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IMPLEMENTATION OF WORK-INTEGRATED LEARNING TO IMPROVE VOCATIONAL SCHOOL STUDENTS' WORK READINESS

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Abstrak: *Kesiapan kerja merupakan kompetensi yang harus dimiliki oleh siswa Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan (SMK). Dalam rangka menciptakan tenaga kerja yang berkualitas dan siap kerja, Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan membekali para siswanya dengan seperangkat keterampilan kerja. Namun, faktanya belum semua siswa SMK setelah lulus memiliki keterampilan yang memadai untuk langsung terjun ke dunia kerja sehingga belum memiliki kesiapan kerja seperti harapan dari Dunia Usaha / Industri. Hal tersebut dikarenakan pembelajaran serta praktik pembelajaran siswa SMK kurang relevan dengan Dunia Usaha / Industri dan kurang dioptimalkannya pemanfaatan Unit Produksi yang ada di SMK untuk praktik pembelajaran. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk: (1) mengetahui tingkat kesiapan kerja siswa SMK; (2) mengidentifikasi upaya-upaya guru untuk meningkatkan kesiapan kerja siswa, serta (3) mengetahui dampak implementasi Work-Integrated Learning terhadap peningkatan kesiapan kerja siswa SMK. Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian kajian literatur berbasis metode kualitatif deskriptif. Berdasarkan data beberapa artikel jurnal yang dianalisis, dapat disimpulkan bahwa implementasi Work-Integrated Learning dapat meningkatkan kesiapan kerja siswa SMK.*
Kata Kunci: Kesiapan Kerja, Work-Integrated Learning, SMK

Abstract: Job readiness is a competency that must be possessed by Vocational High School (SMK) students. In order to create a qualified and work-ready workforce, Vocational High Schools equip their students with a set of work skills. However, the fact is that not all vocational students after graduation have sufficient skills to immediately enter the world of work, so they do not yet have the job readiness as expected from the business/industry world. This is because the learning and learning practices of SMK students are less relevant to the business/industry world and the utilization of Production Units in SMK is less optimized for learning practices. This study aims to: (1) determine the level of work readiness of SMK students; (2) identify teachers' efforts to improve student work readiness, and (3) determine the impact of the implementation of Work-Integrated Learning on increasing work readiness of SMK students. This research is a literature review based on descriptive qualitative methods. Based on the data from several journal articles analyzed, it can be concluded that the implementation of Work-Integrated Learning can improve the work readiness of SMK students.
Keywords: Job Readiness, Work-Integrated Learning, SMK

Introduction

According to Agusta (2015: 135) work readiness is a person's capacity to improve work ability related to one's skills and attitudes. Meanwhile, according to Firdaus (2012: 397) student work readiness is a set of skills and attitudes needed to complete the job well. Based on research conducted by Ihsan (2018: 113) there are seven factors that influence the work readiness of vocational students, these factors include: ability, self-image, supporting

factors, academics, innate factors, behavior, and aspirations. Ability is the most powerful factor influencing work readiness. This factor consists of skills, practical experience, and creativity. Skills, practical experience, and student creativity can be improved through practical learning. Therefore the right strategy to use is Work-Integrated Learning. Work-Integrated Learning is an effective pedagogical method for equipping students with skills relevant to the work industry (Khampirat, Pop, and Bandaranaike, 2019: 129).

In the world of work, Vocational High Schools are the biggest contributors to human resources to become potential workers. On the other hand, based on empirical facts, vocational graduates are still the biggest contributor to the unemployment rate (Nida, Wasliman, and Dianawati, 2023: 248). According to Karanganyar BPS data, the total open unemployment rate (TPT) in 2022 is 5.70%, although it tends to decrease from the previous year of 5.89%. In fact, SMK students have been provided with skills at school related to the world of work and also carry out internships, but the level of trust in the Business/Industry World for SMK students is still low (Khadifa, Indriayu, and Sudarno, 2018: 4). The low level of trust in the Business/Industry World is the result of a competency gap between SMK graduates and the competencies needed by the Business/Industry World and the irrelevance of the use of practical infrastructure technology in schools with technological advances in the business world (Jabbar, 2020: 30). Competency gaps and the use of technology result in low hard skills and soft skills possessed by SMK students.

