



SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW: THE EFFECTIVENESS OF LINK AND MATCH IMPLEMENTATION BETWEEN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND INDUSTRY

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Abstract

The implementation of link and match between vocational education and industry is an important strategy for improving the alignment of graduates' competencies with labour-market needs. This study aims to analyse the effectiveness of link and match implementation, identify the factors that influence its effectiveness, and formulate effective forms of implementation. A Systematic Literature Review (SLR) was conducted on publications from 2020 to 2026. The literature search was systematically performed in Dimensions AI, Scopus, ScienceDirect, ERIC, Web of Science, and Google Scholar using keywords related to link and match, vocational education/TVET, industry partnership, work-integrated learning, and teaching factory. Of the 315 records identified, duplicate removal, title and abstract screening, full-text assessment, and the application of inclusion and exclusion criteria resulted in 10 verified studies that were synthesised thematically. The review indicates that the effectiveness of link and match is primarily determined by curriculum alignment with industry needs, sustainable school-industry partnerships, industry-based learning, teacher and instructor competence, policy support, and organisational readiness. Forms of implementation that consistently support competency relevance and work readiness include internships/work placements, teaching factories, project-based learning using authentic industry projects, competency certification, the involvement of industry practitioners, and stronger commitments to graduate recruitment. The findings demonstrate that effective link and match cannot be defined merely by the existence of formal cooperation; rather, it depends on the quality, intensity, and sustainability of collaboration integrated into the educational process. The final corpus includes Indonesian studies and two international studies from Bangladesh and South Africa, providing comparative perspectives on supportive policies, work-based learning, and the management of TVET-industry partnerships.

Keywords: Effectiveness; Implementation; Industry; Link and match; Vocational Education

INTRODUCTION

Vocational education plays a strategic role in preparing a competent workforce whose capabilities are relevant to labour-market needs. Industrial transformation, digitalisation, and changes in employment structures require vocational education to produce graduates who not only master technical competencies but are also able to adapt to technological change, workplace culture, and evolving labour-market demands. In this context, link and match has become an important approach for strengthening the connection and alignment between educational processes and the actual needs of business and industry.

The implementation of link and match extends beyond curriculum synchronisation. It includes joint curriculum development with industry, work placements and internships, authentic project-based learning, teaching factories, competency certification, the involvement of industry practitioners in instruction, teacher competency development, and stronger pathways for graduate recruitment. Strong collaboration between educational institutions and industry can improve graduates' work readiness while reducing skills gaps in the labour market (OECD, 2021; UNESCO, 2022).

In Indonesia, link and match has been strengthened through vocational education revitalisation policies, including Presidential Regulation No. 68 of 2022 on the Revitalisation of Vocational Education and Vocational Training. Nevertheless, its implementation continues to face several challenges, including uneven industry involvement, limited practical facilities, the need for continuous updating of teacher competencies, inconsistent curriculum alignment, and partnerships that remain largely administrative in some educational institutions.

Previous studies have reported varied findings. Several studies indicate that industry involvement in curriculum development, industrial work placements, teaching factories, and project-based learning can improve graduates' competencies and work readiness. Other studies emphasise that the success of link and match is strongly influenced by communication quality, partnership commitment, organisational readiness, and policy support. These diverse findings highlight the need for a systematic synthesis to identify patterns of effectiveness, determining factors, and the most consistently effective forms of implementation.

The conceptual foundation of this review rests on the concepts of effectiveness, link and match, vocational education, and partnership with industry. Effectiveness reflects the extent to which an organisation or programme succeeds in achieving its established objectives. Robbins and Coulter (2012) define effectiveness as "doing the right things," whereas Hall (1980) views effectiveness in terms of goal attainment and an organisation's ability to acquire and manage resources. Gibson et al. (2012) add a stakeholder perspective, namely an organisation's ability to meet stakeholder needs. In vocational education, effectiveness therefore concerns an institution's capacity to manage inputs, processes, and outputs adaptively in order to produce graduates whose competencies are relevant to labour-market needs.

