Optimizing the Development of Responsibility Character through Field Work Practices (PKL): Collaborative Strategies Between Schools and Industry Supervisors

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Abstract

Field Work Practices (PKL) play a crucial role in character development, especially responsibility, among students. Nevertheless, optimizing this character development requires strategic synergy between educational institutions and industry supervisors. This article aims to deeply analyze various collaborative strategies implemented by schools and industry supervisors in optimizing the development of students responsibility character during PKL, The discussion will focus on case studies and best practices, including effective mentoring models, structured training program for both students and supervisors, and the integration of school curriculum with industry competency needs. The findings of this research are expected to provide practical contributions in the form of srategic recommendations for education practitioners, scholl principals, and industry representatives to improve the quality of PKL programs, ultimately producing a young generation that is not only professionally competent but also possesses a strong sense of responsibility.

Keywords: Field Work Practices; Responsibility; Collaborative Strategies.

Introduction

Character education, particularly the development of a sense of responsibility, is a fundamental aspect of preparing a young generation that is not only academically competent but also has integrity and is ready to face the challenges of the professional world. According to Stephen Tropiano (1997), internships serve as a vital tool for professional development and career transition. In Indonesia's vocational education system, Practical Work Experience (Praktik Kerja Lapangan or PKL), or internships, plays a vital role as a bridge between classroom theory and practical application in the industry. PKL is not only aimed at improving technical skills but also at developing personal traits essential in the workplace, such as discipline, initiative, and responsibility.

However, optimizing the development of a sense of responsibility through PKL cannot stand alone. It requires a strong synergy between educational institutions (schools) and the industry supervisors who act as field mentors. According to Arif Ediyanto et al. (2025), collaboration between educators and industry parties ensures that the material taught in schools and practiced in the industry are interconnected, including in the aspects of character development and work discipline. Yet, a gap often exists between school expectations and the realities on the ground, or there's a lack of structured collaborative strategies, which can ultimately hinder the achievement of character development goals. Therefore, this article seeks to answer the question of how collaborative strategies between schools and industry mentors can effectively optimize the development of student responsibility during PKL. This research will analyze the approaches and best practices that have been implemented, with the goal of providing actionable recommendations

to improve the overall quality of PKL programs.

Literature Review

Practical Work Experience (PKL) is defined as a form of education and training carried out directly in the business and industry world (Dunia Usaha dan Dunia Industri or DUDI) to provide students with real work experience (Badan Standar Nasional Pendidikan, 2006). The main goal of PKL is to equip students with professional competencies, but more than that, PKL also serves as an important medium for developing soft skills and character (Wibowo & Suhartono, 2019). Research by Susanto (2018) shows that direct experience in the workplace helps students understand the work ethic and responsibility required in a professional environment.

Responsibility is defined as an individual's attitude and behavior in carrying out their tasks and duties toward themselves, society, the environment (natural, social, and cultural), the nation, and God Almighty (Kementerian Pendidikan Nasional, 2010). In the context of PKL, responsibility includes punctuality, completing tasks according to instructions, taking initiative, and the ability to accept the consequences of one's actions (Purwanto & Lestari, 2020). The development of this character is complex and requires a supportive environment and consistent role models (Lickona, 1991).

Collaboration between schools and industries is the key to the success of a PKL program (Nurhayati & Hadi, 2017). Effective collaboration includes joint planning, the development of a relevant curriculum, the provision of competent mentors from both sides, and continuous evaluation (Setiawan & Kurniawan, 2019). Research by Utami and Lestari (2021) emphasizes that open communication and a shared understanding of PKL goals are prerequisites for successful collaboration. A lack of communication or a disconnect between schools and industries is often a barrier to maximizing the potential of PKL in character development.

The mentoring model applied during PKL has a significant impact on student learning experiences. Industry mentors not only act as task givers but also as mentors who guide, provide feedback, and serve as role models (Supriadi & Rachman, 2020). Structured training programs, both for students before PKL and for industry mentors on how to guide students, have also been shown to increase the effectiveness of PKL (Ramdani & Dewi, 2018). Integrating the school curriculum with industry practices ensures that the knowledge and skills taught are relevant to the demands of the workplace, so students can apply the responsibility they learn in a real-world context.

