
The Vocational High School Strategy in Increasing Partnerships with Business and Industry

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Abstract

This research comprehensively examined vocational school management and strategies for improving partnerships with DUDI. This research used qualitative research and data collection techniques used observation, documents, and interviews. Data analysis on individual cases with condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification used the N-Vivo tool. The research was at one vocational school in *Blitar*, Indonesia with informants from stakeholders at the school and industrial partners. The research site succeeded in establishing 14 partnerships recorded in the MoU, including joint activity programs, infrastructure utilization, program financing, and placement of graduates in the world of work. Partnership evaluation was carried out by monitoring the collaboration results, deliberation, adjustments to the MoU, consideration of student needs, and renewal to improve quality and collaboration.

Keywords

Business, industrial, partnership, quality of education, strategy, vocational school

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Introduction

The rapid development of technology means educational institutions are constantly struggling to keep up with the latest changes (Hacioglu & Sevgilioglu, 2019). Likewise, with vocational education institutions, many factors cause the low quality of the provision of vocational education today so the challenges faced by vocational schools in this era of globalization are increasingly difficult. One important factor is the preparation of soft skills, development of personal potential, career development, and partnerships with DUDI which are not yet optimal for vocational school students (Daryono et al., 2020; Werdiningsih et al., 2021).

Until now, vocational education has been the main route for providing skilled workers at the secondary level. Through the provision of vocational education, skilled mid-level workers can be produced and developed to meet development needs in various fields of employment. The main characteristic of vocational education requires a management style, namely link, and match, which is in line and synergistic with the developments and needs of related stakeholders (Arjanto et al., 2023; Disas, 2018). In vocational school education, the main stakeholder is the suitability of competencies with the needs of the business world and industry (Ai, 2021; Arifin, 2012; Samsudi et al., 2016). Employment is an important thing in a business, and the Indonesian economy depends on the number of graduates employed. Vocational school graduates are prepared to enter the world of work and industry. However, the open unemployment rate for vocational school graduates is still higher than at other levels of education (Hoffman, 2011).

SMK Negeri 1 Blitar is included in the Technology and Engineering Skills Group and has seven skill programs and ten skill competencies according to the 2013 Curriculum Structure. SMK Negeri 1 Blitar has superior programs that are used to add educational services to students, including, Industrial Class National scale, Professional Certification Institute (*LSP-PI*), and support for student achievement through Student Competency Competitions (*LKS*).

SMK Negeri 1 Blitar, with all the resources, has the potential to act as a solution to problems and answer the challenges of employment competitiveness as follows: a. Alignment of the vocational school curriculum with *SKKNI* (Indonesian National Work Competency Standards). The learning system must have a clear and focused concept according to industry needs; b. Curriculum verification, and content review with the industrial world by improving learning materials and assessments; c. Increasing the effectiveness of learning and a conducive learning process of quality and character; d. Improving the quality of certification tests through the Professional Certification Institute; e. Providing mental readiness skills for work (employment / soft skills) f. Increasing collaboration with the industrial world in learning management.

Many challenges face vocational education in Indonesia in the 21st century, including competition from other countries in the region and the need to find ways to collaborate with the business world to improve education (Baitullah & Wagiran, 2019; Ismail & Hassan, 2019; Ismail, 2020). One way to do this is by developing partnerships with the world of business and industry (Habibi & Hapsari, 2021a). There are similar goals for partnerships between vocational schools and the world of business and industry, namely, improving quality

according to market needs, synchronizing curriculum and school program synergy, and increasing the absorption capacity and placement of school graduates into the world of work. Collaboration between vocational schools and the world of business and industry has an impact on improving the quality of vocational school graduates, in terms of input, process, output, and outcome (Helmy, 2014). Partnerships with innovation and changes in the management of human resources, budgets, and infrastructure, government efforts to develop a teaching factory curriculum through partnerships, and schools preparing students to have superior competencies, be creative, innovative, and understand the digital world (Lestari & Pardimin, 2019; Samsudi et al., 2016). This research aims to comprehensively examine vocational school management and strategies for improving partnerships with *DUDI* and their impact on improving the quality of education.