Link and match is an approach that emphasises the connection and alignment between education and labour-market needs in order to reduce skills mismatch. Vocational education is designed to develop the knowledge, skills, and professional attitudes required for working life (Billett, 2011) and to integrate theoretical knowledge with practical, work-oriented skills (Lucas, Spencer, & Claxton, 2012). Ali, Mardapi, and Koehler (2020) emphasise that implementing link and match requires curriculum alignment, learning environments that resemble actual workplaces, competent teachers and instructors, and industry involvement in the learning process.

Within this relationship, industry serves not only as an employer of graduates but also as a strategic partner in competency development. Industry involvement may take the form of curriculum development, industrial work placements, authentic workplace experience, competency certification, industry-based learning, and the provision of information on technological developments and occupational standards. Accordingly, in this study, the effectiveness of link and match between vocational education and industry is understood as the degree of success in aligning curricula,

learning processes, workplace experiences, graduate competencies, and industry needs through adaptive, collaborative, and sustainable partnerships.

Conceptually, the effectiveness of link and match cannot be demonstrated solely by the existence of formal cooperation between schools and industry. Effectiveness must be assessed in terms of the extent to which such collaboration produces tangible changes in learning and supports competency relevance, work readiness, and graduates' transition into employment. This conceptual framework provides the basis for synthesising the findings of the included studies and identifying factors that consistently influence successful link and match implementation.

Against this background, this study employs a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) to integrate empirical evidence on the effectiveness of link and match implementation between vocational education and industry. The review is intended not merely to describe programmes, but to assess how link and match implementation contributes to competency relevance, work readiness, and the alignment of vocational education with industry needs.

METHOD

This study employs a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) to identify, select, evaluate, and synthesise research evidence on the effectiveness of link and match implementation between vocational education and industry. The review process follows the principles of systematic reviewing proposed by Petticrew and Roberts (2006), Snyder (2019), and Xiao and Watson (2019), as well as the systematic and transparent SLR procedures developed by Paul et al. (2021).

SLR Research Design

The SLR was designed to answer the three research questions formulated in the Introduction through systematic processes of study identification, selection, quality assessment, data extraction, and synthesis.

The units of analysis were empirical publications addressing link and match implementation or partnerships between vocational education and industry that met the inclusion criteria. The findings of the included studies were synthesised using a qualitative thematic approach to identify effectiveness, influencing factors, and forms of link and match implementation.

Protocol, Databases, Keywords, and Search String

The search covered publications from 2020 to 2026 in Dimensions AI, Scopus, ScienceDirect, ERIC, Web of Science, and Google Scholar. The main keywords included “effectiveness of link and match,” “vocational education,” “TVET and industry,” “industry partnership,” “vocational school collaboration,” “work-integrated learning,” and “teaching factory.” Combinations of these keywords were used to identify literature directly related to vocational education-industry partnerships and the effectiveness of their implementation.

The search string combined the predetermined keywords, for example: (“link and match” OR “industry partnership” OR “vocational school collaboration”) AND (“vocational education” OR TVET) AND (industry OR “work-integrated learning” OR “teaching factory”). The combination was adapted to the search functionality of each database.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Table 1. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Aspect	Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Publication year	2020-2026	Before 2020
Focus	Link and match/vocational education partnership with industry	Does not focus on vocational education or relationships with industry
Substance	Addresses effectiveness, implementation, curriculum, work placements/internships, teaching factory, certification, project-based learning, or graduate employment	Does not relevantly address effectiveness/implementation
Type of evidence	Empirical quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-method studies; relevant journal articles/proceedings	Conceptual articles without relevant empirical evidence
Document quality	Clear methodology and full text available	Unclear methodology, duplicate, or full text unavailable

Identification, Screening, Duplicate Removal, and Quality Assessment

A total of 315 records were identified across all search sources. Before screening, 95 records were removed, comprising 70 duplicates, 15 articles that were not relevant to the topic, and 10 non-article publications outside the scope of the review. The remaining 220 articles were screened by title and abstract; 185 were excluded because they did not focus on vocational education and link and match (n = 110), did not address effectiveness (n = 45), or did not involve industry (n = 30). Subsequently, 35 articles underwent full-text eligibility assessment, resulting in eight studies that passed bibliographic verification. An audit of the initial corpus identified two records that could not be retained because their metadata could not be verified or the records were inaccurate. To maintain the breadth of evidence and the intended final corpus, an additional targeted search was conducted using the same inclusion criteria and the international terms “TVET industry partnership,” “linking TVET with industries,” and “college-industry partnership.” This supplementary search yielded two relevant and verified empirical studies, one from Bangladesh and one from South Africa. Accordingly, 10 studies were included in the qualitative synthesis.

