

Work Readiness of Graduates Responding to User Needs for a “Ready to Work” Workforce from University Perspective

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ABSTRACT

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There is a fundamental difference in the concept of "ready to work" between the user perspective and the university, especially for prospective graduates who will enter the workforce. The research aims to provide an assessment of the job-readiness of prospective graduates from a university perspective. Job readiness of prospective graduates is assessed based on four aspects: work competence, personal intelligence, social intelligence, and organizational intelligence. The research uses the Mixing method by conducting interviews, distributing the work readiness scale (WRS) instrument developed by Caballero, and making additional modifications to suit the needs. The instrument was filled out by 64 respondents, 8 men and 56 women, spread over 4 study programs at Faculty of Tarbiyah, IAIN Takengon. Job readiness assessment of prospective graduates shows a good quantitative for all aspects measured. The percentage figures show that, on average, each aspect occupies more than 50%. Specifically, the communication skills section, quantitative assessment, and interviews reveal conditions that require special attention in communicating effectively, both oral and written communication. All aspects are assessed to represent the university's perspective in preparing its graduates to have all competencies they should have when entering the work environment. Some shortcomings are not denied. Universities should improve themselves to produce high-quality graduates to align themselves with user/employers needs.

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ABSTRAK

Kata Kunci:

*Kebutuhan Pengguna;
Kesiapan Kerja;
Manajemen Perguruan
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Terdapat perbedaan yang mendasar konsep “siap kerja” antara perspektif pengguna dengan universitas, terutama untuk calon lulusan yang akan memasuki dunia kerja. Penelitian bertujuan memberikan penilaian kesiapan kerja calon lulusan dalam perspektif universitas. Kesiapan kerja calon lulusan, dinilai berdasarkan 4 aspek yaitu: kompetensi kerja, kecerdasan personal, kecerdasan sosial dan kecerdasan organisasi. Penelitian menggunakan Mixing method dengan melakukan wawancara dan mendistribusikan instrumen work readiness scale (WRS) yang dikembangkan oleh Caballero, dan dilakukan sedikit modifikasi agar sesuai dengan kebutuhan. Instrumen diisi oleh 64 orang responden, 8 orang laki-laki dan 56 orang perempuan, tersebar pada 4 prodi di Fakultas Tarbiyah IAIN Takengon. Penilaian kesiapan kerja calon lulusan menunjukkan kuantitatif yang baik dari semua aspek yang diukur, angka persentase menunjukkan rata-rata setiap aspek menempati angka 50% lebih untuk setiap item. Khusus bagian kemampuan komunikasi, penilaian secara kuantitatif dan wawancara, menampakan kondisi yang membutuhkan perhatian khusus dalam berkomunikasi dengan efektif, baik itu komunikasi lisan maupun secara tertulis. Semua aspek yang dinilai mewakili perspektif uiversitas dalam menyiapkan lulusan mereka mengantongi semua kompetensi yang patut mereka miliki ketika memasuki lingkungan kerja. Beberapa kekurangan tidak dipungkiri, universitas patut berbenah diri untuk menghasilkan lulusan berkualitas untuk dapat menselaraskan diri dengan kebutuhan pengguna.

INTRODUCTION

The challenges to the industrial world and the need for a competent workforce impact campus policies to create work-ready graduates (Krstić et al., 2020). College graduates are considered ready to work if they have personal competencies in the form of basic skills, knowledge, attitudes, and resilience in the work environment (Judson et al., 2008; Yorke, 2000).

The fundamental aspects that become the standard for university graduates in industrial needs include personal characteristics, organizational intelligence, work competence, and social intelligence (Fayolle & Redford, 2014; Pino-Mejías & Luque-Calvo, 2021; Rahmah & Fadhli, 2021). In this case, universities act as facilitators for fulfilling these competencies, both hard skills and soft skills, especially those related to technological competencies (Levano-Francia et al., 2019; Mouwen, 2000).

The survey results show that 96% of universities feel confident that they have prepared their prospective graduates to be competent and successful in the work world (Bain & Zundans-Fraser, 2017; De Leo, 2012). This is based on the general view that academic achievement or technical competence is the main criteria as a consideration in the

recruitment of prospective workers (Bock et al., 2014). These two aspects are the initial indicators in selecting new job candidates according to industry needs.

