

## COMPETENCY-BASED CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT TO IMPROVE JOB READINESS OF SECONDARY SCHOOL GRADUATES

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### Abstract

In the face of dynamic and competitive labour market demands, education that is oriented towards practical learning outcomes is an inevitable necessity. The Competency-Based Curriculum (KBK) has been identified as a potential approach in preparing students to enter the world of work. This study aims to analyse the effectiveness of the implementation of the Competency-Based Curriculum in improving students' work readiness and identify the challenges faced in the implementation process. The research method used in this study was a literature review. The results show that the Competency-Based Curriculum can significantly improve students' work readiness by integrating competencies relevant to industry needs into the curriculum. This method emphasises the development of practical, critical and analytical skills through project-oriented learning and collaboration with industry. However, results also indicate challenges in resources, educator training, and the need for improved infrastructure and assessment methodologies to support effective implementation of KBK.

**Keywords:** Development, Competency-Based Curriculum, Job Readiness of Secondary School Graduates.

### Introduction

In the era of globalisation and rapid technological advancement, the demands for work skills and competencies are becoming increasingly high. High school graduates are faced with labour market challenges that require more than just theoretical knowledge; they need to have practical skills that are relevant to industry needs. Therefore, the relevance of education to labour market needs is a must to improve the job readiness of secondary school graduates.

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Competency-based curriculum (CBC) has been identified as an effective approach in educating and training students to become a competent and ready workforce (Muharrom et al., 2023). This curriculum is designed to emphasise the development of specific skills required in the world of work, in contrast to traditional education systems that focus more on mastering academic content (Dandekar et al., 2023).

Several countries have successfully implemented competency-based curricula and seen significant improvements in the work readiness of their graduates (Aslan, 2016). Work readiness is an important asset for secondary school graduates. Work readiness is not only about the academic knowledge that graduates bring with them from school, but also includes practical skills, professional work attitudes, and adaptability to the actual work environment (Kubai, 2023). With increasing competition in the labour market, employers want candidates who are not only intellectually savvy, but can also immediately contribute and integrate into the existing work system. In this context, work-ready graduates have a competitive advantage and are more likely to secure quality and sustainable employment (Dodge et al., 2023).

In addition, work readiness also directly contributes to economic development and industrial sector growth. Work-ready graduates are key in meeting the needs of a qualified and efficient workforce, which in turn will drive innovation and productivity (Muslim & Sumarni, 2023). Thus, work readiness not only affects an individual's success in entering the labour market, but also plays an important role in improving national competitiveness on a global scale.

Finally, the work readiness of secondary school graduates also affects the social and economic stability of the community. Graduates who are job-ready and absorbed by the labour market quickly reduce the unemployment rate, which is one of the socioeconomic challenges facing many countries. By narrowing the gap between the skills learnt in school and the skills required by industry, education systems will be more outcome-orientated and contribute to sustainable and inclusive community development (Currie et al., 2023). Therefore, improving the job readiness of secondary school graduates not only supports economic growth, but also strengthens the social safety net by forming a resilient and highly adaptable labour base (Loeis et al., 2023).

This study aims to examine how the development and implementation of CBC can improve the work readiness of secondary school graduates in Indonesia. This research is expected to provide useful insights and recommendations for policy makers and educational institutions in designing a curriculum that is more adaptive and responsive to the needs of industry and the current labour market.

In addition, the in-depth literature review will involve analysing various CBC models that have been implemented in different countries, identifying successful elements, challenges, and inhibiting and supporting factors that can be extrapolated to the local context. This will help in formulating a strategy that recognises CBC not only

as a pedagogic concept, but also as a pragmatic solution in improving the quality and relevance of education to the economic and social needs of a globalised society.

### **Research Methods**

The research method used in this study is a literature review. The literature research method is a research approach that involves collecting, reviewing, and analysing information related to the topic under study. This can include sources such as books, journal articles, and various other relevant publications (Sio et al., 2024; Nguyen et al., 2024). There are several steps in conducting literature research, including searching for keywords from various reliable sources, collecting data, reading and recording, and managing the research materials obtained to serve as a basis for analysing and discussing findings (Kim et al., 2024).

