Effective SLB-DUDI Partnership Management: A Conceptual Framework for Vocational Alignment

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Abstract: *This study aims to (1) systematically map the literature on SLB–DUDI partnerships to identify critical managerial gaps and (2) propose a conceptual framework for post-MoU partnership management to ensure vocational alignment for students with disabilities. Using a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) following PRISMA guidelines, we analyzed 15 relevant studies from academic databases (Google Scholar, SINTA, Elsevier) published between 2015–2025, with the synthesis critically contrasting partnership management literature in Special Education (SLB) with the more established Vocational High School (SMK) frameworks. The findings reveal two critical gaps: first, SLB partnerships remain stuck in a passive "Model I–Networking" characterized by ceremonial MoUs without real implementation, and second, the literature on SLB largely focuses on problem identification while neglecting post-MoU managerial processes. To address these gaps, this study proposes a two-pillar conceptual framework consisting of Partnership Relationship Management (relational pillar) and Internal Alignment Process Management (technical pillar), integrating the principles of Supported Employment and Functional Curriculum. This framework shifts the partnership paradigm from ceremonial to managerial, offering SLB leaders a systematic approach to translate MoUs into actual vocational alignment and providing a strategic blueprint to mitigate persistent competency mismatches and improve labor force participation for persons with disabilities in Indonesia.*

Keywords: *SLB–DUDI partnership, vocational alignment, supported employment, management framework, disability inclusion*

Abstrak: Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk (1) memetakan literatur kemitraan SLB–DUDI secara sistematis guna mengidentifikasi celah manajerial yang kritis dan (2) mengusulkan kerangka konseptual manajemen kemitraan pasca-MoU untuk memastikan penyelarasan vokasional bagi siswa disabilitas. Penelitian ini menggunakan *Systematic Literature Review* (SLR) dengan panduan PRISMA terhadap 15 studi relevan dari basis data akademik (Google Scholar, SINTA, Elsevier) yang diterbitkan pada periode 2015–2025, dengan sintesis yang membandingkan secara kritis literatur manajemen kemitraan dalam konteks pendidikan khusus (SLB) dan kerangka yang lebih mapan pada pendidikan kejuruan (SMK). Hasil kajian menunjukkan dua celah utama, yaitu kemitraan SLB yang masih terjebak dalam "Model I–Networking" yang bersifat pasif dengan MoU seremonial tanpa implementasi nyata, serta kecenderungan literatur SLB yang berfokus pada identifikasi masalah tetapi mengabaikan proses manajerial pasca-MoU. Untuk menjawab celah tersebut, penelitian ini mengusulkan kerangka konseptual dua pilar yang terdiri atas Manajemen Hubungan Kemitraan (pilar relasional) dan Manajemen Proses Penyelarasan Internal (pilar teknis) dengan mengintegrasikan prinsip *Supported Employment* dan *Functional Curriculum*. Kerangka ini menggeser paradigma kemitraan dari yang bersifat seremonial menjadi manajerial, serta menawarkan pendekatan sistematis bagi pimpinan SLB untuk menerjemahkan MoU ke dalam penyelarasan vokasional yang nyata sebagai cetak biru strategis dalam mengatasi mismatch kompetensi dan meningkatkan partisipasi kerja penyandang disabilitas di Indonesia.

Kata kunci: Kemitraan SLB–DUDI, keselarasan vokasional, pekerjaan yang didukung, kerangka manajemen, inklusi disabilitas

1. INTRODUCTION

Amidst the narrative of Indonesia's economic development, an often-overlooked reality persists: the significant labor force participation gap experienced by persons with disabilities. This is not merely a

statistical issue but a crucial problem touching the foundation of social inclusivity (Frian et al., 2019; Lasiyono et al., 2024). Data from Statistics Indonesia (BPS) consistently paint a grim picture, where the aggregate labor force participation rate (TPAK) for persons with disabilities is estimated at only 21.65% (BPS, 2024). This figure reflects a deep disparity compared to global data (Singal, 2023) or other countries like Australia; by 2016, more than 7 million persons with disabilities in Indonesia had already been marginalized from the workforce (Kurnianto et al., 2023).

Field reports confirm this challenge is multifaceted. The barriers faced are not only physical, such as a lack of accessibility (evidenced by the fact that only 7.04% of companies provide adequate facilities), but also social, such as deep-rooted stigma (Ayuningtyas et al., 2022; Frian et al., 2019; Qiu et al., 2023). Although affirmative regulations like Law No. 8 of 2016 have established a 1%-2% quota, realization in the formal sector remains exceptionally low, with absorption at only about 1.2% in 2017 (Ayuningtyas et al., 2022).