Contrary to the university's confidence, users/employers stated that only 11% of graduates have the skills they need, especially critical thinking skills and written and oral communication (Sartika, 2019). Equally important, graduates are expected not only to be able to apply the formulas/theory they learn at university but also to be skilled in collaborative thinking and trained in problem-solving cases (Egel & Fry, 2017). Users need a workforce that is ready to use according to their needs. Users want a workforce with the skills needed to succeed in the work environment (Bashori et al., 2020; Rahmah & Prasetyo, 2022).

The world of work is so dynamic that an academic degree is not a guarantee of getting a job (Tomlinson, 2008). Meanwhile, the education world tends to be static, and every graduate is expected to be able to work across sectors, not just fixated on one scientific field. Graduates are expected when they leave the education program, they are already in a ready-to-work mode with demonstrable employability. The world of work wants graduates who are willing and have the ability to make a direct contribution to the workplace (Prasetyo & Sukatin, 2020). Graduates who can demonstrate not only technical knowledge but also relevant work skills and competencies (Harvey, 2000; Manurung et al., 2018).

An initial survey related to job readiness is conducted on 25 alumni respondents and prospective graduates at one of the Islamic state campuses in Aceh Tengah province. It shows that 56% of respondents on the aspects of their critical thinking and communication skills are low, even though these two aspects are the most important elements that influence the job readiness of prospective graduates. Although these prospective graduates generally have a good GPA, academic and technical abilities are not enough to predict a person's readiness to survive and succeed in the world of work.

Based on this phenomenon, it is necessary to conduct special research on the readiness of prospective graduates to face the world of work and the institute's perspective regarding the prospective graduate's readiness based on the quantitative data that has been found. The job readiness of prospective graduates is measured by measuring their readiness level in four aspects: personal character, organizational intelligence, work competence, and social intelligence. This information is expected to be initial data for universities to map what competencies have not been skilled by prospective graduates, to make improvements so that they can take us one step further toward "ready-to-work graduates".

METHODS

Data on prospective college graduates' job readiness is measured using a questionnaire distributed to students. The research respondents are narrowed down to students from the Faculty of Tarbiyah. Questionnaires are distributed to 4 study programs: Madrasah Ibtidayah (Islamic Elementary School) Teacher Education, Islamic Early Childhood Education, Education Management, and Islamic Education (PGMI, PIAUD, MPI, PAI) at the Takengon Islamic State Institute of Aceh Province. Respondents who fill out the questionnaire are 64 people and are randomly distributed in 4 study programs at Faculty of Tarbiyah. The selection of respondents is based on special considerations after passing two years in college. The reason is that they have started to prepare themselves to have the competencies required to face the world of work because they have finished at least more than 80 credits in lectures. Respondents who took part in filling out the research instrument consisted of 8 male respondents and 56 female respondents. The questionnaire used is a work readiness scale (WRS) instrument developed by Caballero et al., which is then modified according to the data needed in the study. The total number of questions is 27 items. Questionnaires are distributed online via Google forms to even semester students for the 2021/2022 academic year, students in semesters 4, 6, and 8.

The research data are analyzed using the percentage formula, calculating each question item's percentage on each indicator. The percentage calculation based on the responses given by students will show the value of indicators and variables of work readiness as the basis for drawing conclusions. To obtain in-depth research data, the authors also conduct interviews with 75% of the total respondents randomly to analyze the special social aspects of communication skills. It is considered that communication skill is a significant aspect that prospective new workers must have. It is a soft skill that is very much needed in the world of work, both orally and in writing.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Working Readiness

The tendency of academic achievement score, known as the cumulative achievement index (GPA), and technical competencies skilled by graduates are the main indicators and become users' focus in selecting new workforce candidates. This applies almost the same to every agency or company in Indonesia and various other places (Roth & Bobko, 2000; Sayidah et al., 2019). This conceptualization gradually began to shift along with the dynamics in the world of work. Technical and academic ability alone cannot guarantee and predict the future career success of the workforce concerned (Shaturaev, 2021).

Currently, users and organizations require workers who have generic skills and attributes in all jobs. In particular, users prefer new job candidates with various skills and attributes "ready-to-use" concept to succeed and survive in a highly dynamic work environment (Caballero & Walker, 2010).

Research results conducted by Turnbull and Hart find that new workers are weak in general knowledge, writing, critical thinking, and the ability to adapt to various situations (Elliott & Turnbull, 2004; Harriet, 2008). Demir's research also measures employer satisfaction with new employees (Demir, 2020). He find that creativity and talent are the two most important but also the least important things for new workers to possess. But it is also found that the new workers are more enthusiastic about enthusiasm, independence, and critical thinking skills. They are more flexible and able to adapt well. In line with Hart's findings, problem-solving, oral communication, and interpersonal skills are considered lacking.