Quality assessment considered the clarity of research objectives, methodological appropriateness, data collection and analysis techniques, the relevance of findings to the research questions, the adequacy of empirical evidence, and bibliographic traceability. Bibliographic verification was conducted by matching the title, authors, year, journal/proceedings title,

volume/issue, page range, and DOI or official publisher webpage. Studies with unverifiable publication metadata or duplicate records were not retained in the synthesis. The two supplementary studies were subjected to the same quality assessment and data extraction criteria as the eight primary studies.

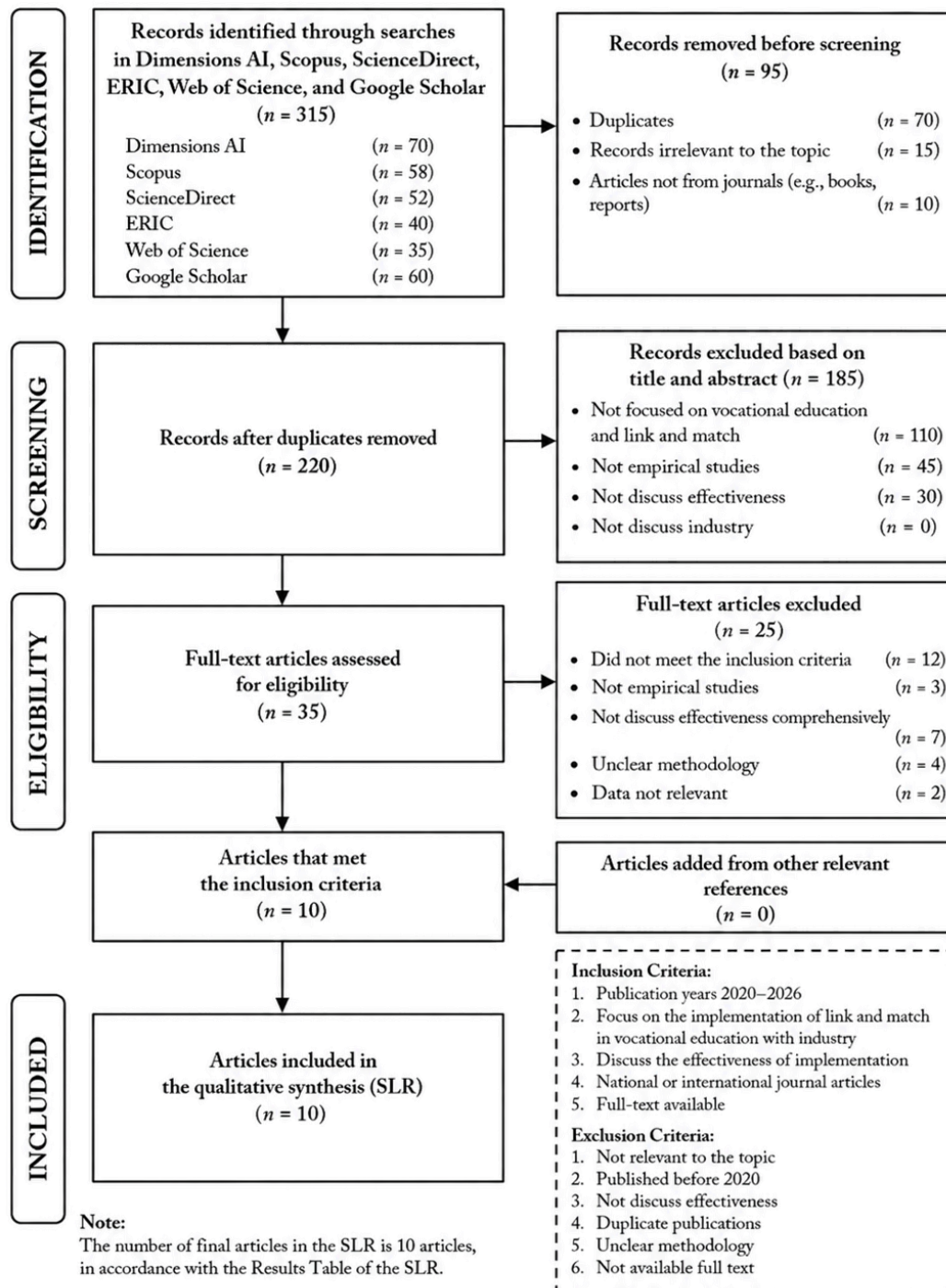


Figure 1. PRISMA Flow Diagram for the SLR

Source: Prepared by the authors based on the SLR selection process, bibliographic audit, and targeted supplementary search.