Method

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study method to deeply analyze the collaborative strategies between schools and industry mentors in optimizing the development of student responsibility during PKL. The case study will focus on vocational education institutions and their industry partners who are considered successful in implementing effective PKL programs.

The research subjects include PKL supervising teachers from the school, industry mentors (field supervisors) from partner companies, and students who have completed or are currently undergoing PKL.

Data Collection Techniques: Data was collected through several methods:

1. In-depth interviews: Conducted with supervising teachers, industry mentors, and students to gather information about mentoring models, training programs, curriculum integration, challenges, and the strategies implemented.
2. Participant observation: Direct observation of the PKL process at the industry location to understand the interactions between students and mentors, as well as the implementation of practices that support the development of responsibility.
3. Document analysis: Examining relevant documents such as PKL guidelines, PKL reports, attendance records, student evaluation notes, and cooperation agreements between schools and industries.

Data Analysis: The collected qualitative data will be analyzed using thematic analysis. The steps of the analysis include:

1. Data transcription: Converting interview recordings into written text.
2. Identifying key themes and patterns that emerge from the data, related to collaborative strategies, mentoring models, training programs, and the development of responsibility.
3. Categorization: Grouping the codes into larger categories.
4. Interpretation: Explaining the meaning of the categories and themes found, and linking them to the research objectives and literature review.

The validity and reliability of the data will be maintained through data triangulation (interviews, observation, documents) and member checking with participants to ensure the accuracy of the interpretation.

Result and Discussion

The research shows that the most effective mentoring model for fostering student responsibility is a personal and structured mentoring model. The industry mentor is the primary guide for students during PKL. The role of the industry mentor is more than just assigning tasks; they are also a character-building agent. Industry mentors must:

1. Provide measurable and realistic tasks. The work tasks given should be challenging but achievable for the students. Tasks that are too easy will not foster a sense of responsibility, while tasks that are too difficult can make students feel hopeless.
2. Conduct intensive mentoring with regular feedback sessions. Constructive feedback helps students understand areas that need improvement. For example, if a student is often late, the mentor can explain the impact of tardiness on the team and the project as a whole.
3. Provide responsibility gradually with small tasks and give greater trust over time. This shows that the mentor trusts them, which will motivate students to act more responsibly.
4. Be a role model. Mentors must demonstrate a strong work ethic, discipline, and responsibility in their own work. Students tend to imitate the behavior they see from their mentors.

Industry mentors who act as mentors not only give tasks but also consistently provide constructive feedback, explain the consequences of actions, and serve as a role model in work ethic. Routine communication between the industry mentor and the school supervisor is also crucial. For example, at a company, the field supervisor holds daily briefings and weekly debriefings with students and reports on student progress periodically to the school supervisor. In addition, school supervisors regularly visit the company or workshop where students are doing their PKL to observe and directly monitor students as they complete their PKL tasks and meet with field supervisors to receive reports on student progress.

PKL student attendance is taken directly at the company or workshop. In contrast, school attendance is done online every day when starting and finishing PKL, with a photo taken at the PKL location and sent to a specified link, which is monitored by the school supervisor. If there are signal or other issues, the photo is sent via WhatsApp to the school supervisor. This allows for early identification of problems and timely intervention, so students feel monitored and responsible for their progress.

The implementation of structured training programs for students before PKL, which includes material on work ethics, professional communication, and time management, is significantly correlated with an increased sense of responsibility in the field. Additionally, training for industry mentors on mentoring techniques, character assessment, and effective communication with the younger generation also has a positive impact and successfully improves the quality of interaction and guidance, which ultimately fosters student initiative and responsibility.

Integrating the school curriculum with industry competency needs is an important foundation for developing relevant responsibility. When students understand that

their tasks during PKL are a direct application of what they learn in school, their motivation and sense of responsibility to complete the tasks increase. Schools that regularly hold meetings with industry representatives to revise and update vocational subject syllabi based on skill gaps in the field tend to produce PKL students who are more proactive and responsible when asked to do something.

