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Bridging the Gap: Enhancing the Effectiveness of Vocational Internships at SMK Muhammadiyah 2 Bandar Lampung

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Abstract: This study evaluates the Practical Work Experience Program (Prakerin) at SMK Muhammadiyah 2 Bandar Lampung using the CIPP (Context, Input, Process, Product) model. Vocational education in Indonesia faces challenges in preparing students for the competitive job market amidst technological advancements and global integration. The Prakerin program, aimed at enhancing vocational skills through internships, is critical in bridging this gap. This qualitative research explores the program's implementation and effectiveness through interviews, documentation analysis, and direct observation. Findings reveal strengths in regulatory compliance and program management, yet highlight gaps in industry alignment, preparation duration, and follow-up processes. Recommendations include strengthening industry collaboration, improving preparation strategies, enhancing monitoring systems, integrating follow-up presentations, expanding resources, and promoting program benefits. These insights are crucial for refining the Prakerin program to better meet industry needs and improve the employability of SMK graduates.

Keywords: Vocational education, Prakerin program, CIPP model, internship evaluation

INTRODUCTION

Evaluation is a research aimed at collecting, analyzing, and presenting useful information about an evaluation object, assessing, and comparing it with evaluation indicators to make decisions (Wirawan, 2011:7). Program evaluation is a systematic process to obtain, discover, and determine information about the planning, value, objectives, benefits, effectiveness, and suitability of a program with established criteria and goals (Stufflebeam & Shinkfield, 2007).

In 2003, the Indonesian government approved the ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA) and in 2020 committed to the global free market. This creates tight labor competition and technological diversity demanding skilled, innovative, and responsive workforce (Purwadi & Muljoatmodjo, 2000). One government policy to address this challenge is the establishment of Vocational High Schools (SMK), focusing on developing students' skills for specific jobs.

Vocational education is mandated by Government Regulation No. 29 of 1990, which emphasizes that vocational education at the secondary level aims to develop students' abilities for specific types of jobs (Kemendikbud, 1990). This goal is for SMK graduates to have relevant skills in their field and be able to compete in the job market. Collaboration between schools and industries is important because schools cannot provide all the necessary equipment, and this collaboration helps channel graduates into industries (Widoyoko, 2011).

Practical Work Experience Program (Prakerin) is a mandatory program for SMK students involving internships in relevant businesses or industries. The purpose of Prakerin, in accordance with Minister of Education and Culture Regulation No. 323/U/1997 Article 2, is to improve the quality and relevance of vocational education, produce graduates with knowledge, skills, and work ethics that are suitable, and recognize work experience as part of the education process (Kemendikbud, 1997).

However, many industries complain about the low relevance of SMK graduates' skills to job requirements, resulting in low absorption of SMK graduates into the workforce (Sukmawati & Setyowati, 2017). The Central Statistics Agency (BPS) reported that in 2023, the unemployment rate for SMK graduates was 9.60%, higher than 7.69% for general high school graduates (BPS, 2023).

To address this issue, innovative breakthroughs such as creating quality Prakerin programs are needed. However, challenges remain, including varying levels of SMK readiness, lack of standardized job structures in industries, inadequate funding for human resource development in industries, and a lack of awareness of the benefits of Prakerin for industries (Putri & Kurniawan, 2019).

Initial research on May 29, 2023, at SMK Muhammadiyah 2 Bandar Lampung showed that the Computer and Network Engineering (TKJ) department had the highest number of applicants but a low employment absorption rate (20%-40% from 2019-2022). This indicates the need for Prakerin program evaluation to identify and address its weaknesses. Such evaluation is crucial to improving the program and ensuring that it meets its goals (Hadi & Nugroho, 2020).

METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with descriptive methods to provide an in-depth overview of the Prakerin program evaluation at SMK Muhammadiyah 2 Bandar Lampung. The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows researchers to explore information from various perspectives and understand the social context and dynamics that occur in program implementation. Descriptive methods are used to present data as it is without manipulation, providing an objective overview of the real conditions in the field.