Literature Review

Partnerships between vocational high schools and the world of business and industry are paramount to improving the quality of graduates and preparing them to enter the world of work. This partnership can involve various aspects such as curriculum development, industry practices, in-house training, and on-the-job training for students and teachers (Purnamawati et al., 2019; Ubaidah et al., 2021). Several essential aspects of this partnership include: 1) Strategic planning: Partnerships are formed through strategic planning, which involves school-industry collaboration in developing curriculum, facilities, infrastructure, teachers and materials; 2) Implementation: Partnership implementation includes orchestral and practical learning, industrial practice, and field work practice; 3) Supervision : Industry partners often administer industry standard competency tests and provide supervision for practical learning experiences; 4) Evaluation and monitoring: Partnerships are evaluated through regular observations of the level of interest of applicants and the level of target achievement; 5) Teacher professional development : Teachers participate in professional development programs to increase their knowledge and skills related to Industry 4.0 and STEM components, which are important for preparing students to enter the world of work; 6) Collaboration: Collaboration between schools and industry can result in increased graduate competency, better alignment with industry needs, and increased motivation for teachers and students (Akgunduz & Mesutoglu, 2021; Al-Amien & Santosa, 2022; Habibi & Hapsari, 2021a; Suroto & Hung, 2018).

Some of the challenges faced in implementing this partnership include suboptimal program progress, inappropriate work units, the realization of the memorandum of understanding, clarity of partnership activities, and absorption of graduate competencies (Purnamawati et al., 2019; Setiawan et al., 2023). Schools and industries need to work closely together to overcome these challenges, with a focus on student interests and the effectiveness of partnership programs (Habibi & Hapsari, 2021a).

The involvement of important elements in the strategic process of school management, starting from environmental observation, strategic planning, implementation, and evaluation, must be carried out so that the management strategy runs well (Bafadal et al., 2024; Freeman, 2015). Schools also need to empower all internal aspects of the school such as teachers and external parties such as industry and parents. In empowering the administration of the

education system, it is necessary to establish a management model as the basis or paradigm used in managing the education system (Sumaryanto et al., 2022; Maisyaroh et al., 2021; Santiago, 2009). In that context, human and technical have been arranged in an organization to achieve certain goals. In this case, vocational school management is an activity related to the arrangement or planning, implementation, and supervision of various human resources and other resources in educational organizations at vocational schools (Freeman, 2015; Saberan & Susilawati, 2019)

To comprehensively examine the historical development and current research situation in school partnership management using a bibliometric analysis approach (Arjanto, 2023; Hadi et al., 2023). Based on bibliometric analysis via VOS viewer regarding school partnership management which has a paramount relationship, especially to vocational education, to study in more depth a path analysis is carried out that has a relationship with partnership management and other indicators to show novelty. from the research carried out, presented as in the following figure:

Figure 1. Visual mapping of the 2018–2023 partnership management network (Base data Scopus by hazing's publish or perish)