Data Extraction and Synthesis Technique

Data extracted from each study included publication details, research focus or questions, forms of link and match implementation, forms of school-industry partnership, findings on effectiveness, and factors supporting or hindering implementation. The data were then analysed using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and organise them into major themes addressing RQ1-RQ3.

RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Results

Selection Results and Characteristics of the Included Studies

The 10 studies that met the inclusion criteria and passed bibliographic verification were published between 2020 and 2025. Eight studies examined the Indonesian context, one investigated TVET-industry linkages in Bangladesh, and one addressed the strengthening of TVET college-industry partnerships in South Africa. The studies covered skills gaps, teaching factories, leadership, implementation of the 8+i link and match framework, supportive policies, work-based learning, and partnership management. Bibliographic audits covered titles, authors, publication years, publication sources, page ranges, and official DOI/URLs to ensure that only traceable studies were retained in the synthesis.

Table 2. Selection Results and Characteristics of the Included Studies

No.	Year	Author(s)	Title	Research Questions/Assumptions	Theoretical Anchor
1.	2020	Ali, M., Mardapi, D., & Koehler, T.	Identification Key Factor in Link and match Between Technical and Vocational Education and Training with Industry Needs in Indonesia	What factors influence link and match between TVET and industry needs in Indonesia?	Gap Analysis Theory
2.	2020	Ali, M., Triyono, B., & Koehler, T.	Evaluation of Indonesian Technical and Vocational Education in Addressing the Gap in Job Skills Required by Industry	How does Indonesian TVET address the gap between vocational graduates and industry skill requirements?	Human Capital Theory
3	2020	Siddiky, M. R., & Uh, S.-B.	Linking TVET with Industries in Bangladesh: Need for Supportive Policies and an	How can TVET-industry linkages in Bangladesh be strengthened through supportive policies	TVET-Industry Partnership Theory

No.	Year	Author(s)	Title	Research Questions/Assumptions	Theoretical Anchor
			Approach to TVET	and approaches to TVET?	
4..	2021	Wahjusaputri, S., Bunyamin, B., & Nastiti, T. I.	Critical Success Factors in Implementing Teaching Factory-Based Competency for Vocational High School Students	What factors support the successful implementation of teaching factories in vocational high schools?	Experiential Learning Theory
5.	2022	Asrin, A., Ramdhani, A., Muhaimi, L., & Maulyda, M. A.	Principals' Leadership Strategy to Improve "Link and match" Quality for Vocational Education	How do principals' leadership strategies improve the quality of link and match in vocational education?	Systems Theory
6.	2022	Ahmanda, W., Maulana, A., Murtinugraha, R. E., & Arifah, S.	Implementasi Program SMK Pusat Keunggulan Dilihat dari Konsep 8+i Link and match	How is the 8+i link and match concept implemented in the Vocational High School Centre of Excellence Programme?	Link and Match Theory
7.	2024	Wahjusaputri, S., Rahmanto, M. A., Suciani, S., & Kustantini, S.	Implementation of the 8+i Link and match Vocational School Program	How is the 8+i link and match programme implemented in vocational schools?	Organizational Effectiveness Theory
8.	2024	Lamijan, Waluwandja, P. A., Anabokay, Y. M., Faggidae, Y. M., Kolnel, A. A., Taebenu, Y., & Mesah, J. W.	Implementasi Program IDUKA (Link and match) di Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan	How is the IDUKA/link and match programme implemented in vocational high schools?	Stakeholder Theory
9.	2024	Njengele, T., Engel-Hills, P., & Winberg, C.	Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Colleges and Industry: Strengthening Partnership-Building Practices	How can partnership-building practices between TVET colleges and industry be strengthened?	Collaboration and Partnership Theory
10.	2025	Khomsah, N. L., Syahri, M., & Tinus, A.	Strengthening Link and match 8+i Program in Vocational	How does strengthening the 8+i link and match programme support	Collaboration Theory

No.	Year	Author(s)	Title	Research Questions/Assumptions	Theoretical Anchor
			Education	vocational education and graduate readiness?	

