



IMPLEMENTATION OF COMPETENCY-BASED LEARNING PROGRAMS IN PREPARING GRADUATES FOR EMPLOYMENT AT STATE VOCATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL 4 TEBING TINGGI

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Article Info

ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the implementation of competency-based learning programs in preparing graduates for employment at State Vocational High School 4 Tebing Tinggi. Competency-based learning is an educational approach that emphasizes the mastery of knowledge, skills, and work attitudes in accordance with the needs of the business and industrial sectors. This study employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive method. Data collection techniques include observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. The research informants consist of the principal, teachers, and students of State Vocational High School 4 Tebing Tinggi. The results indicate that the implementation of competency-based learning programs at State Vocational High School 4 Tebing Tinggi has generally been carried out in accordance with established standards, as reflected in the application of a competency-based curriculum, the integration of theoretical and practical learning, and the implementation of industrial work practice. However, the implementation has not yet been fully optimal due to several inhibiting factors, including limited practical facilities and infrastructure, a lack of continuous teacher training, minimal involvement of the business and industrial sectors, and differences in competency levels among students.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Vocational High Schools (SMK) are secondary education institutions that play a strategic role in preparing skilled, productive, and work-ready human resources. Vocational education is designed to equip students with competencies that meet the needs of the business and industrial sectors (DUDI), enabling SMK graduates to adapt to technological developments and the dynamics of the labor market. In this context, competency-based learning has become the main approach to ensure alignment between the educational process and labor market demands.

Competency-based learning emphasizes the integrated mastery of knowledge, skills, and work attitudes. Finch and Crunkilton (1999) define competence as the mastery of tasks, skills, attitudes, and appreciation required to support successful job performance. This approach requires a learning process that is not only oriented toward cognitive aspects but also toward practical abilities and the development of professional attitudes. Therefore, competency-based learning is directed at producing graduates who possess work readiness in accordance with established competency standards.

From a regulatory perspective, the implementation of vocational education in Indonesia is based on Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, which stipulates that vocational education is a form of secondary education that primarily prepares students to work in specific fields. This provision is reinforced by the Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture Number 34 of 2018 concerning National Education Standards for SMK, which emphasizes that the competency standards of SMK graduates are developed based on graduate profiles encompassing attitudes, knowledge, and skills. In addition, Government Regulation Number 57 of 2021 concerning National Education Standards emphasizes the importance of process standards and assessment standards oriented toward the achievement of student competencies.

In its implementation, competency-based learning is not only related to the curriculum and learning processes but is also influenced by organizational factors and the behavior of implementers. Robbins (1996), in his study of organizational behavior, emphasizes that the effectiveness of a program is strongly influenced by the ability of individuals and organizations to adapt to environmental changes. This indicates that the success of competency-based learning in SMKs is highly dependent on the synergy among teachers, school management, students, and the support of the business and industrial sectors.

State Vocational High School 4 Tebing Tinggi, as one of the public vocational education institutions, seeks to implement competency-based learning in order to prepare work-ready graduates. This program is implemented through the integration of theoretical and practical learning, the implementation of industrial work practice, and the application of competency-based assessment. However, based on empirical conditions in the field, the implementation of this program still faces various challenges, including limited practical facilities and infrastructure, a lack of continuous teacher training, minimal involvement of the business and industrial sectors, and differences in competency levels among students. These conditions indicate that the implementation of competency-based learning has not yet been fully optimal.

Various previous studies included in this thesis indicate that the implementation of competency-based learning in vocational high schools continues to face similar problems. Yayat (2010) found that the level of competency mastery among SMK students in competency-based learning remains in the moderate category. Purnomo and Munadi (2005) emphasize that the success of a competency-based curriculum is highly dependent on the alignment of competency standards, assessment systems, and the involvement of industry partners. Furthermore, Friatna and Andriani (2022) show that the development of student competencies in vocational high schools requires strengthened learning management and sustainable partnership networks with the business and industrial sectors.

Based on the findings of previous studies, competency-based learning has proven to be relevant in improving the work readiness of SMK graduates; however, its implementation still faces various obstacles at the school level. These problems include limited facilities and infrastructure, teacher competency development, the involvement of the business and industrial sectors, and differences in student competency levels.

On this basis, this study adopts the title "Implementation of Competency-Based Learning Programs in Preparing Graduates for Employment at State Vocational High School 4 Tebing Tinggi" to examine more deeply the implementation of competency-based learning at the school level and its contribution to graduate work readiness.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive method, aiming to describe and understand the implementation of competency-based learning in preparing graduates for employment. The research was conducted at State Vocational High School 4 Tebing Tinggi, which was selected because it implements competency-based learning in vocational education processes.

Research informants were selected using purposive sampling, consisting of the principal, teachers, and students who are directly involved in the implementation of competency-based learning. Data collection was carried out through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation to obtain comprehensive and in-depth data.

Data were analyzed using qualitative data analysis through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data validity was ensured through source and technique triangulation to ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the research findings.