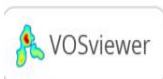
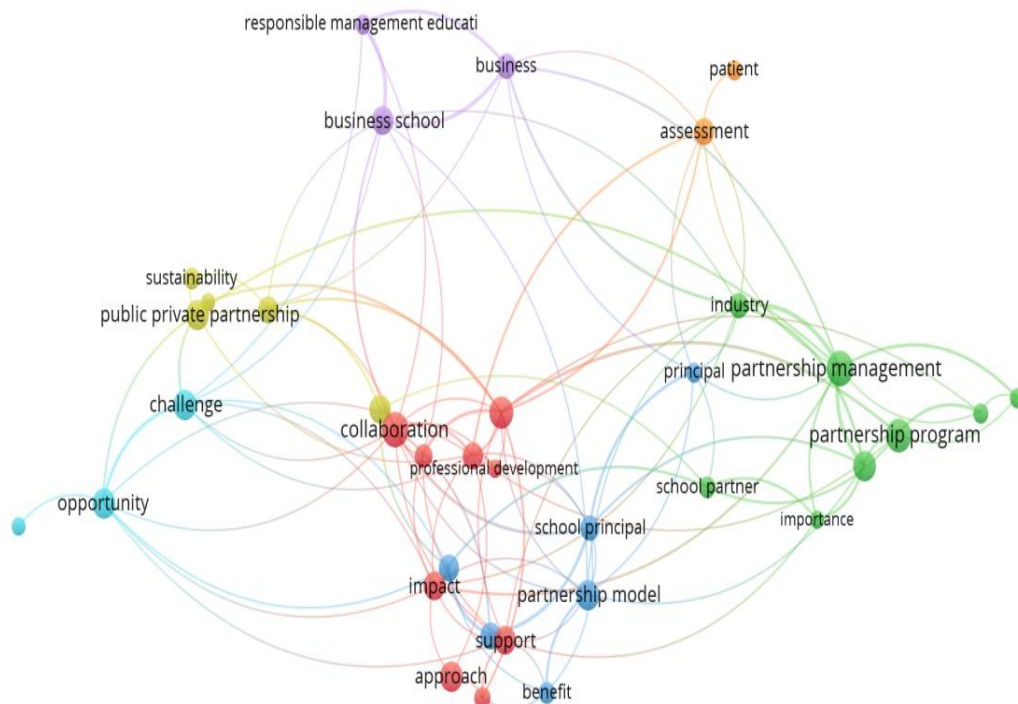
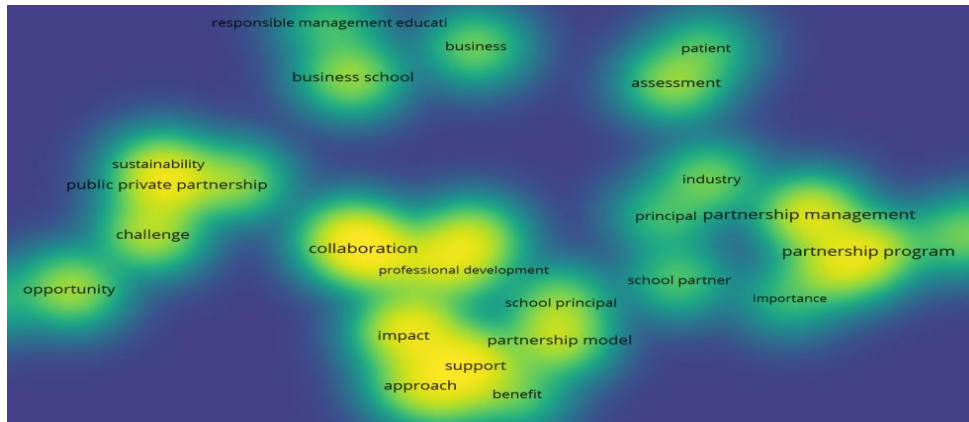


Figure 2. Density visualization mapping



Methodology

Research design, site, and participants

This research uses a type of qualitative research that places more emphasis on meaningfulness. This type of research is intended to understand the phenomena experienced by research subjects, such as behavior, perceptions, motivations, and actions, holistically and comprehensively (Bumbungan et al., 2022; Ulfatin, 2015). The presence of researchers in qualitative research is absolute because researchers act as key research instruments and data collectors (Miles et al., 2014; Sugiyono, 2016; Ulfatin, 2015).