### **Results and Discussion**

#### **Competency-Based Curriculum**

The history of competency-based curriculum (CBC) began more than four decades ago, when education began to focus on measurable learning outcomes and skills relevant to employment needs. In the 1960s and 1970s, particularly in the United States and some European countries, there was a paradigm shift from the traditional teacher-centred model of education to one that focused more on students and learning outcomes (McMullen et al., 2023). The concept was popularised in response to concerns that the education system was not preparing students with the necessary skills to succeed in the workplace (Kraft, 2023). Thus, the competency-based curriculum was developed to address these concerns by setting clear standards for what students should be able to do after they complete their education, not just what they know (Daryono et al., 2023).

The development of competency-based curriculum continues, with an increased emphasis on lifelong learning and adaptability in the face of technological change and the labour market. In the early 21st century, many countries adopted or adapted the CBC model as part of their efforts to improve the quality and relevance of education (Muchira et al., 2023). Advances in information and communication technology also encourage personalisation of learning and allow more accessible educational resources for students to learn at their own pace. Thus, CBC is becoming increasingly popular as an approach to producing graduates who are able to think critically, work in teams, and have the right skills to succeed in a knowledge-based and changing economy (Taping et al., 2023).

The implementation of Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) in different countries has shown wide variations related to their respective contexts and needs (Aslan, 2023). In Australia, for example, the implementation of CBC has been an important part of vocational education and training reform, with the Australian National

Training Framework providing a clear and consistent structure for competency development across all industry sectors (Elbarrad & Belassi, 2023). This approach prioritises the development of practical skills directly related to employment needs, enabling students to become more work-ready with industry-relevant expertise (Rodgers & Alice, 2023). Australia has been an example of how CBC can be effectively integrated in the education and training system to increase industry engagement and improve employment opportunities for graduates (Jenkins-Weintaub et al., 2023).

In Finland, the implementation of CBC is part of a broader educational revolution that emphasises personalised student learning and lifelong skills development (Alt et al., 2023). The curriculum in Finland is designed to not only enhance academic competence but also promote skills such as problem-solving, critical scaling, and teamwork, all of which are key components of CBC. With a more flexible and student learning-orientated evaluation system, Finland stands out as a country with one of the best education systems in the world (Hammad et al., 2023). The implementation of CBC in Finland shows how this approach can be adopted within the formal education framework to strengthen the link between education and wider social and economic needs (Djubaedi et al., 2023).

The implementation of the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) in various parts of the world is inseparable from various challenges and obstacles. One of the biggest challenges is the change in mindset or paradigm from curriculum-centred education to student competency-centred education (Aslan, 2017). This change requires significant adjustments in the way teachers teach, evaluate learning, and manage the classroom. Teachers must be trained to design and implement lessons that support the development of student competencies, including the use of student-centred active learning methodologies, which are often much different from traditional teaching methods (Astuti et al., 2023). In addition, the evaluation system that is oriented towards one-way measurement of learning outcomes must be changed to be more formative and reflective, assessing student progress in achieving certain competencies, which sometimes encounters obstacles in practice (Aslan & Wahyudin, 2020).

Another barrier to implementing CBC is resources. The development and implementation of a competency-based curriculum often requires a significant investment in time, teacher training and learning resources. In many countries, there are limitations in terms of education budgets, which makes investing in these changes a challenge (Syarnubi et al., 2023). The availability of technology and its accessibility for all students is also a barrier, especially in developing countries or remote areas where technology can play an important role in supporting competency-based learning. In addition, to achieve effective implementation of CBC, there needs to be support from all stakeholders, including parents, communities and industries, who may not fully understand the benefits and needs of this change (Abidin et al., 2023).