Research Design. The research design used is the CIPP (Context, Input, Process, Product) model developed by Stufflebeam (2003). The CIPP model provides a comprehensive framework for evaluating educational programs, allowing researchers to evaluate various aspects from context, input, process, to product of the Prakerin program. Context evaluation aims to identify the underlying needs and issues of program implementation, input evaluation assesses the resources and strategies used, process evaluation examines program implementation, and product evaluation assesses the outcomes and impacts of the program.

Location and Research Participants. This research was conducted at SMK Muhammadiyah 2 Bandar Lampung, which has a Computer and Network Engineering (TKJ) program. Research participants include the school principal, TKJ program coordinator, productive teachers, mentoring teachers, and TKJ class XII students. Participant selection is based on their direct involvement in the Prakerin program, expected to provide relevant and in-depth information about program implementation and evaluation.

Data Collection. Data was collected through three main techniques: in-depth interviews, documentation, and direct observation. In-depth interviews were conducted with the school principal, TKJ program coordinator, productive teachers, mentoring teachers, and TKJ class XII students to gain their perspectives and experiences regarding the Prakerin program. Documentation includes analysis of official school documents, Prakerin activity reports, and graduate employment absorption data. Direct observation was conducted to observe the Prakerin implementation process in industries, including interactions between students and mentors in the workplace.

Data Validity. To ensure data validity, this research uses source triangulation techniques. Source triangulation involves comparing and confirming data from various sources of information to ensure the accuracy and reliability of findings (Patton, 1999). This technique helps identify the consistency of information obtained from interviews, documentation, and observation, as well as reduce bias and subjectivity in research.

Data Analysis. The collected data was analyzed using thematic analysis techniques. The thematic analysis process includes data coding, identification of main themes, and interpretation of findings. Data coding was done by labeling relevant data sections related to the research objectives. Identification of main themes was done by grouping similar codes into broader themes. Interpretation of findings was done by connecting the themes found with relevant theories and literature, as well as their implications for improving the Prakerin program at SMK Muhammadiyah 2 Bandar Lampung.

By using the CIPP model and thematic analysis technique, this research is expected to provide a comprehensive overview of the strengths and weaknesses of the Prakerin

program at SMK Muhammadiyah 2 Bandar Lampung. The results of this research are expected to be used as a basis for improvement and development of the Prakerin program in the future, making it more relevant to industry needs and able to improve the employment absorption of SMK graduates.

RESULT & DISCUSSION

Context Stage: At the context stage, components including legal basis, background, school vision and mission, program objectives, cooperation agreements (MoU), and TKJ competency profiles are very good and in accordance with guidelines based on various regulations and laws. However, better alignment with local industry requirements is needed. Input Stage: The school has prepared comprehensive implementation strategies, including committees, targets, employment agreements, guidelines, student placement procedures, work program schedules, facilities, infrastructure, budget management, and human resources. The facilities are adequate, with sufficient laboratories and equipment. However, there are limitations in the duration of preparation sessions, and students bear double costs (tuition fees and Prakerin fees), which should be addressed. Process Stage: The process has been implemented quite well, with internships lasting for 3 months, weekly supervision visits, and online monitoring. This is in line with SMK guidelines, but continuous improvement in monitoring is needed. Product Stage: There is no follow-up presentation after the completion of the internship report due to time constraints and a busy school schedule. It is recommended to hold presentation sessions to assess the knowledge and skills acquired by students and train them in presenting their work results.

CONCLUTIONS

The evaluation of the Prakerin program using the CIPP model has provided valuable insights into the implementation and effectiveness of the program at SMK Muhammadiyah 2 Bandar Lampung. From this evaluation, several important findings have been identified, highlighting both the successes and challenges faced by the program in achieving its goals. Firstly, the school's compliance with legal foundations and school vision and mission has proven to be strong, demonstrating a clear commitment to implementing education programs in line with established standards. However, although this foundation has been well established, there are still gaps that need to be addressed in aligning the program with local industry needs.