Distribution of Studies

By publication year, the 10 included studies were distributed as follows: 2020 (3 studies), 2021 (1 study), 2022 (2 studies), 2024 (3 studies), and 2025 (1 study). By country context, eight studies were from Indonesia, one from Bangladesh, and one from South Africa. The inclusion of the two international studies broadens the comparative perspective, particularly regarding the role of public policy, work-based learning systems, institutional readiness, and practices for building sustainable partnerships.

Effectiveness of Link and Match Implementation (RQ1)

The synthesis indicates that link and match implementation generally contribute positively to competency relevance and graduates' work readiness when partnerships with industry are integrated into the educational process. Effectiveness is particularly evident in curriculum alignment, increased authentic workplace experience, learning environments that approximate industrial settings, competency certification, and improved opportunities for graduates to transition into employment. These findings indicate that link and match produce stronger outcomes when industry acts as a learning partner rather than merely as an employer of graduates. The Bangladesh study highlights that effective TVET-industry linkages require supportive public policies, industry involvement in curricula and training, and stronger workplace learning. The South African study shows that effective partnerships also depend on the capacity of partnership-management teams, communication, the resolution of contradictions between stakeholders, and the ability to expand collaboration adaptively.

At the outcome level, effectiveness is reflected in improved alignment of hard skills, soft skills, and work-related attributes with industry requirements. Work placements/internships and teaching factories broaden students' exposure to workplace procedures, technologies, quality standards, and organisational culture. However, the synthesised evidence also shows that effectiveness remains uneven because the quality of partnerships, facilities, teacher readiness, and organisational capacity vary across educational institutions.

Factors Influencing Effectiveness (RQ2)

Curriculum alignment with industry needs. Curricula reviewed jointly with business and industry enable learning content, competencies, technologies, and assessment to respond more effectively to occupational requirements. Curriculum alignment that is not updated regularly increases the risk of skills mismatch.

Sustainable school-industry partnerships. Effective partnerships are characterised by tangible activities, including curriculum development, the provision of work-placement/internship opportunities, guest instructors, certification, industry projects, and recruitment. A memorandum of understanding without substantive implementation is insufficient to produce effective link and match.

Quality of industry-based learning. Teaching factories, project-based learning, and work-integrated learning strengthen contextual learning experiences and connect school-based learning with authentic workplace situations.

Teacher and instructor competence. Teachers need pedagogical competence as well as an understanding of industry technologies, standards, and workplace culture. Training and industrial placements for teachers are important mechanisms for maintaining up-to-date competencies. Policy support and organisational readiness. Policies, leadership, practical facilities, resources, and organisational readiness for change influence schools' ability to establish and sustain adaptive partnerships.

Effective Forms of Implementation (RQ3)

Based on the synthesis, the forms of implementation most consistently identified across the included studies are: (1) joint curriculum alignment with industry; (2) structured work placements or internships; (3) teaching factories and authentic project-based learning; (4) involvement of industry practitioners as guest teachers or instructors; (5) competency certification aligned with occupational standards; (6) teacher competency development through industry experience; and (7) partnerships oriented towards graduates' transition into employment and recruitment. Effectiveness increases when these elements do not operate independently but are designed as an integrated sequence of collaboration, from curriculum planning to the evaluation of graduate outcomes.

Main Themes/Patterns

Five major themes emerged consistently from the synthesis: curriculum alignment, sustainable school-industry partnerships, industry-based learning, teacher/instructor competence, and policy support and organisational readiness. The overall pattern indicates that effectiveness increases when these five elements are interconnected within a single implementation ecosystem rather than conducted as separate activities.

Discussion

The SLR findings show that link and match effectiveness is multidimensional. From an organisational effectiveness perspective, success cannot be assessed merely by whether a programme has been implemented; it must also reflect the capacity of vocational education to achieve graduate relevance, manage external resources through partnerships, and meet stakeholder needs. Measures of effectiveness should therefore connect inputs and processes—such as partnership quality, teacher competence, curricula, and facilities—with outputs and outcomes including competencies, work readiness, and graduate employment.