Within this ecosystem, vocational special education schools (Sekolah Luar Biasa, or SLB) are meant to hold a crucial function. SLBs are the frontline, the institution formally designed as the school-to-work transition bridge from a protective educational environment to the competitive world of work (Duffy et al., 2022; Greer & Kirk, 2022). Vocational education in SLBs is seen as a promise to build career identities and access decent work in the future (Choi et al., 2023; Denault et al., 2019). The "Link and Match" policy was introduced as an ideal umbrella solution to align the SLB curriculum with the pulse of industrial needs.

Ironically, this promise often remains unfulfilled in practice. The implementation of this ideal policy still faces severe challenges. The transition process for SLB graduates is often not smooth, leading to unemployment, precarious work, or underemployment (Ngai et al., 2023; Perri et al., 2021). The root of the problem has been clearly identified: a skills mismatch. Many industries complain that graduates, even those who are hired, are deemed incompetent or not ready for work because the skills taught in school are no longer relevant to the demands of the modern workplace (Brudevold-newman & Ubfal, 2024; Suharno et al., 2020).

This situation is exacerbated by a phenomenon this study terms "passive partnership." Many collaborations between schools and industry (Dunia Usaha dan Dunia Industri, or DUDI) are merely ceremonial; MoUs are signed, photographed, and then filed away (Alasim & Al-Otabi, 2024; Suharno et al., 2020). This limited collaboration and communication mean graduates do not receive the real support they need. A literature review in the SLB context confirms this trend: existing research tends to focus on problem identification such as curriculum gaps, lack of teacher training, or negative expectations from industry (Alasim & Al-Otabi, 2024) but very few offer systematic managerial solutions for what must be done after the MoU is signed.

Deeper still, the failure of these partnerships stems from a one-size-fits-all approach that adopts the mainstream vocational high school (SMK) model without considering the unique characteristics of special education. International literature, in contrast, has developed models like Supported Employment and Customized Employment, which are specifically designed for the work transition of persons with disabilities, yet these have not been integrated into the SLB-DUDI partnership discourse in Indonesia.

This article argues that a managerial "implementation gap" exists post-MoU that has not been thoroughly researched in the SLB context. Current research is overly focused on inputs (how to find partners) or outputs (the mismatch figures), while ignoring the process (how to manage the partnership). Therefore, this article aims to (1) map the state of partnership management literature in SLBs to highlight this gap, and (2) propose a systematic conceptual framework for post-MoU process management to ensure SLB graduates are equipped with the skills required by industry.

2. METHOD

This research employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method, following the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) 2020 guidelines. The SLR approach was chosen to map the existing research landscape, identify theoretical and practical gaps, and construct a new conceptual framework from the literature synthesis.

The literature analysis process followed several structured stages:

Literature Search The literature search was conducted for the period of January 1, 2015, to November 10, 2025, to ensure coverage of recent publications. Databases included Google Scholar, SINTA, and Elsevier. The search was performed using a combination of keywords formulated into a precise Boolean search string, such as: (("kemitraan" OR "partnership") AND ("SLB" OR "special education" OR "sekolah luar biasa") AND ("DUDI" OR "dunia kerja" OR "employment" OR "vocational" OR "school-to-work")). Since the study focuses on the specific context of Indonesian Special Schools (SLB), keywords in Bahasa Indonesia (e.g., "kemitraan", "dunia kerja") were included to ensure the retrieval of relevant local studies and government reports.

Screening and Selection The selection process was adopted from the PRISMA 2020 flow, as illustrated in Figure 1.