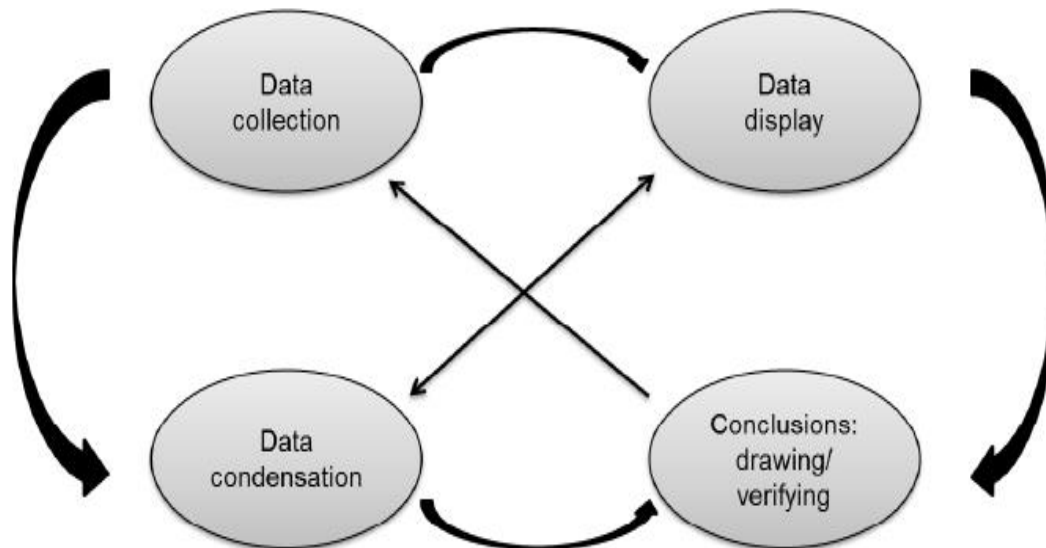
Table 1. Data source

No	Activities	Data sources
1	Interviews	Headmaster Vice Principal Head of Industrial Work Practices Head of Department Productive Teacher Student Alumni Industry Partners
2	Observations	Facilities and Infrastructure Student Competency Development Activities Partnership Implementation Partnership Management in the Research Period
3	Documents	Vocational School Profile Organizational Structure School Strategic Plan Industry Based Curriculum Guidelines Internal Policy Guidelines/Policy Decrees Vocational School Partnership Data with DUDI (MoU) Organizing the Congeniality Team

Data collection and analysis

In this research, researchers conducted research on the stakeholders of SMK Negeri 1 Blitar, specifically to reveal the strategy and implementation of partnership management with DUDI. Qualitative data is obtained through the collection of written or verbal data and information, which will later be made into sentences based on interviews with informants, observation, and documentation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Miles et al., 2014). In selecting data sources, purposive sampling and snowball sampling techniques were also used, considering that the data sources in this research were based on referrals from previous informants to track and expand the variations in information that might exist (Patton, 2003). Three types of analytical activities are involved in data analysis: data condensation, data presentation, and conclusion drawing (Miles et al., 2014). Each activity is a cyclical and interactive process, with data collection itself a continuous process.

