



Implementation of the center of excellence vocational school program at private vocational school Delisha Deli Serdang, North Sumatra

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Abstract

This study evaluates the implementation of the Center of Excellence Vocational School program at Delisha Private Vocational School with a focus on link-and-match partnerships, especially in Fashion Design and Production (DPB) competencies. Initial observations and interviews revealed that the program's implementation has not been optimal, hampered by constraints on facilities, infrastructure, and a limited number of productive teachers. Using qualitative descriptive methods, data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation studies to analyze the quality of program implementation. Of the nine partnership indicators, only five meet the General of Vocational Education standards, including the development of a common curriculum for the world of work and the implementation of upskilling for teachers. However, there are shortcomings in project learning that do not fully reflect the world of work, competency certification that is not fully integrated with the industrial world, and the absence of a teaching factory production unit. This research aims to provide a comprehensive overview of program implementation and recommendations for improvement.

Keywords: SMK center of excellence, link and match, fashion design and production, world of work partnership, program implementation

Introduction

The world of work has been one of the main topics that has high urgency in Indonesia for a long time. As time goes by, the demands of the world of work are increasing, forcing the workforce to have good quality and professional competence in various fields. Rapid changes in technology and globalization further strengthen the need for an adaptable and innovative workforce. Therefore, careful preparation in the form of education, skills training, and adequate access to information is very important. This preparation includes the development of relevant knowledge, technical skills, and soft skills, such as communication skills and teamwork. Thus, the workforce can face increasingly fierce competition and meet the needs of a dynamic job market, as well as contribute effectively to economic growth and national development (Anggraini *et al.*, n.d.; Latief *et al.*, 2019) ^[1, 3]. One of the efforts to improve the quality of the workforce is through education. As in opinion Roseno & Wibowo, (2019) ^[13] that education is an aspect that has an important role in determining the quality of Human Resources.

Educational institutions have a focus on preparing the workforce before entering the world of work, one of which is vocational education or vocational high schools which can be abbreviated as SMK. Because vocational schools have the goal of preparing students to face the world of work, the graduates produced need to be given directions to become graduates who have a job-ready character (Hartanto, 2019) ^[2]. Vocational school graduates are expected to have skills and competencies that are by their field of expertise so that they can be directly absorbed by the business world and industry. As such, they can contribute effectively in various sectors, helping to increase productivity and support local and national economic growth (Latief *et al.*, n.d.; Suharyanto, 2015) ^[17].

But there are still problems *mismatch* namely the gap between the world of vocational education and the world of work. Therefore, the competencies produced by vocational education graduates must have relevance and suitability to match the needs of the world of work. Putranto (2017) ^[11], *mismatch* This is because vocational schools have not been able to adapt to the world of work environment because the availability of work workshops is inadequate and the cooperation established with the world of work has not been implemented optimally (Maulina & Yoenanto, 2022) ^[6].

As one of the solutions to overcome this, the Directorate General of Vocational Education created the Center of Excellence Vocational High School (SMK) program in 2021. This program is one of the main programs that is a continuation of the previous program, namely SMK *Center of Excellence (CoE)* in 2020 and SMK Revitalization in 2019. The Kenggulan Central Vocational School program is an effort to realize the development of vocational school quality through partnerships with the world of work (same, 2021). The purpose of this program in general is to create vocational school graduates who can be absorbed by the world of work or can be entrepreneurial independently through in-depth and comprehensive adjustment of vocational education with the world of work (same, 2021).

The implementation of the Center of Excellence Vocational School program includes socialization, selection, determination, implementation, and evaluation. To be able to achieve the goals of this program, one of the program implementations carried out by SMK Pusat Excellence is partnerships *link and match* comprehensively according to the agreement with the world of work. Therefore, the partnership process must be based on a sense of mutual need and benefit both parties (Rojaki *et al.*, 2021) ^[12]. The partnership effort is carried out by SMK Center of Excellence through the fulfillment of aspects of *Link and*

Match, including curriculum developed together, project-based learning, instructors from the world of work, fieldwork practices, competency certification, *Upskilling Reskilling* teacher *Teaching Factory* and absorption commitment.

Several previous studies discuss related *links and matches*, as well as research from (Wibowo *et al.*, 2022) ^[18] which discusses the training carried out by SMK Central Excellence teachers only, this is by one of the points *link and match* that is *upskilling* and *reskilling* for teachers. Then research from (Sholihatinnisa *et al.*, 2021) ^[15] which discusses the implementation of the Pancasila student profile only as part of the curriculum developed with the world of work. Other research discusses one of the series of programs for the implementation of the SMK Center of Excellence in general such as research from (Novika, 2022) ^[9] which discussed the implementation of assistance for the SMK Center of Excellence.

This research focuses on vocational schools with competence in Fashion Design and Production or DPB for short, considering that there are so many garment businesses that are currently being carried out. So that this will open up many opportunities for vocational schools to align with the world of work. In addition, there has been no previous research explaining the implementation process of the Central Vocational School Program of Excellence on the competence of DPB expertise.

This research was conducted at Delisha Private Vocational School. Because Delisha Private Vocational School is a relatively new vocational school that was established in the 2018/2019 school year but has been designated as a Center of Excellence Vocational School since 2023, this is a special attraction for Delisha Private Vocational School to be used as an object of research.