Furthermore, in terms of program preparation and management, SMK Muhammadiyah 2 Bandar Lampung has shown a strong commitment to ensuring the smooth implementation of Prakerin. Comprehensive implementation strategies have been well prepared, covering various aspects from employment agreements to budget management and human resources. However, some constraints such as limited preparation duration and double costs borne by students indicate potential improvements in more effective and inclusive program management.

In the implementation process of Prakerin, the school has successfully run the program quite well in accordance with the established guidelines. Regular supervision

and monitoring during the internship provide assurance that students gain valuable and beneficial experiences in the industry. However, there is room for improvement in strengthening the monitoring system to ensure that each student receives appropriate support and that the learning process proceeds optimally.

On the other hand, the evaluation also highlights some shortcomings in the product stage, especially regarding the lack of follow-up presentation sessions after the internship. Opportunities for students to present their work results can be an important step in evaluating the understanding and skills acquired during the Prakerin program. Therefore, it is recommended to integrate presentation sessions into the program regularly to increase student engagement and ensure that the results are understood and appreciated.

Thus, this evaluation has provided a deeper understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the Prakerin program at SMK Muhammadiyah 2 Bandar Lampung. These findings can serve as a basis for the school and relevant stakeholders to make necessary improvements to enhance the quality and relevance of the program in the future. With appropriate adjustments and strong commitment, the Prakerin program can become an effective instrument in preparing students for entering the workforce and meeting industry demands more effectively.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, several recommendations are proposed to enhance the Prakerin program at SMK Muhammadiyah 2 Bandar Lampung:

1. **Strengthen Industry Alignment**: Conduct regular needs assessments with local industries to ensure the Prakerin program aligns with the evolving demands of the job market. Establish formal advisory boards with industry representatives to provide ongoing feedback and guidance on curriculum and program improvements.
2. **Improve Program Preparation**: Extend the preparation period for students before they embark on their internships, ensuring they are adequately equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge. Consider financial support mechanisms to alleviate the double costs incurred by students (tuition fees and Prakerin costs), possibly through scholarships, subsidies, or industry partnerships.
3. **Enhance Monitoring and Supervision**: Develop a more robust monitoring system that includes frequent and detailed check-ins with both students and industry supervisors during the internship period. Train teachers and supervisors in effective monitoring techniques and provide them with the tools needed to support students more effectively.
4. **Integrate Follow-up Presentations**: Implement mandatory follow-up presentation sessions where students can present their internship experiences and learning outcomes. This can help in assessing their understanding and skills while also fostering communication and presentation skills. Use these sessions as a platform for feedback from peers, teachers, and industry partners to further refine the program.
5. **Increase Industry Collaboration**: Strengthen partnerships with a wider range of industries to diversify the internship opportunities available to students, ensuring

a match with their career aspirations and field of study. Encourage industries to take an active role in co-designing the internship programs and providing real-world projects for students.

6. **Expand Resources and Infrastructure**: Invest in better facilities and up-to-date equipment to simulate real industry environments within the school, providing students with hands-on experience before their internships. Secure additional funding sources for the program, possibly through grants, partnerships, or government initiatives to support ongoing development and resource enhancement.
7. **Promote Awareness of Prakerin Benefits**: Conduct awareness campaigns to educate both students and industries about the benefits of the Prakerin program. Highlight success stories and case studies to illustrate the value of vocational internships. Facilitate regular industry-school engagement events to build stronger relationships and mutual understanding of expectations and benefits.

By implementing these recommendations, SMK Muhammadiyah 2 Bandar Lampung can significantly improve the effectiveness and relevance of the Prakerin program, thereby better preparing students for successful careers in their chosen fields and enhancing their employability in the competitive job market.

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