Various current studies have not provided a clear conceptual definition of job readiness for prospective graduates or new workers. Employers or users have different concepts regarding the specific skills and competencies they want from these workers. They value the unequal skills of the workforce. The use of the term "generic skills" is the same as "basic skills" and "work skills," which refer to various competencies. These qualities are considered significant in a job. The research findings are presented based on four aspects measured in the work readiness instrument, including 1) personal character, 2) organizational intelligence, 3) work competence, and 4) social intelligence. Each of these aspects will be discussed separately in the 4 sub-sections of the job-readiness of prospective graduates from a university perspective.

1) *Personal character*

This aspect discusses the personal character by prospective graduates. Four indicators are measured in assessing the personal character of the respondent: personal skills, self-direction, self-understanding, and the respondent's ability to adapt to the work environment. The personal character of respondents shows a percentage above 50% of each measured indicator. Each indicator is described in several questions that provide a more detailed picture of the personal character of each individual. The measurement results are described in table 1 as follows:

Table 1. Percentage of personal characteristics of prospective graduates

Indicator	Item	%
Personal skills	Starting work on assignments is easy for me	56.6
	Able to survive in challenging conditions	55.6
	Abstract ideas are easy to understand	53.7
Self-direction	I have a goal and believe in success to achieve it	61.9
Self understanding	I am not easily offended	56.6
	If other people intentionally change what I have made, I don't get angry easily	55.3
	Doing many things at once makes me feel stressed	50.9
Adaptability	I am quite easy at building relationships and trust with others	51.6
	Change is what I love	58.1
	New thing is something I like to learn	66.2

The highest percentage lies in adaptability, especially in learning new things, which is the thing most prospective graduates agree with regarding their personal character. Then, it is followed by changes to new things. Meanwhile, self-direction is the second highest percentage of prospective graduates' readiness to enter the workforce. They have a 61.9% confidence that they will succeed in the goals they set in their post-graduation plans.

2) *Organizational intelligence*

Organizational intelligence is measured by providing some questions related to professionalism, ethical judgment, social responsibility, and lifelong learning. The aspect of ethical assessment has the highest percentage level, which is 60.3%. Meanwhile, the measurement of other aspects is overall quite good, with percentage figures showing above 50% for work readiness, especially organizational intelligence for prospective graduates. Detailed data related to organizational intelligence are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Percentage of organizational intelligence of prospective graduates

Indicator	Item	%
Professionalism	I am responsible for every decision and action that I have made	57.5
	I cannot wait to get started and join a project	54.7
Ethical assessment	Organizational values and beliefs are part of the culture within the organization.	60.3
Social responsibility	I enjoy learning as much as I can about the organization of the workplace	58.8
Lifelong learning	Feedback is an opportunity to learn better	58.4

3) *Job competence*

Four aspects of prospective graduates' work competence are measured, including organizational ability, critical thinking, problem-solving, and creativity. Of all the items submitted to the respondents, the highest percentage lies in the ability to think critically, where 61.9% of them think that being the best in a field is the most important concerning work competence. The second percentage is occupied by the technical ability possessed in a job with a value of 60.6%, which is considered the most important thing in work competencies that graduates must have. Table 3 shows the results of detailed measurements related to graduate work competencies.

Table 3. Percentage of job competencies of prospective graduates

Indicator	Item	%
Organizational ability	I believe in the technical ability I have at work	60.6
	I am easy to calm down even under pressure at work	55
	My life partner is mature enough to face life's challenges	58.4
Think critically	I am able to apply my technical knowledge in my work	58.4
	It is important to strive to be the best in a field	61.9

Solution to problem	I have the critical ability to analyze complex problems	54.4
Creativity	Relationship/networking tend to come to me for new ideas	53.8

4) *Social intelligence*

Social intelligence is an indicator in Cabellero's design instrument in measuring the job readiness of prospective graduates. To know the social intelligence of the respondents quantitatively, a question item was compiled involving four indicators: teamwork, social or interpersonal skills, adaptability, and communication skills. The results of the measurement of social intelligence show that the percentage number is above 50% but does not exceed 60% of each question item asked. The results of detailed measurements related to social intelligence from respondents are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Percentage of social intelligence of prospective graduates

Indicator	Item	
Teamwork	Working together in a team is fun	59.7
Interpersonal or social skills	I find it easy to build relationship/networking with other people	56.6
	I am open to a friendship	53.8
Adaptability	I am able to adapt to any changing situation	56.3
Communication skills	I have a lot of ideas that I want to communicate at work	54.6

Organizational intelligence, personal character, work competence, and social intelligence are the benchmarks that prospective graduates must have when they graduate from university. These 4 main things become important when they enter the world of work. Considering the world of work requires a workforce that is ready to use in terms of academic and technical abilities but also required to be proficient in terms of personal and social skill, and also have the ability to work in an organization.