Figure 3. *Data analysis components*

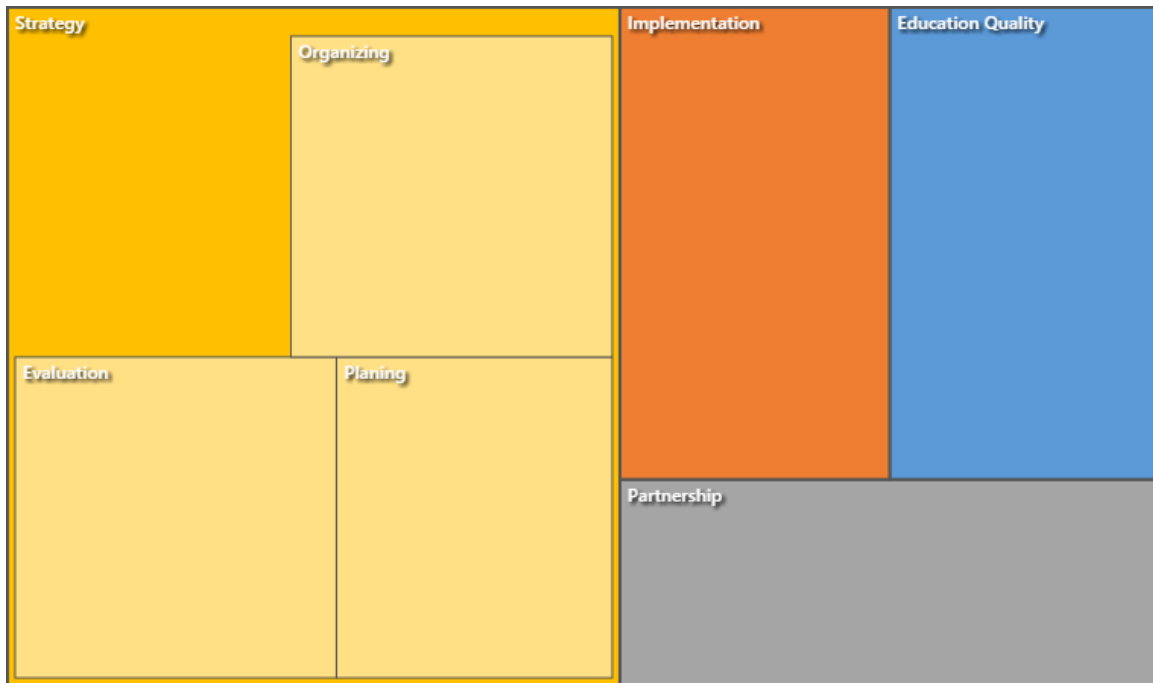


Data analysis used condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/ verifying with the N-Vivo tools. Data analysis is carried out using the following steps: 1) import data/data source, 2) data coding, 3) coding comparison, 4) comparison diagram, 5) data presentation; and 6) concluding (Edwards-Jones, 2014; Priyatni et al., 2020). Data validity uses credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability techniques. This research was conducted to observe, illustrate, and describe the strategy of SMK Negeri 1 Blitar in improving partnerships with DUDI.

Findings and Discussion

Based on field data findings that have been analyzed using N-Vivo, the following data are presented,

Figure 4. *Data visualization diagram based on findings*



In connection with the educational concept of achieving quality education in a vocational high school, good planning is needed for various learning activities. One of the planning stages in establishing partnerships with the world of business and industry is incorporating elements of school partnerships with the world of business and industry into the school's vision, mission, and goals (Habibi & Hapsari, 2021b; Purnamawati et al., 2019; Suroto & Hung, 2018). If vocational schools can incorporate elements of school partnerships with the world of business and industry into the school's vision, mission, and goals, it will make it easier to achieve shared directions and goals to improve the quality of education. SMK Negeri 1 Blitar includes industrial elements in its vision, mission, and goals, including: a) Developing an education unit curriculum together with industry and the world of work, society, and stakeholders; b) Developing vocational excellence through competency-based training, production-based training, and teaching factory learning; c) Improve academic and non-academic achievements; d) Realizing link and match; and e) Produce competent graduates can adapt, have an entrepreneurial spirit and are competitive.

At the planning stage, SMK Negeri 1 Blitar carries out internal and external analysis of the school, formulates a partnership management structure with business entities and the industrial world, selects and sorts the business and industrial world, proposes school

collaboration with the business and industrial world and completes facilities for school collaboration with the business and industry world. SMK Negeri 1 Blitar carries out planning, organizing, implementation, and control/evaluation so that partnership management will be more effective and efficient. The involvement of important elements in the strategic process of school management, starting with environmental observation, strategic planning, implementation, and evaluation, must be carried out so that the management strategy runs smoothly (Akgunduz & Mesutoglu, 2021; Freeman, 2015).

In empowering the administration of the education system, it is necessary to establish a management model as the basis or paradigm used in managing the education system (Habibi & Hapsari, 2021). In that context, human and technical resources have been arranged in an organization to achieve certain goals. In this case, vocational school management is an activity related to the arrangement, planning, implementation, and supervision of various human resources and other resources in educational organizations at vocational schools (Freeman, 2015; Saberan & Susilawati, 2019). The implementation of the educational partnership will be effective, as demonstrated by the achievement of the indicators determined in the cooperation policy (Kuncoro et al., 2010; Ubaidah et al., 2021). It can be concluded that partnerships between vocational schools and the world of business and industry in providing education can further encourage educational activities to become more efficient and effective so that the realization of partnership objectives can run smoothly. The implementation of educational partnerships will be effective, as demonstrated by the achievement of indicators determined in the cooperation policy, such as improving the quality of learning, the quality of student success, the alignment and relevance of the curriculum with the world of work and increasing the level of absorption of graduates in the world of work.

Figure 5. Frequency of partnerships based on findings



SMK Negeri 1 Blitar plans: a) a 5-year of Year Medium Term Plan partnership program; b) selecting and sorting the world of business and industry by the expertise program; c) formulating a partnership management structure with industry; d) equipping facilities for

school collaboration with business and industry standards; e) forming a team in charge of industrial relations; and f) making a mutual agreement as outlined in the MoU. Planning is carried out to improve partnerships that can be established between vocational schools and the world of business and industry.