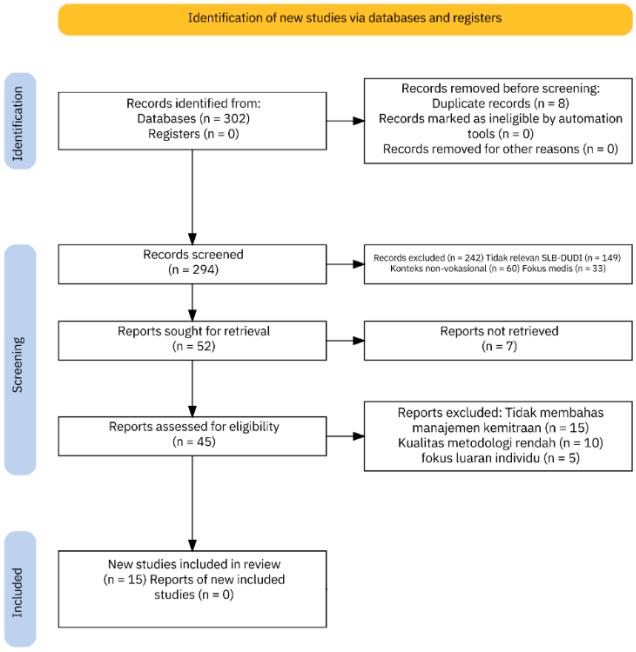

Figure 1. PRISMA 2020 flow

Identified articles were screened based on title and abstract relevance after duplicates were removed. Full-text reports of the remaining articles were then assessed for eligibility based on the following inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Inclusion Criteria:

- Studies discussing partnerships between schools and industry in a vocational education context.
- Focus on partnership management or curriculum alignment processes.
- Published between 2015-2025.
- Available in full-text.
- Written in Indonesian or English.

Exclusion Criteria:

- Studies focusing purely on medical/rehabilitation aspects unrelated to vocational outcomes.
- Studies in a non-vocational (general education) context.
- Studies that did not discuss partnership management (n=15).
- Low methodological quality (n=10).
- Focus only on individual outcomes without discussing organizational/managerial processes (n=5).

Quality Assessment To apply the "low methodological quality" exclusion criterion (n=10), the quality of the remaining studies was assessed using the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP)

checklist for qualitative and mixed-methods studies. Studies were excluded if they lacked clear research objectives, appropriate methodology, rigorous data analysis, or a clear statement of ethics.

Analysis and Synthesis Data analysis was conducted through thematic synthesis with the following approach:

- Extraction: Information was extracted regarding identified partnership problems and proposed managerial solutions.
- Categorization: Findings were grouped into thematic categories (e.g., partnership models, implementation challenges, management strategies).
- Synthesis: A conceptual framework was built by adapting managerial solutions from the SMK context to address problems identified in the SLB context.
- Validation: Triangulation was performed by comparing findings from various sources and contexts.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The systematic literature review yielded two crucial primary findings. First, a theoretical and practical diagnosis of the current state of SLB partnerships. Second, the identification of a striking gap in managerial focus between the SLB and SMK (vocational high school) contexts. Based on these two findings, a new conceptual framework is proposed.

3.1. Diagnostic Findings: Passive Partnerships and the Managerial Literature Gap

A theoretical review of organizational partnerships reveals two main dimensions for diagnosis: power balance and integration level. A true partnership is distinguished from a transactional relationship (like a contract) by the presence of *mutuality* (a sense of mutual benefit) and *high organizational identity*. An ideal partnership is *Mutualistic*, where both partners have equal status and design common goals, differing fundamentally from a *Subordinative* model, where one party (usually industry) dominates the other (school) (Hingley et al., 2015)

In terms of integration, partnership models can be divided into two poles:

- **Model I (Networking/Passive):** This is the most basic partnership model. The relationship is formed instantly (e.g., for accreditation), is passive, and often just a formality on paper. Interaction is minimal, commitment is low, there are no joint evaluation mechanisms, and the risk of becoming subordinative is very high.
- **Model II (Solid/Cooperative):** This is a mature partnership model. The formation process is active, gradual, and built on intensive interaction and negotiation. The focus is on mutual learning, resource integration, high commitment, and continuous evaluation (Serrano-hernandez et al., 2018; Silva-r & Ant, 2023)

Findings from empirical literature indicate that the majority of SLB partnerships in the field are *stuck in the passive Model I-Networking* (Park et al., 2016). Lacking deep negotiation or joint goal setting, these partnerships fail to achieve mutuality. In the best-case scenario, they become passive "internship placements"; in the worst-case, they are vulnerable to becoming subordinative, where the SLB is merely a passive implementer with no bargaining power (Hingley et al., 2015)

This gap becomes clearer when comparing the SLB literature landscape with that of SMK. The literature in the *mainstream Vocational High School (SMK)* context is *far more advanced*. Research in SMKs no longer questions the "importance" of partnerships but has shifted focus to *how* to manage them. SMK literature is rich with discussions on managerial *solutions* like "curriculum synchronization," "guest teachers," and the "Teaching Factory" model (Ingholt et al., 2015; Ylimaula & Toiviainen, 2025). Management in SMKs proactively involves multiple stakeholders and implements structured strategies to ensure program innovation remains relevant to industry (Habibi et al., 2025)