Curriculum alignment is an important starting point, but it does not automatically guarantee effectiveness. A curriculum agreed upon with industry must be translated into relevant learning activities, practical training, assessment, equipment, technology, and workplace culture. This is consistent with the view that vocational education should integrate learning experiences at school and in the workplace so that competencies develop contextually (Billett, 2011; Choy, Wärvik, & Lindberg, 2018).

Sustainable partnership emerged as a central theme. The synthesised studies demonstrate a shift in the meaning of link and match from an administrative relationship towards substantive collaboration. Industry needs to be involved throughout the educational cycle: identifying competency needs, aligning curricula, providing workplace experiences, contributing to learning and assessment, and providing feedback on graduate quality. Thus, the quality of relationships and mutual commitment is more consequential than the number of formal partnership documents.

The findings also highlight the importance of schools' internal readiness. External partnerships are unlikely to produce meaningful change when teachers lack industry experience, facilities are inadequate, leadership does not encourage adaptation, or the organisation lacks mechanisms for evaluation and follow-up. Weiner's (2009) concept of organisational readiness helps explain that change requires collective commitment and organisational confidence in the ability to implement change.

Overall, the synthesis shows that effective link and match constitutes an ecosystem rather than a single programme. Effectiveness is created through the interconnection of curriculum alignment, work-based learning, educator competence, organisational support, and industry involvement. An important implication is that link and match evaluation should not merely count partnership activities but should also assess implementation quality and its impact on competencies and graduates' transition into employment.

Consistency, Differences, and Contradictions Across Findings

The findings are relatively consistent regarding the importance of industry involvement, curriculum alignment, and authentic workplace experience. Differences primarily concern the

mechanisms emphasised: some studies identify teaching factories and project-based learning as the main drivers, whereas others place greater emphasis on leadership, partnership, or organisational readiness. No strong substantive contradictions were identified in the reviewed studies regarding the direction of the benefits of link and match; rather, the most notable differences concern the quality and depth of implementation.

Remaining Research Gaps

Remaining research gaps include the lack of standardised indicators for link and match effectiveness, limited longitudinal evidence on graduate employment and career sustainability, and the need for sector-specific studies linking partnership models to industry-specific competency requirements. The two international studies indicate that issues identified in Indonesia overlap with those in other contexts, particularly the need for supportive policies, workplace learning, organisational readiness, communication, and partnership governance. However, international evidence in this corpus remains limited to Bangladesh and South Africa; future research should broaden comparisons with VET systems in other countries.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

Theoretically, the findings support the view of organisational effectiveness as an outcome of the interrelationship among inputs, processes, the external environment, and stakeholder needs. Practically, vocational schools and industry need to shift partnerships from an administrative orientation towards substantive collaboration that can be measured through curricula, learning, assessment, teacher development, workplace experience, certification, and graduates' transition into employment.

CONCLUSION

Based on the 10 verified studies that met the SLR criteria, link and match implementation between vocational education and industry tends to be effective when partnerships are substantively integrated into curricula, learning, workplace experience, assessment, and graduates' transition into employment. Vocational education needs to strengthen a demand-driven approach by involving business and industry from the identification of competency needs through to graduate evaluation. Schools need to ensure that formal cooperation is translated into measurable learning and competency-development activities. Strengthening teacher capacity through training and industry placements, updating facilities and technologies, and periodically evaluating curriculum relevance are important components of the implementation strategy.

This review was limited to publications from 2020 to 2026 and yielded 10 verified studies meeting the final criteria, comprising eight Indonesian studies and two international studies from Bangladesh and South Africa. Although this composition provides an international comparison, the

corpus remains dominated by the Indonesian context and does not represent the diversity of global TVET systems. Variation in research designs, contexts, and effectiveness indicators across the included studies also limits direct quantitative comparison. Future research should expand cross-country searches using terms such as TVET-industry partnership, school-industry collaboration, work-integrated learning, apprenticeship, and employer engagement; develop more standardised indicators of effectiveness; and conduct longitudinal studies of graduate employment and career sustainability.

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