Despite many successes, challenges in collaboration were also identified, such as the lack of time for industry mentors to focus on character mentoring, different expectations between schools and industries, and limited resources. To overcome this, some successful collaborative strategies include:

1. Establishing a joint PKL coordinator: Creating a joint coordination team from the school and industry responsible for all aspects of PKL, from planning to evaluation.
2. Developing a mutually agreed-upon responsibility assessment tool: An integrated assessment system with a shared evaluation form that includes technical and non-technical aspects, such as attendance, punctuality, initiative, and adaptability. This assessment not only evaluates performance but also measures the extent to which students have developed a sense of responsibility.
3. Regular meetings or online forums to discuss student progress, challenges, and opportunities for improvement.
4. At the end of the PKL, students create a PKL report signed by both the school and company or workshop supervisors. Students can present their experiences and what they have learned during the PKL. This not only strengthens their understanding but also reinforces their sense of pride and ownership of the process they have undergone.

The success of collaboration highly depends on the leadership commitment from both sides. School principals and industry managers who fully support PKL initiatives and facilitate active communication will create a conducive ecosystem for developing student responsibility. By implementing these strategies, PKL becomes not just a place to hone technical skills but also an effective "laboratory" for fostering responsibility, discipline, and professionalism in students, which are essential foundations for their future careers.

Benefits for Students

Students are the primary parties who directly benefit from this strategy. The advantages they gain include:

1. Enhanced Sense of Responsibility: Students learn that every task has consequences, both positive and negative. They are encouraged to be proactive, not just wait for orders, and take full ownership of their work, from planning to completion. This is a crucial foundation for a professional work ethic.
2. Higher Job Readiness: Through practical experience in the industry, students not only hone their hard skills but also soft skills like communication, time management, and teamwork. They become graduates who are ready to work and aren't surprised by the demands of the real professional world.
3. Increased Self-Confidence: When students are trusted with completing real tasks and receive constructive feedback, their self-confidence grows. They feel capable and valued, which motivates them to perform better.
4. Professional Network: During their internship, students interact with professionals in their field. This opens opportunities to build a network that can be very beneficial for their future careers and may even lead to job offers.

Benefits for Schools

For schools, this effective collaboration not only improves the quality of graduates but also strengthens the institution's reputation. The benefits they receive include:

1. Guaranteed Curriculum Relevance: Through communication and input from the industry, schools can

continuously update their curriculum to remain relevant to the needs of the job market. This ensures that the material taught is truly useful and aligns with industry developments.

2. Improved School Reputation: Graduates with strong character and skills become tangible proof of a successful PKL program. The school's reputation as a producer of quality workers will increase, attracting more potential students and partnerships with leading companies.
3. Stronger Industry Relationships: Structured and sustainable collaboration builds close relationships between schools and companies. These relationships can develop into long-term partnerships, such as special internship programs, joint research, or direct recruitment.

Benefits for Mentors and Companies

Mentors and companies also benefit from these collaborative strategies. Although they act as guides, there are significant advantages they can gain:

1. Efficient Early Recruitment System: Companies can use PKL as a preliminary selection process for potential employees. They can directly observe a student's performance and work ethic over several months, which is far more effective than just relying on interviews.
2. Identification of New Talent: PKL is an opportunity for the industry to identify innovative and promising young talents. Students often bring fresh ideas and new perspectives that can benefit a project or team.
3. Mentor Skill Improvement: Industry mentors get the chance to hone their mentoring and leadership skills. Interacting with students can also be a way to maintain enthusiasm and innovation within the team.
4. Social Contribution and Positive Image: By actively participating in the education and character development of students, companies demonstrate their commitment to corporate social responsibility (CSR). This builds a positive image in the eyes of the public and strengthens the company's reputation.

Conclusion

Optimizing the development of student responsibility during Practical Work Experience (PKL) is highly dependent on the effectiveness of collaborative strategies between schools and industry mentors. The three main pillars found to contribute significantly are: a personal and structured mentoring model, a comprehensive training program for students and mentors, and the integration of a school curriculum that is responsive to industry needs.

A strong collaborative strategy, characterized by open communication, a shared understanding of goals, and mutual commitment, allows industry mentors to act as effective guides, and schools to prepare students with relevant skills. Therefore, PKL is not just a place to learn technical skills but also a place to shape important characters like responsibility. Educational institutions and industries must proactively build and maintain strategic partnerships, invest in continuous training for mentors, and regularly review and adjust the PKL curriculum to align with the dynamics of character and competency needs in the workplace. In doing so, the PKL program can optimally produce a young generation that is not only professionally competent but also has high integrity and a strong sense of responsibility.

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