The reality on the ground is that the learning pattern in SMK is not yet relevant to the needs of the business/industry world, there is still a tendency for the transfer of knowledge to cause cognitive load on students. Pujiriyanto's preliminary study (2013, 13-14) shows that there is a dominance of theory over practice, namely 57% theory and 43% practice. To obtain work readiness, it is not suitable to be taught theoretically in the nuances of teaching business theory (know-what and know-why) because it is only limited to the cognitive aspect, but must emphasize real learning experiences, not separating theory and practice but in unity as a cycle that is emphasized by Boyyet & Jimmie (1998:89) as (the wheel of learning).

The provision of knowledge and skills according to fields that are not yet relevant causes many students to be unemployed after graduation, even though SMK graduates should be immediately ready to work. In addition, the SMK Production Unit as a means of student training practice is in fact underutilized optimally for learning. Production Units that are not yet relevant to market demands also result in students' skills not being as expected by the Business/Industry World. So, there is still a gap between student competencies and the competencies needed by the business/industry world and the not yet optimal utilization of production units for students' practice needs, this is a factor causing the low work readiness of SMK students to enter the world of work.

According to Law No. 20 of 2003 that Vocational High Schools (SMK) aim to improve students' abilities so that they can develop according to science and technology and prepare students to enter the workforce professionally. Work-Integrated Learning is very important to prepare students' job readiness in the job market that requires new graduates and professional skills. The future world of work requires graduate professionals who can be productive in globally distributed teams and negotiate solutions using sophisticated interpersonal and technical skills (Brewer, Lewis, and Ferns, 2022: 17).

Work-Integrated Learning is an integrated learning strategy in the form of implementing learning for students related to world of work practices outside of academic programs (Arney, 2022: 154). Work-Integrated Learning is quality experiential learning in a workplace environment that includes school partnerships with the business world (CEWIL Canada. (a.n.d.) : 2021).

Work-Integrated Learning is an effective pedagogical method for equipping students with industry-relevant skills. The application of Work-Integrated Learning in vocational schools certainly provides benefits for students not only to acquire knowledge and skills but also to form ideas, perspectives and practical experience (Babacan & Babacan, 2015: 173). Forms of activities in schools that can be a solution to the low work readiness of SMK students are Teaching Factory, management of good apprenticeships, apprenticeships / OJT, management of industrial visits, workforce recruitment, holding of industrial classes and counseling from stakeholders regarding employment (Jabbar, 2020: 29). In this study, focusing on the use of Teaching Factory-based Production Units. Sudiyanto (2011: 5) says that in Teaching Factory is a production activity or service as part of the learning process in the school environment. For this reason, schools must have factories, workshops or production units.

Dirwanto (2008) explains that there are three factors that most influence the work readiness of vocational students. These factors include practical experience, creativity and skills. This study focuses on one factor, namely the factor of work experience. Work experience can be gained from activities carried out in the Production Unit. In addition to apprenticeship/prakerin programs in the Business/Industry World, Production Units at Vocational High Schools can be utilized to optimize students' practical learning with teachers and the Business/Industry World. Through the Production Unit, students can gain hands-on practical experience as in the Business/Industry World. To further increase the relevance of quality competencies according to the needs of employment, it is

necessary to have cooperation between Production Units in Vocational High Schools and the Business/Industry World.

Steps that can be taken by Vocational High Schools to optimize practices in Production Units that collaborate with the Business/Industry World according to Raharjo (1997):

1. Schools can examine various aspects of existing potential industries, including: a) types of business world; b) production process activities in the form of goods and services produced by the institution; c) qualifications and expertise that may be obtained in the company; d) available production facilities; e) available capacity; f) institutional qualifications, whether it includes large, medium, or small companies.
2. Carry out an assessment of all skills appropriate to each department.
3. Collaborating with the Business/Industry World in writing with a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).