It is in line with Habibi's opinion that cooperation carried out by the school is the main thing and is the school's main program in public relations which is solely aimed at channeling students into the industrial world according to their field of expertise (Habibi & Hapsari, 2021a). Partnership planning can be done through discussion forums with school management and brainstorming with related parties such as teachers, employees, students, and those from the business and industrial worlds. Forms of collaboration carried out by schools within the business and industrial world include curriculum synchronization, apprenticeship and internship programs, training program collaboration, and graduate distribution program collaboration. Efforts to increase school partnerships (cooperation) with the business and industrial world by involving all components related to the learning process, internal and non-internal school institutions, as well as channeling and placing workers according to students' majors, are important things to do (Sumaryanto et al., 2022; McLean & Behringer, 2008; Meirawan et al., 2022).

At the organizing stage, SMK Negeri 1 Blitar formed a team or working group in industrial relations and had their respective main tasks and functions. (working professionally and avoiding holding multiple positions), then the principal, together with the Deputy Head for Curriculum and Public Relations/Industrial Relations, formed a working group (*Pokja*) namely the PKL/internship team, Production Unit, and BKK team. The organization carried out in-school partnership activities with the business and industrial world to form teams or work groups in charge of industrial relations and have their respective main tasks and functions. For partnerships to be established optimally, the management of partnerships (cooperation) with the business and industrial world in Industrial Work Practices (*Prakerin*) must be by applicable procedures to equip students with skill competencies by the demands of national work standards (Yurnalissa & Maria, 2019).

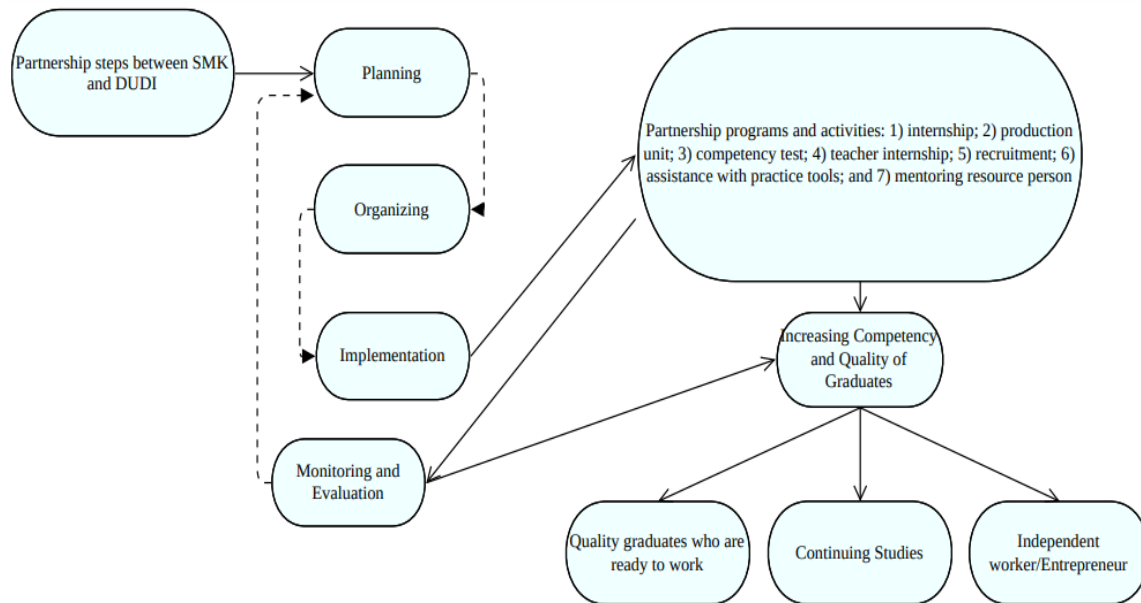
SMK Negeri 1 Blitar's efforts to establish partnerships resulted in the agreements outlined in 14 MoUs. The collaboration created includes a) management of joint activity programs between education providers and partner institutions; b) utilization of infrastructure owned by partner institutions; c) program financing to realize the program to be implemented; and e) utilization or placement of educational institution graduates into the world of work or commodities needed by partner institutions. Evaluation of the implementation of the partnership between SMK Negeri 1 Blitar and Industry is based on: a) looking at the results of monitoring related to the implementation of the collaboration; b) deliberation for the common interest; c) adjustment of the MoU to improve quality and cooperation; d) considering students' needs; e) renewal of cooperation between parties.