Conversely, the literature in the *SLB* context is generally *stuck at the problem identification stage*. Research focus in SLBs remains on documenting challenges: resource limitations, negative public perceptions (Ndlovu & Nzuma, 2024), *minimal collaboration among stakeholders* (Prins, 2025), and

the passive role of school leaders themselves (Dille et al., 2025). Various barriers such as lack of trust, poor communication, and professional skill deficits are continuously reported as primary obstacles.

To provide a comprehensive overview of this gap, Table 2 presents the mapping of the 15 selected studies. The synthesis clearly categorizes existing research into two clusters: one focusing on problem identification within special education, and the other offering managerial solutions from vocational contexts.

Table 2. Thematic Mapping of Selected Studies (Literature Synthesis)

The Reality of SLB & Disability Employment (Problem Identification)			
No	Author (Year)	Context / Country	Key Findings / Relevance to Study
1	(Alasim & Al-Otabi, 2024)	Transition Program (Saudi Arabia)	Confirms that transition implementation is often hindered by a lack of teacher training and weak collaboration.
2	(Ayuningtyas et al., 2022)	Disability Work Sector (Indonesia)	Highlights the low absorption of labor with disabilities in the formal sector, even with the existence of quota regulations.
3	(Frian et al., 2019)	Employment Barriers (Indonesia)	Identifies social stigma and lack of accessibility as the primary barriers to industrial partnerships.
4	(Lasiyono et al., 2024)	Economic Participation (Indonesia)	Finds that barriers to economic participation are caused more by external factors (environmental) than by internal disability factors.
5	(Park et al., 2016)	Job Satisfaction (South Korea)	Demonstrates the importance of job-fit; haphazard (passive) partnerships reduce graduate job satisfaction.
6	(Suharno et al., 2020)	Vocational Education (Indonesia)	A key study stating that vocational education partnerships are often merely administrative (ceremonial MoUs).
7	(Qiu et al., 2023)	Employment Deprivation (China)	Reinforces the fact that family socioeconomic status influences employment opportunities, necessitating stronger school interventions.
Managerial Solutions & Comparative Models			
No	Author (Year)	Context / Country	Key Findings / Relevance to Study
8	(Wehman et al., 2016)	ASD Employment (USA)	Proves the effectiveness of the *Customized Employment* model compared to traditional internships for individuals with disabilities.
9	(Rodriguez et al., 2017)	Transition Practices (Global/Review)	Emphasizes the importance of *Individualized Transition Planning* as the foundation for partnership management.
10	(Francis et al., 2018)	Collaboration (USA)	Proposes *Interagency Collaboration* (school, family, industry, agencies) as a pillar of relationship management.
11	(Habibi et al., 2025)	Teacher Performance (Indonesia)	Shows that in vocational high schools (SMK), teacher competence in managing industrial relations directly influences school performance.
12	(Choi et al., 2023)	Decent Work (Indonesia)	Analyzes "link & match" in vocational education; serves as a comparison for the SLB context.
13	(Dille et al., 2025)	Teacher Collaboration (Norway)	Highlights the importance of internal collaboration among teachers before collaborating externally (with industry).

14	(Ingholt et al., 2015)	Social Relations (Denmark)	Emphasizes strengthening students' social relations in vocational schools to prevent dropout and internship failure.
15	(Ngai et al., 2023)	Career Intervention (Hong Kong)	Offers a community-based career intervention model that can be adapted by SLBs.

The dichotomy presented in Table 2 confirms the urgency of this study. While vocational high schools (SMK) benefit from established industrial management models (Cluster B), special schools (SLB) are trapped in a cycle of identifying barriers without concrete managerial guidelines (Cluster A). This study adopts the solution-oriented approach from Cluster B to solve the passive partnership problems in Cluster A.

3.2. Proposed Conceptual Framework: The Two-Pillar Model for Effective Partnership Management

To address this gap and to shift from mere problem identification to proposing solutions, this article proposes a systematic conceptual framework for post-MoU management. This model consists of two main pillars that must run simultaneously and be interconnected: (1) Partnership Relationship Management (Relational Pillar), and (2) Internal Alignment Process Management (Technical Pillar).