In addition to internal challenges from the educational institutions themselves, the implementation of the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) also often faces challenges from socio-cultural and political aspects. In the socio-cultural context, there are times when traditional values and community expectations of the education system are not aligned with the principles of CBC (Southworth et al., 2023). For example, in some societies, education is still very much seen as a rigid transfer of academic knowledge rather than the development of practical and applicable competencies. Society may be less supportive of a more dynamic and flexible approach, as demanded by CBC, because it is perceived as less rigorous or less concerned with basic academic knowledge, which has been the benchmark for educational success (Tricahyati & Zaim, 2023).

Politically, fluctuating education policies and shifts in political power can also be barriers to the consistent and sustainable implementation of CBC. Any shift in government policy can cause education reforms already underway to be stalled or altered, making it difficult for schools and teachers to adjust to rapid and frequent changes (Arunachalam et al., 2023). This also impacts on resource allocation and funding priorities, which may shift from curriculum development and teacher training to other initiatives deemed more urgent or politically rewarding. Therefore, successful implementation of CBC requires long-term commitment from all levels of government and the stability of education policies that support effective and inclusive competency-based learning (Hakimova & Dилоva, 2023).

The implementation of CBC, with all its challenges and barriers, requires a holistic approach involving multiple stakeholders, appropriate adaptations to local conditions, and sustained commitment and resources. With a deep understanding of the value and benefits of this approach, communities and governments can be more energised to overcome barriers and adopt innovative strategies for a more adaptive and relevant future of education (Højgaard & Sølberg, 2023).

A comparison between the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) and the traditional curriculum shows fundamental differences in several important aspects. Traditional curricula generally focus more on subject matter content and theoretical knowledge absorption, where students are assessed on their ability to recall and reproduce information in the form of written tests or examinations (Muchira et al., 2023). On the other hand, CBC focuses more on developing students' competencies, including knowledge, skills and attitudes, which are applicable and relevant to real-world needs. Evaluation in CBC does not simply test memorisation, but is more oriented towards demonstrating students' ability to apply their knowledge to solve real problems, reflecting a more holistic approach to teaching and learning (Kifta et al., 2023).

Furthermore, the learning approach in CBC tends to be more student-centred, promoting active learning where students are directly involved in activities that support

the development of their competencies. This is in contrast to the more teacher-centric traditional learning model, where students are mostly passive recipients of information. In a competency-based curriculum, learning is designed to be more flexible and adaptive, allowing students to progress at their own pace and according to individual interests and needs (Kiesler & Impagliazzo, 2023). In contrast, traditional curricula often take a "one-size-fits-all" approach, which may not meet individual learning needs or accommodate differences in learning pace between students. Competency-based learning advocates a more inclusive and personalised approach, where each student is given the opportunity to develop to his or her full potential (Lai et al., 2023).

### **Competency-based learning**

Competency-based learning (CBL) is an educational paradigm that focuses on mastering a number of clearly defined and measurable competencies (Kinnear et al., 2023). It eschews fixed time-orientated learning methods (such as semesters or school years) and replaces them with an approach that allows students to learn at their own pace until they have fully mastered each required competency. In this approach, learning is no longer about memorising facts or theories, but rather about putting knowledge into practice (Muchira et al., 2023). This changes the focus of learning from 'what we know' to 'what we can do' with that knowledge, so that students are ready to face real-world challenges as they graduate (Kifta et al., 2023).

CBL provides opportunities for students to participate in relevant and personalised learning, where they can relate the material learnt to practical applications in various work situations. It also allows educators to provide more focused and constructive feedback, which is based on specific achievements against set competencies (Kiesler & Impagliazzo, 2023). Overall, competency-based education seeks to hone students' critical, problem-solving and adaptability skills, which are indispensable in a constantly changing labour market (Lai et al., 2023). Thus, the implementation of competency-based learning aims to create a workforce that not only knows a lot, but is also able to apply that knowledge effectively in the workplace.

### **National and international labour competency standards**

National Work Competency Standards (SKKNI) are a reference in the quality assurance system of human resources in a country and are part of the vocational education and training system recognised by the government. This SKKNI includes qualifications and work competencies designed based on the needs of certain industries and sectors in the country (Fahimirad et al., 2024). This standard aims to harmonise perceptions between educational outputs and industry needs, thus facilitating the integration of graduates into the labour market. SKKNI also plays an important role in professional certification, which aims to improve the quality of work and worker

productivity as well as ensuring occupational safety and health (Noviyanto & Wijanarka, 2023).