User's views on the readiness of these prospective graduates tend to differ from the views of universities. To adapt to the user's needs, the researchers measure the work readiness of prospective graduates using a work readiness scale from Cabellero. It is possible to harmonize the results between the user's wishes and the university's readiness to prepare their prospective graduates.

Measurement of job readiness of prospective graduates shows a different percentage of each aspect measured. However, the difference does not appear so striking in the 4 aspects assessed. These differences are caused by various underlying factors, including differences in the personal resources of the individual concerned, in the form of differences in emotional intelligence, differences in the sense of connection, and differences in the psychological capital of each individual.

Job competence

Prospective graduates get work competence from all the knowledge and technical knowledge they learn in college. Each course credit that they have saved for 8 semesters in each study program gives them the readiness to solve problems when faced with a problem and the ability to think critically about everything and workload assignments, which they will face when they become a worker.

The measurement of the work competence of these prospective graduates shows good results. The results of academic achievement through the achievement index value align with the results of measuring work competencies through a circulated job readiness questionnaire.

The work competence of prospective graduates from Faculty of Tarbiyah is the accumulation of all the credits they have saved during the education period. At the end of their education, all this knowledge will become their technical capital in entering the world of work. So, work competence is a mandatory skill that they must have properly according to their respective scientific fields, as a provision for them to succeed in their careers. Work competence is closely related to academic assessment, where the quantitative value in the form of GPA is one of the benchmarks in measuring work competence. The better the GPA score by a prospective graduate will be directly proportional to their work competence in the world of work. Although this is not absolute, the assessment on prospective graduates who have completed PPL in various schools shows such a tendency.

Personal and Social Intelligence

Prospective graduates develop social and personal intelligence during the learning process in the classroom. They learn all the processes, tasks, and abstract ideas to build their character. The pressure of heavy lectures and doing hard assignments from the lecturers will help them to survive the pressure when faced with the world of work.

Social intelligence students develop it through group discussion activities. They are taught how to manage emotions when faced with situations where the ideas they convey will not always get a positive response from other group members. The ease of each individual to be open to different ideas, and learn to adapt to all different conditions with different groups, makes it very easy for these prospective graduates to develop their social competencies.

For communication skills, it is found different facts. The measurement results show a figure of 54.6%, and candidates who passed claimed to be able to express themselves by issuing ideas in work. However, the results of interviews with 75% of respondents show the opposite condition.

The interviewer asks for their opinion on a matter or a condition that requires ideas to get the job done. They are required to convey their ideas effectively orally so that listeners easily understand them. That is, only 25% of the total respondents are considered able to communicate orally. The other 75% are still very chaotic and floating when communicating verbally.

Meanwhile, when the interviewer asked them to write down the idea on a paper, there was an increase in the number of respondents, increasing to 45% being considered able to communicate in writing, and the other 55% still needing to learn better, how to put their ideas into writing that can be understood well by the reader.

This condition is considered quite troubling because the ability to communicate both orally and in writing is essential for these recruits. With this, they will be easier to accept in their work environment, both by superiors and colleagues. This ability will help them more easily adapt and socialize at work. Acceptance of someone in their new work environment is also one of the factors that can make someone feel comfortable, accepted, and survive in a stressful world of work.

Considering that the main job prospect of prospective graduates from Faculty of Tarbiyah is to become an educator in a school institution, communication skill is a fundamental thing they must have. By being able to communicate orally, it will be easier for their students to obtain the knowledge being taught. Even though the teacher is a facilitator, they still need good skills in communicating their ideas so that students easily understand them.

In addition, it is also easy for educators to develop knowledge through their writings, whether in the form of textbooks or journals from the classroom action research they have conducted. All of which require written communication skills to be easily understood by readers.