3.2.1. Pillar 1: Partnership Relationship Management (Relational Process)

This first pillar focuses on "nurturing the relationship" to prevent established partnerships from becoming passive and dormant (Model I). This is the foundation of a Model II-Solid partnership. It is a proactive managerial process, managed by school leadership or the Vice-Principal of Industry Relations (Waka Hubin), to keep the relationship "alive," productive, and mutualistic. Based on a synthesis of management literature, this pillar comprises five key dimensions:

(a) Coordination: This is more than scheduling. It is the managerial effort to align stakeholders, roles, and resources (time, personnel, facilities) to achieve agreed-upon common goals. Good coordination requires leadership and a clear conflict resolution framework (Huston et al., 2015; C. Lin, 2021). (b) Routine Communication: Establishing open, honest, and scheduled two-way communication mechanisms (e.g., quarterly evaluation meetings, formal communication groups). This communication is crucial for building trust, sharing progress information, and transparently discussing challenges before they become major problems (Hsin & Peng, 2023; C. Lin, 2021). (c) Results Monitoring: Conducting periodic and *joint* evaluations of partnership program achievements (e.g., joint post-internship evaluations). This monitoring is essential for continuous improvement; industry provides feedback to the school, and the school provides feedback to the industry (C. R. Lin et al., 2025). (d) Long-Term Development: Having a vision to ensure collaboration does not stop at one program cycle (short-term) but continues to evolve (*co-evolution*). It focuses on creating shared value, innovating new programs, and ensuring the sustainability of the relationship (Cheng et al., 2025; Yin et al., 2020). (e) Interagency Collaboration: Building partnerships not only with industry but also with relevant government agencies, vocational rehabilitation counselors, and other service providers to create a comprehensive support ecosystem (Francis et al., 2018; Perri et al., 2021).

3.2.2. Pillar 2: Internal Alignment Process Management Based on Special Education (Technical Process)

A "living" partnership (Pillar 1) must be translated into educational practices that are truly contextualized for students with disabilities. Unlike the SMK approach, which focuses on standardization, Pillar 2 adopts the individualized philosophy of special education through three core processes:

(a) **Curriculum Synchronization Based on Functional Curriculum:** A curriculum adaptation process focused on developing functional life skills and vocational skills that are genuinely applicable in post-school life. The curriculum is designed based on individualized assessments that consider each student's unique profile, with an emphasis on functional skills such as applied mathematics, daily living skills, and specific vocational competencies relevant to local industry needs. (b) **Implementation of**

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Supported Employment & Customized Employment Models: Applying the Supported Employment model where students are placed in competitive work environments with intensive job coach support. This is complemented by a Customized Employment approach through processes of job carving, job negotiation, and job creation tailored to individual strengths and interests (Wehman et al., 2016). This model replaces the SMK "Teaching Factory" concept with a more personalized, community-integration-focused approach. (c) **Individualized Assessment Based on Transition Planning:** An assessment system integrated with the Individualized Education Program (IEP) and transition planning. This includes comprehensive vocational assessment, workplace readiness evaluation, and continuous monitoring post-placement (Rodriguez et al., 2017). The assessment involves industry practitioners as part of the transition team, but within a framework that considers individual progress rather than absolute competency standards. It is important to note that this technical pillar differs from the 'Teaching Factory' model commonly used in SMKs. While Teaching Factory brings the industry atmosphere *into* the school, the SLB context requires a 'Supported Employment' approach that brings students *out* to the industry with intensive guidance. Therefore, the internal alignment here focuses on equipping teachers as 'Job Coaches' rather than just instructors.

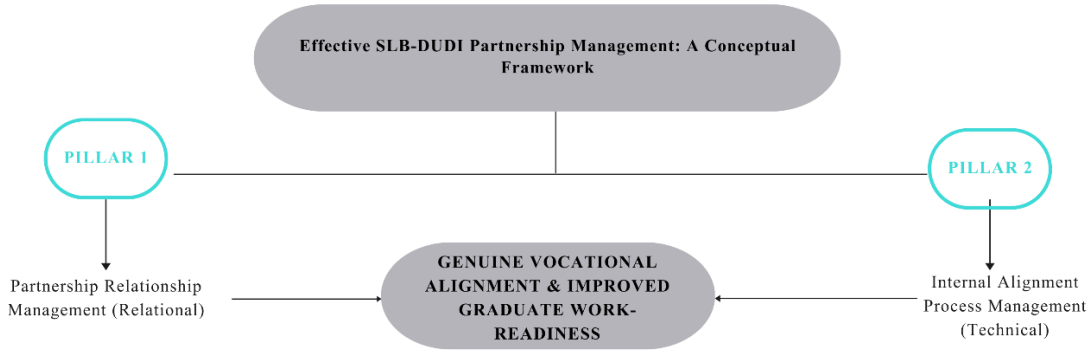

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Two-Pillar Partnership Management Model