At the international level, work competency standards are developed to adapt to the needs of the global labour market and encourage worker mobility between countries. Organisations such as the International Labour Organization (ILO) promote the development of standards that ensure the quality and equity of skills across countries (Anderson-Levitt, 2023). These standards are especially important in the context of a globalised economy, where companies and industries operate in many countries and require consistent criteria for hiring and assessing employee performance. Through the adoption of internationally recognised competency standards, workers have greater opportunities to work abroad, while improving their competence and adaptability in diverse work environments (Inderanata & Sukardi, 2023).

The integration between National Competency Standards (SKKNI) and international standards plays an important role in improving the competitiveness of a country's workforce in the global market (Barrot, 2023). This allows for the creation of wider employment opportunities and higher labour mobility. By having skills and competencies that conform to international standards, workers from a country have better access to participate in international collaboration projects or even work abroad more easily. It also helps domestic companies to improve their production quality to suit the international market, which in turn can boost exports and economic growth (Aydarova, 2023).

In addition, harmonisation between national and international occupational competency standards can strengthen the vocational education and training system. By adjusting curricula and training materials to align with global industry needs, educational institutions can ensure that graduates are not only job-ready in the domestic market but also in the global market (Azhar et al., 2023). This requires close collaboration between government, industry and educational institutions to regularly synchronise competency standards with the latest developments in technology and market needs. Through an integrated system that is responsive to global changes, the workforce will be better prepared to face future economic challenges and contribute to the growth and competitiveness of national and global economies (Thirsk et al., 2023).

### **Job Readiness of Secondary School Graduates**

Job readiness indicators are criteria used to assess how prepared individuals are to enter and succeed in the work environment. One important indicator is technical skills relevant to the job being sought, including industry-specific knowledge as well as the ability to operate tools or software that are essential in a field of work (Dandekar et al., 2023). However, technical skills alone are not enough, interpersonal and communication skills are also very important. This includes the ability to work in teams,

build good professional relationships, as well as the ability to effectively communicate, both orally and in writing (Kubai, 2023).

In addition, work readiness indicators also include problem-solving and critical thinking skills, where individuals can creatively and efficiently solve problems and make logical, data-driven decisions. Adaptability and flexibility are also key, given the ever-changing work environment, which requires employees to be able to adjust quickly to new conditions or demands (Dodge et al., 2023). In addition, strong work ethics, including dedication, integrity and reliability, are also important aspects that contribute to work readiness, ensuring that individuals can be relied upon to complete tasks and that their efforts are aligned with organisational values (Muslim & Sumarni, 2023).

Effective work readiness assessment methods often involve a combination of approaches to measure different aspects of an individual's skills and personal attributes. Qualitative assessments such as behavioural interviews can provide deep insights into a candidate's interpersonal competencies, communication skills and work ethics (Currie et al., 2023). Such behavioural assessments often require candidates to provide specific examples from past experiences that demonstrate specific skills or decision-making. Skills tests or technical employability tests, such as computer tests or practical assignments, are also implemented to assess the technical abilities required for the position of interest, as well as to measure the extent to which the individual masters specific tools, technologies or methodologies in the work context (Loeis et al., 2023).

Factors influencing the work readiness of secondary school graduates are diverse and complex, involving aspects related to formal education, learning experiences outside the classroom, and personal and environmental conditions (McMullen et al., 2023). At the formal education level, the quality of curriculum and teaching in schools plays an important role. A curriculum that is relevant to the needs of the modern world of work, which focuses not only on academic knowledge but also on the development of practical skills such as problem solving, critical thinking and digital literacy, strongly supports students' work readiness. Furthermore, access to quality learning resources, such as laboratories, libraries, and learning technologies, are also influential in improving students' skills and knowledge (Lawton et al., 2023).