3. RESULT AND ANALYSIS

Implementation of Competency-Based Learning Programs at State Vocational High School 4 Tebing Tinggi

The implementation of competency-based learning programs at State Vocational High School 4 Tebing Tinggi represents the school's effort to enhance graduate work readiness in accordance with the needs of the business and industrial sectors. To analyze the implementation of this program, this study employs the policy implementation theory proposed by Van Meter and Van Horn (1975), which states that the success of a policy

is strongly influenced by six main variables, namely policy standards and objectives, resources, characteristics of implementers, interorganizational communication and implementation activities, social, economic, and political conditions, and the disposition or attitudes of policy implementers.

Policy Standards and Objectives

Van Meter and Van Horn (1975) explain that policy standards and objectives must be clearly formulated and understood by implementers in order for a policy to be implemented effectively. Clear standards and objectives enable implementers to determine the direction and form of actions to be taken.

The standards and objectives of competency-based learning at State Vocational High School 4 Tebing Tinggi have been established through a competency-based curriculum that refers to graduate competency achievements. Teachers understand the learning objectives that emphasize the mastery of knowledge, skills, and work attitudes. However, in practice, there are still differences in understanding regarding the achievement of competency standards, particularly in aligning them with the needs of the business and industrial sectors.

Resources

According to Van Meter and Van Horn (1975), resources include human resources, facilities and infrastructure, and financial support required to implement a policy. Limited resources may hinder successful policy implementation.

Resources for implementing competency-based learning at State Vocational High School 4 Tebing Tinggi are not yet fully adequate. In terms of human resources, some teachers are already aligned with their areas of expertise; however, continuous professional training is still needed. In terms of facilities and infrastructure, practical learning facilities remain limited, resulting in competency-based learning not being implemented optimally.

Characteristics of Implementers

Van Meter and Van Horn (1975) state that the characteristics of policy implementers—such as levels of competence, experience, and organizational structure—greatly influence the success of policy implementation.

The characteristics of implementers at State Vocational High School 4 Tebing Tinggi are generally supportive of competency-based learning implementation. The principal and teachers possess experience and a basic understanding of vocational education. Nevertheless, teachers' workload and limited opportunities for professional development affect the optimization of program implementation.

Interorganizational Communication

Van Meter and Van Horn (1975) emphasize that interorganizational communication and implementation activities play an important role in aligning perceptions and coordinating among parties involved in policy implementation.

Internal school communication has been conducted through regular meetings and coordination. However, communication and cooperation with the business and industrial sectors remain suboptimal, resulting in incomplete synchronization between the competencies taught in schools and labor market needs.

Social, Economic, and Political Conditions

According to Van Meter and Van Horn (1975), the social, economic, and political conditions of the environment in which a policy is implemented may influence its success.

The diverse social and economic backgrounds of students affect the competency-based learning process. In addition, the dynamics of educational policies and limited external support also have an impact on the implementation of competency-based learning programs at State Vocational High School 4 Tebing Tinggi.

Disposition of Policy Implementers

Van Meter and Van Horn (1975) explain that the disposition or attitudes of policy implementers relate to their commitment, acceptance, and willingness to carry out a policy.

The disposition of implementers at State Vocational High School 4 Tebing Tinggi is relatively good. The principal and teachers demonstrate commitment to implementing competency-based learning. However, limited resources and external support affect the optimization of program implementation.

Inhibiting Factors in the Implementation of Competency-Based Learning Programs at State Vocational High School 4 Tebing Tinggi

Several inhibiting factors affect the implementation of competency-based learning programs at State Vocational High School 4 Tebing Tinggi, including limited practical facilities and infrastructure, a lack of continuous teacher training, weak communication and cooperation with the business and industrial sectors, and differences in students' social and economic conditions. These factors have caused the implementation of competency-based learning to be not yet optimal in supporting graduate work readiness.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research and discussion, it can be concluded that the implementation of competency-based learning programs at State Vocational High School 4 Tebing Tinggi has generally been carried out in accordance with the direction of vocational education policies in preparing graduates who are ready to enter the workforce. The implementation of the program has referred to a competency-based curriculum and has sought to integrate theoretical and practical learning. Viewed from the perspective of the policy implementation theory of Van Meter and Van Horn (1975), the standards and objectives of competency-based learning policies have generally been understood by implementers, particularly teachers and school management. However, the achievement of competency standards has not yet been fully optimal due to limitations in aligning learning with the needs of the business and industrial sectors.

The main inhibiting factors in the implementation of this program include limited practical facilities and infrastructure, a lack of continuous training and professional development for teachers, weak cooperation with the business and industrial sectors, and differences in students' social and economic conditions. In addition, teachers' workload and limited external support also affect the optimization of competency-based learning implementation. Thus, the implementation of competency-based learning programs at State Vocational High School 4 Tebing Tinggi has been carried out but has not yet been fully optimal. Strengthening resources, enhancing partnerships with the business and industrial sectors, and providing continuous professional development for teachers are required so that competency-based learning can be more effective in improving graduate work readiness.

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