Based on the fact that some vocational school graduates who have worked in industry are less able to adapt to the environment and infrastructure in industry and have not worked according to their competencies, it shows that there are even more problems in the implementation of inappropriate operations in operating facilities that should be mastered (Habibi & Hapsari, 2021a; Mustofa et al., 2021; Widayana & Mukhadis, 2020). It means that educational facilities have a very high influence on vocational schools to adapt to industry

needs. The importance of training for vocational school students who are educated by partners by the needs of partners in the field will certainly bring great benefits to students, to schools, and to the world of business and industry itself. The partnership between vocational schools and the world of business and industry is not just "existing", but students can be channeled optimally according to the world of work that requires them.

Limited collaboration with industry regarding programs in vocational high schools results in limited opportunities for schools to place students as apprentices in the industrial world (Al-Amien & Santosa, 2022; Ubaidah et al., 2021). Therefore, the opportunity to improve walking skills is less than optimal. Another impact of the limited world of industrial cooperation is the limited opportunity to update learning materials to develop learning curricula (Grubb, 2006). For this reason, cooperation between government, industry, and vocational schools must run smoothly. The government makes regulations that require the industrial world to collaborate with vocational schools and provides tax-reduction incentives for the industrial world to collaborate with vocational schools (Nambiar et al., 2019). Collaboration with vocational high schools should be seen as an investment in human resources because apprentices can directly enter the industrial world with the skills needed by industry. Placing students in internships in industry is a place for students to practice and a place where students are introduced to careers in the industry that they will face after graduating (Anjum, 2020; Van Stekelenburg et al., 2020).

Figure 6. *Concept of vocational school partnership model with DUDI*



Conclusion and Implications

Partnerships between vocational high schools and the world of business and industry are paramount to improving the quality of education. To achieve an effective partnership, good planning, as well as effective organization, implementation, and evaluation are needed.

Partnership planning is carried out through discussion forums and involves all related parties, including teachers, employees, and students, as well as parties from the business and industrial worlds. Forms of collaboration that can be carried out between schools and the world of business and industry include curriculum synchronization, apprenticeship and internship programs, training, and placement of graduates by industry needs.

To improve the quality of the partnership, a good evaluation is carried out by looking at monitoring results, coordinating with the business and industrial world in resolving problems, providing rewards for the advantages provided by the business and industrial world, and adjusting the MoU to improve the quality and cooperation that have occurred so that you can determine strategies and set effective goals. Overall, partnerships between vocational schools and the world of business and industry can encourage the efficiency and effectiveness of education, as well as increase the compatibility between the curriculum and the demands of the world of work, so that the partnership goals can be well achieved. The planning stages in establishing partnerships with the world of business and industry are carried out by incorporating elements of school partnerships with the world of business and industry into the school's vision, mission, and goals. Through link and match as a form of partnership, it can provide benefits. Planning, determining appropriate strategies, organizing industrial relations units, and evaluating the achievements of managing collaboration must be carried out by SMK. The partnership that is established must be stated in a MoU to strengthen both parties.

It is necessary to study the process of formulating the vision, mission, and goals that will be used as a pilot project to be achieved by the Vocational School. On the other hand, the relevant organizing process between vocational schools and industry does not reduce the essence and substance of the partnership process itself. Planning and implementing partnerships with business and industry requires effective communication between SMK and industrial partners. Good collaboration, regular exchange of information, and continuous evaluation are the keys to success in establishing a mutually beneficial partnership for all parties involved. Matters relating to determining personnel processes, implementation, and evaluation of partnerships need to be revitalized as a form of system improvement.

Disclosure Statement

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest.

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