On the other hand, extracurricular factors and practical work experience also contribute to improving work readiness. Extracurricular activities such as leadership clubs, sports and arts can help students develop social and leadership skills, while internships or work practice programmes provide hands-on experience in real work environments, which not only enriches their understanding of the world of work but also builds their professional networks (Kraft, 2023). In addition, support from family and community, including the provision of views on the value of hard work and the importance of education, plays an important role in motivating students to excel in school and prepare for their future. Therefore, the combination of rich learning experiences at school, participation in extracurricular activities, and support from the



surrounding community creates a solid foundation for students to achieve work readiness after graduating from high school (Daryono et al., 2023).

### **Implementation of Competency-Based Curriculum and Impact on Work Readiness**

The implementation of the Competency-Based Curriculum (KBK) in the education system is directed at strengthening students' work readiness by prioritising the development of specific skills that are in line with the needs of the job market. The KBK concept emphasises the achievement of learning outcomes that are measurable and relevant to the competencies required in the world of work, rather than simply the mastery of theoretical content (Maulidina & Wijanarka, 2023). In this context, education not only provides students with academic knowledge but also prepares them with practical skills, such as problem solving, effective communication, and the ability to work in teams. Learning is designed to be more interactive and applicable, often involving case studies, projects, and co-operation with industry, so that students can directly relate what they learn to situations in the workplace (Efendi et al., 2023).

The impact of competency-based curriculum implementation on work readiness is evident through increased employability of graduates. Students who undergo education with a competency-based curriculum tend to have a smoother transition into the world of work because they already have skills that are in line with those required by employers (Zhang et al., 2023). By focusing on developing targeted competencies, students are also more confident and proactive in facing employment challenges. Furthermore, it helps to reduce the skills gap that is often an issue between educational outputs and industry needs, thus indirectly contributing to reducing youth unemployment and creating a more competent and productive workforce (Taping et al., 2023).

Furthermore, to achieve effective implementation of a competency-based curriculum (CBLC), close collaboration between educational institutions and relevant industries or employment sectors is required. This partnership allows the curriculum to be structured and tailored to the actual competency needs demanded by the labour market, ensuring that graduates are not only theoretically but also practically prepared (Insorio et al., 2023). Industry can provide valuable input on current trends, technologies in use, and essential skills required in a particular sector. In addition, the involvement of professional practitioners in the teaching-learning process brings real perspectives from the field of work into the classroom, giving students a better understanding of how theory is applied in practice and what is expected of them in the workplace (Munadi & Nurulhaq, 2023).

However, the challenges of implementing the KBK cannot be ignored. Adjusting to the new curriculum requires significant resources, both in terms of time and finances (Elbarrad & Belassi, 2023). Educators need to be trained to teach with more competency-oriented methodologies, and educational institutions may need to

upgrade their facilities to support more intensive practical learning. In addition, competency evaluation and assessment require a different approach from conventional assessment systems that focus more on theoretical knowledge (Green et al., 2023).

Ultimately, the success of competency-based curriculum implementation in improving work readiness depends on the ability of the education system to adapt, innovate and act responsively to the changing needs of the world of work. With close collaboration between education and industry, as well as continued investment in curriculum development and learning resources, the KBK can be one of the best solutions to future work readiness challenges. Continued research and development in teaching methodologies, educational technology, and school-employment co-operation strategies will be key in achieving this goal.

## Conclusion

The Competency-Based Curriculum (KBK) has consistently been found to be effective in preparing students for the world of work through its focus on developing practical and applicable skills. Studies have shown that the KBK helps to reduce the gap between the competencies required by industry and the skills taught in educational institutions. This is achieved by providing more relevant learning experiences and opportunities for students to develop critical thinking, problem-solving and team collaboration skills, all of which are essential competencies in the modern workplace.

However, the research also highlights the challenges that exist, including the need for substantial resources for faculty training, facility upgrades, and the development of appropriate competency assessment methods. In addition, the research emphasises the importance of partnerships between educational institutions and industry to ensure that curricula keep pace with changing labour market needs. Continued investment and strategic collaboration between various stakeholders is required to optimise the KBK as a work preparation tool that can meet the demands of a dynamic global economy.

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