Work-Integrated Learning is the practice of combining traditional academic studies with the foray of students into the world of work in their chosen profession, with the core objective of preparing students for authentic work practices and learning and practicing applying skills and knowledge in real-world contexts. In addition, Work-Integrated Learning also establishes collaboration/partnerships between schools and industry to design curricula that are responsive to the needs of society and industry (Smith, 2012). Work-Integrated Learning is carried out in vocational program schools for the development of learning objectives related to knowledge, skills and employability (CEWIL Canada. (a.n.d.): 2021). The implementation of Work-Integrated Learning will be able to improve students' work skills so as to increase students' work readiness as well, meaning that it is hoped that students who have graduated from Vocational Schools are able to work according to the competencies expected by the Business/Industry World.

Research in the field of Work-Integrated Learning shows that during a work placement, students develop several employability skills in the workplace, including leadership, entrepreneurial skills, responsibility, decision making, critical thinking, problem solving, ethical awareness, and ethical standards (Khampirat, Pop , and Bandaranaike, 2019: 129). The differences between Work-Integrated Learning and other learning models are: (1) providing direct and meaningful experience according to their respective areas of expertise; (2) curriculum integration related to learning outcomes assessed by schools and workplaces; (3) students gain knowledge and skills as expected by the business world as well as knowledge of work discipline behavior (McRae & Johnston, 2016: 345).

Work-Integrated Learning in providing direct experience can be in the form of practical learning at school. SMKs as graduates who are ready to work have various practical learning facilities. Schools must be able to empower the practice facilities they have, one of which is the Production Unit. Empowerment of Production Units can be done by cooperating with the Business/Industry World.

There are still many problems that occur in the implementation of Production Units, one of which is regarding Production Unit activities that occur incidentally, meaning that there is still a lack of proper preparation. Therefore, cooperation between the Production Unit and the Business/Industry World can be one of the long-term plans to support practical learning in schools.

Based on research conducted by Khampirat, Pop, and Bandaranaike (2019: 142) that the application of Work-Integrated Learning strategies can improve work skills. There is a drawback to this study in that it only investigates occupational skill levels separately so that it may not lead to an understanding that contributes to occupational skill performance. Research conducted by Jabbar (2020) examines the cooperative relationship established by Muhammadiyah Kedawung Vocational School and Yamaha Motor Manufacture by utilizing motorcycle business engineering workshops. In addition, according to Arney (2022: 156) international students in Canada as a minority have very little possibility of participating in the Work-Integrated Learning program in class. They will try to find their own partnership and this is a weakness of the education system there. Based on these studies, the implementation of Work-Integrated Learning has only occurred abroad. Meanwhile, in Indonesia there is no Work-Integrated Learning in class and its application to Production Units in Vocational High Schools.

According to a study conducted by Khampirat, Pop, and Bandaranaike (2019: 141) it was stated that Work-Integrated Learning is effective in training students to become employable. Then in Abery et al.'s research. (2015) showed that Work-Integrated Learning learning strategies affect the improvement of students' skills and self-reflection abilities on productivity in the workplace. Several studies abroad state that the impact of Work-Integrated Learning on the workforce is still being debated. Jackson, Collings, and David (2017) explained that employment is not directly related to Work-Integrated Learning.

As explained in previous studies, the average use of Work-Integrated Learning learning strategies is carried out abroad. In addition, there is also a debate about the influence of Work-Integrated Learning on the world of work. Therefore the novelty of this research is in the use of the Work-Integrated Learning learning strategy, which

is still very rarely used in Indonesia. This learning strategy is very appropriate to be applied in Vocational High Schools (SMK) because it can integrate learning in schools with the world of work. If this research is successful then at the same time it can be the answer to the debate.

Researchers focused research on the implementation of Work-Integrated Learning learning strategies through collaboration with the Business/Industry World. This collaboration can be done by inviting presenters to teach directly in class. Then conduct partnerships to optimize the existing Production Units in schools. The researcher hopes that the application of this learning strategy can improve work readiness for SMK students.

Method

This research is a type of literature review research by looking for theoretical references that are relevant to the problems found. Literature review research is a series of scientific activities by collecting a number of information relevant to the topic or problem to be studied with the literature as the main reference (I Made and Cahyaningrum, 2020). Researchers carried out literature study data collection techniques related to the implementation of Work-Integrated Learning to increase the work readiness of SMK students through scientific articles, journals, books and other documents. The data analysis technique used is qualitative analysis with 4 stages, namely: data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions.