Discussion

The conceptual framework proposed in this article offers a fundamental paradigm shift for SLB management. This discussion is rooted in the finding that the main employment problem for SLB graduates is not the absence of partnerships, but the *passivity* of those partnerships (Model I-Networking) and the *absence of systematic managerial processes* post-MoU. The literature review confirms that many SLBs are stuck focusing on "finding partners" and stop at the ceremonial level, a practice proven to fail in bridging the persistent skills mismatch (Suharno et al., 2020).

This framework represents a paradigm shift from conventional partnership approaches that adopt the SMK model to one that is truly inclusive for special education. Unlike the SMK approach, which focuses on competency standardization, this framework integrates the philosophy of an individualized approach through the principles of Supported Employment and Functional Curriculum.

The shift from a "Teaching Factory" model to a "Supported Employment" model represents a fundamental change from "school as a mini-industry" to "school as a bridge to community integration." This model acknowledges the complex needs of students with disabilities who require person-centered planning and ongoing support, not just technical vocational training (Wehman et al., 2015). The integration of interagency collaboration in Pillar 1 expands the partnership ecosystem beyond just industry, involving vocational rehabilitation counselors, service providers, and relevant agencies to create a comprehensive support system during the transition (Francis et al., 2018).

This two-pillar model argues that signing an MoU is not the finish line, but the starting line. Pillar 1 (Relationship Management) is the "engine" that keeps the partnership running, preventing it from becoming a mere archival document. Pillar 2 (Internal Process Management) is the "mechanism" that ensures the partnership produces tangible *outputs*: an aligned curriculum and competent graduates. By

adapting established managerial solutions from the SMK context, this model directly fills the literature gap for the SLB context.

Practical Implications The practical implications of this model are significant. This framework can serve as an operational guide or managerial checklist for decision-makers in SLBs: Principals, Vice-Principals of Curriculum, and Vice-Principals of Industry Relations (Hubin). This model provides concrete steps on *what to do* after an MoU is signed to transform a passive partnership into a productive one that genuinely improves the work-readiness of students with special needs. Managerially, this framework implies a shift in resource allocation. Successful partnerships cannot rely solely on teacher volunteerism. School principals must allocate specific budgets for 'partnership maintenance'—including operational costs for job coaches and transport for industrial visits—treating these not as auxiliary expenses, but as core operational investments similar to curriculum procurement.

Limitations and Future Research Directions It is important to acknowledge that the model proposed in this article is conceptual and built upon a literature synthesis. Therefore, there is an urgent need for empirical research to test, validate, and explore the implementation of this model in the field. Future research (such as the multi-site study that will be the focus of the researcher's thesis) should analyze how contextual factors such as school status (public vs. private), leadership culture, and vocational teacher competencies moderate (promote or hinder) the successful implementation of these two management pillars in daily practice.

However, the implementation of this framework faces significant challenges. This model requires different teacher competencies, particularly in *job coaching* and *individualized transition planning*, which many SLB teachers may not yet possess. Furthermore, the framework must be adapted to accommodate the wide variation in disability types and support levels required.

4. CONCLUSION

The employment gap for persons with disabilities in Indonesia is a critical issue that must be addressed at its root: within vocational educational institutions. Effective SLB-DUDI partnerships are key, but field practice shows that passive, ceremonial partnerships are failing to solve the persistent graduate skills mismatch. This article, therefore, argued for and proposed a two-pillar conceptual management framework that integrates (1) a Relational Pillar (Partnership Relationship Management) to nurture the relationship and (2) a Technical Pillar (Internal Alignment Process Management) to translate that relationship into practice using individualized principles like Supported Employment and Functional Curriculum. This framework shifts the focus from merely "finding partners" to "proactively managing the process," providing a managerial blueprint for SLB leaders to systematically convert a passive MoU into a productive collaboration that ensures genuine vocational alignment and improves the work-readiness of graduates with special needs.

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