Organizational Intelligence

Especially for organizational intelligence, the university does not provide special training or special courses in the curriculum to build this intelligence for students. The existence of various intra-campus organizations is possible to build organizational intelligence for each student. This is indicated by a percentage value above 50% based on an assessment of work readiness, although not all students are actively involved.

On the other hand, the discussion system lecture method, which is also often used in certain courses, also allows students to have organizational intelligence in the smallest scope. With this system, students are guided to build the ability to provide information through a paper, analyze the problems found, and retrieve the correct information during the discussion process. This is in line with the concept put forward by M. Feldman & J March (1991), organizational intelligence is the ability to provide, analyze and retrieve the correct information at the right time.

So, logically, organizational intelligence is a process that provides strategic information for organizations, considering that information management has a considerable impact on the life cycle of an organization. According to Achard et al. (1991), intelligence is the ability to synthesize and create new knowledge. Organizational intelligence is an analytical ability that guides action towards a specified goal.

Research Results Novelty

There have been a lot of studies conducted by previous researchers related to the job readiness of prospective graduates. Sukatin and Sartika's research describes job readiness from the point of view of job seekers, job readiness from the point of view of users or employers, as well as job readiness from the concept of universities as the main institution providing prospective new workers. Various research results provide different concepts, such as research by Rothwell and Bashori. Their research results show that higher education policies aimed at human resources, competency improvement, entrepreneurship, and reward and punishment systems are required to be competitive. Examples of job readiness in the concept of an employer are very different from one institution to another. Each institution provides a different definition, depending on the specific skills or general skills they need for their institution.

The university, as the main provider of prospective workers, also has different concepts related to job readiness. Not only between universities but between universities and employers also have different ideas of job readiness. In this study, the researchers measure the job readiness of prospective graduates from Faculty of Tarbiyah. The concept of "ready to work" in the university's definition of producing prospective graduates who meet the specifications expected by users in general. The research findings are supported by Haris' research and provide results, after Covid-19, universities face unpredictable challenges that demand adaptive, innovative, and technology-based strategies.

From a university perspective, prospective graduates are considered ready to enter the world of work if they have some special skills or competencies before completing their education at a certain level. For this reason, measurements are made on 4 aspects representing some of the abilities that various users expect (social intelligence, work competence, organizational intelligence, and personal character). With the fulfillment of these 4 aspects, it is considered following the concept of "ready to work," which universities have pursued in preparing their prospective graduates so far.

The research findings show that prospective graduates from the Faculty of Tarbiyah, IAIN Takengon, have been quite good at measuring 4 aspects of work readiness. However, the prospective graduates from Faculty of Tarbiyah are categorized as having minimum on communication skills, both orally and in writing. They require special attention from the faculty in particular. Considering the main capital of prospective tarbiyah graduates is communication skills. The main job opportunities for tarbiyah graduates are to become educators or education staff in school institutions. Educators need communication skills as the main skill in transferring their knowledge to students. The following is explained in the form of Table 5 about the novelty of this research.

Table 5. Employment readiness of graduates responding to user needs from a university perspective

Ready to work concept by user/employers	Ready to work concept by university	Measured aspect	Research findings
Diverse Every user does not value the same skills as every prospective job seeker. Their needs are different (can be personality, values, character, technical skills, oral and written communication skills, critical thinking skills, teamwork and so on)	Academic ability (GPA), technical skills, organizational capability, personality and expertise in their respective scientific fields	Personal intelligence, social intelligence, work competence, organizational intelligence	In general, prospective graduates from Faculty of Tarbiyah have 4 aspects which are measured in the moderate/good category with a percentage of 50-60% Specific findings: prospective graduates are very weak in communication skills (oral and written)

CONCLUSION

The results of this study show good quantitative figures from all aspects of job readiness of prospective graduates. Especially for communication skills, respondents are still very minimal in communicating effectively both verbally and in writing. When respondents are asked to convey their ideas orally, only 25% of the total respondents are considered able to communicate effectively. The other 75% are considered a low category in conveying ideas. There is an increase percentage when they are asked to write down their idea on a paper; 45% are considered able to communicate in writing, and another 55% still need to learn how to put their ideas into writing that the reader can understand well.

So, in the university's perspective, measuring the work readiness of prospective graduates in the excellent category indicates that the university is trying to prepare its prospective graduates as well as possible. With all the knowledge, academic and technical skills, and other work competencies provided by universities are needed by students to succeed in the world of work. Some abilities that are not yet skilled require special attention and become homework for universities to improve themselves to be better.

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