Findings and Discussion

The problems studied in this study are related to the work readiness of Vocational High School (SMK) students. This problem needs a solution by implementing Work-Integrated Learning through optimizing the utilization of Production Units by collaborating with the Business/Industry World so that there is no gap between the competencies possessed by SMK students and the competencies needed by the Business/Industry World. The implementation of such cooperation needs to be studied and prepared as well as possible.

Work-Integrated Learning is a pedagogical strategy in preparing students to face the world of work. Work-Integrated Learning has an important role in preparing students to enter the world of work to match the expectations of the current job industry. The benefits of Work-Integrated Learning in Vocational Schools are not only in acquiring knowledge and skills, but also in gaining practical experience.

Several countries have implemented Work-Integrated Learning as a curriculum and qualification as a student career promotion system. One of them is Canada, which has implemented Work-Integrated Learning as a learning strategy in schools. Research in Canada conducted by Arney (2022) explained that Work-Integrated Learning applied in learning focuses students in practical learning so that they are ready to face the world of work. However, the Work-Integrated Learning program can only be accessed by domestic students (coming from Canada), foreign students cannot take this program for free. They have to pay and find partnerships on their own. In addition, a study in Thailand stated that Work-Integrated Learning was implemented at a university to encourage performance on student work skills (Khampirat, Pop, and Bandaranaike, 2019).

Jabbar's research (2020) shows that establishing cooperation between Production Units at Vocational Schools and companies requires a planning stage, in the form of surveys with direct interviews or observations of the Business World / Industrial World that are relevant to the competency skills at Vocational Schools. The next stage is the implementation of: 1) coordination with the business world and industry; 2) MoU for Business and Industry by first contacting the company that will be invited to work together or sending a proposal via email, if approved, the MoU will be implemented as a cooperation agreement between the Vocational High School and the World of Business and Industry; 3) curriculum synchronization with the world of business and industry; 4) the teaching factory program in the form of cooperation between the Production Unit owned by the Motorcycle Business Engineering Competency and Yamaha Motor Manufacture.

The mechanism for optimizing Work-Integrated Learning can be done with the following steps: (Ferns, Campbell, & Zegwaard, 2014: 6)

1. Work management tailored to the Business/Industry World
    a. Time management: includes procedures for opening and closing Production Units in a timely manner according to the Business/Industry World
    b. Operational management: includes the procurement of goods/services, system operations, inventory management, and human resource management

2. Role Playing
   Each student has their own role in the Production Unit such as:
    a. Human Resource Development: in charge of managing Human Resources (HR)
    b. Supply and Demand: responsible for planning goods and displaying goods
    c. The Purchasing Division is in charge of purchasing goods

d. Good Receiving: in charge of receiving goods
e. Promotion: in charge of all promotional activities for the Production Unit / store
f. Finance: in charge of all activities related to money, from the cashier to the treasury
g. Information Technology: in charge of system management and operation
h. But they can all rotate to get all roles and experience.

3. Carry out a Job Readiness Workshop

Training/workshops held at schools by inviting practitioners from the Business/Industry World to synchronize student skills with skills needed in the world of work. Theories that are appropriate to the field are needed by students to provide a picture of the world of work for students to become quality vocational graduates.

4. Monitoring

In the form of supervisory activities carried out by teachers and practitioners of the Business / Industrial World in accordance with the expected competencies to assess the skills possessed by students while practicing in the Vocational High School Production Unit.

Conclusion

Based on the presentation in the discussion, it can be concluded that the application of Work-Integrated Learning in Canada has been successfully applied to learning so that it improves student development in practical activities. Jabbar's research (2020) shows that it is important to establish cooperation and build trust in the Business/Industry World for Vocational High Schools in order to eliminate the competency gap between students and the needs of the world of work.

Based on research from Khampirat, Pop, and Bandaranaike (2019:142-143) it can be concluded that the work skills of students before the implementation of Work-Integrated Learning were generally still low, then after applying Work-Integrated Learning the work skills became very high. Therefore, it is necessary to implement Work-Integrated Learning by optimizing Production Units in Vocational Schools in collaboration with the Business/Industry World to improve students' skills in the form of hard skills and soft skills so that they are able to equip vocational school students to become graduates who are ready to work according to the competencies expected by the World Business / Industry.

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