By the field observations that have been made, the implementation of the Center of Excellence Vocational School program through the *link and match* at Delisha Private Vocational School is still not optimal. This is also strengthened by the results of a preliminary interview that has been conducted previously with the head of the DPB expertise competence, who said that there are obstacles in implementing the SMK PK program, namely in terms of the availability of the number of facilities and infrastructure that have not supported the implementation process of the SMK PK program properly and also the number of productive teachers of DPB which is still very lacking. These obstacles will greatly affect Delisha Private Vocational Schools in implementing *link and match* through the Center of Excellence Vocational School program, so to find out this, it is necessary to conduct research at the Delisha Private Vocational School with the title "Implementation of the Center of Excellence Vocational School Program at Delisha Private Vocational Schools as seen from *the Link and Match partnership* with the business world/industrial world". The goal to be achieved from this study is to try to describe and find a case picture related to the implementation process of the Center of Excellence Vocational School program based on *the Link and Match partnership* on the competency of Fashion Design and Production (DPB) expertise at Delisha Private Vocational School.

Research Methods

This research was conducted at Delisha Private Vocational School, Jl. Karya Bakti, Tandam Hilir II Village, Hamparan

Perak District, Deli Serdang Regency. This school has competence in Fashion Design and Production and has implemented the Center of Excellence Vocational School program since the 2018/2019 school year. The research took place from July to August 2024, with subjects including the Deputy for Curriculum, Deputy Head for Industrial Relations, Head of Fashion Design and Production Competence, teachers, and students. Initial observations and research permits have been obtained, and the research object can be expanded as needed.

The purpose of this study is to describe the implementation of the Center of Excellence Vocational School program at Delisha Private Vocational School based on the Link and Match partnership. The method used is qualitative descriptive with a case study approach. Data was collected through observation, interviews, and analysis of related documents, as well as scientific literature (Sugiyono, 2021) ^[16]. Descriptive data was analyzed to explain the quality and meaning of facts related to program implementation.

The data collected includes information about field conditions according to the focus of the research. Primary data was obtained from interviews and direct observations, while secondary data was obtained from supporting documents. Data collection techniques include structured interviews, direct observations, and documentation studies. Interview instruments and voice recorders are used to ensure the validity of the data. Observation was carried out to observe activities and conditions related to the implementation of the program.

According to (Moleong, 2015) ^[8], observation requires special attention so that the results are accurate and relevant. Some important things in making observations are (a) recording the results of observations objectively, based on data seen, heard, or felt, without including personal opinions; (b) avoiding recording data that is approximate; (c) presenting facts thoroughly to understand the context; and (d) focus on the main object of observation. The results of the observation include a description of the subject or object, and a description of the setting, activities, and special events that support in-depth study.

Documentation studies involve collecting and analyzing supporting documents, both written and pictorial, to supplement the interview data. Delisha Private Vocational School was chosen because of its relevance to the research theme, namely the Center of Excellence Vocational School program in the context of Fashion Design and Production (DPB) competencies. The research was carried out with the approval of the school and permission obtained through a letter from the State University of Jakarta.

The initial step of the research includes the creation of data collection guidelines, introduction, theoretical foundation, and methodology that are tested in the proposal proposal seminar. Researchers prepare equipment such as notebooks, stationery, cellphones for voice recording, and photo documentation.

Data analysis using Interactive Models (Miles *et al.*, 2014) ^[7] with three steps: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion. Data reduction clarifies and organizes data, presents data through narrative text, tables, or graphs, and draws conclusions to explore the meaning of data. The validity test of the data is carried out through triangulation of sources, methods, and theories, ensuring that the data is accurate and reliable. The research report is prepared systematically so that the results are easy to understand.

Results and Discussion

The implementation of the Center of Excellence Vocational School program has been implemented at Delisha Private Vocational School on the competency of Fashion Design and Production (DPB) expertise since 2023, although there is still a lot of development that needs to be done, especially in the implementation of alignment with the world of work through the *link and match* partnerships. The Center of Excellence Vocational Training Program is a program from the Directorate General of Vocational Education, so there are several standards related to the *link and match partnership policy* that need to be adjusted by the implementation of the Center of Excellence Vocational Training program. The following is the result of research data analysis related to the implementation of the Center of Excellence Vocational School program based on the *link and match partnership* carried out by Delisha Private Vocational School on the competence of Fashion Design and Production expertise.

Curriculum Developed Together

Based on the results of the research, Delisha Private Vocational School has implemented the Independent Curriculum which is prepared in the form of the Operational Curriculum of the Education Unit (KOSP). This curriculum is prepared based on the needs of each educational unit, and in principle, the concept of KOSP has long been applied in the Education Unit Level Curriculum (KTSP). The change from KTSP to the Independent Curriculum does not show significant differences, but there is an important innovation, namely the involvement of universities and the world of work in the curriculum preparation process.

Delisha Private Vocational School has received assistance from Medan State University in the KOSP development training and curriculum preparation process. However, this assistance has not been fully integrated, because the curriculum that has been prepared only follows the Basic Framework and Learning Outcomes according to the provisions of the Ministry of Education and Culture, without directly involving the world of work. This is because the competence of DPB expertise at Delisha Private Vocational School has not yet collaborated with the world of work in the early stages of curriculum preparation.

However, in August 2023, the expertise competence of the DPB of the Delisha Private Vocational School collaborated with CV. Prestasi Jaya Mandiri, a garment production company. This collaboration is listed in the MoU and is planned to be implemented in the next school year. However, the preparation of the curriculum with the world of work is still in the planning stage and has not been implemented directly, so it has not met the minimum standards of the Link and Match Partnership.

Currently, the independent curriculum is applied to grades X and XI in the DPB expertise competencies, but not in grade XII. The curriculum structure combines national and regional content subjects into general group subjects, as well as vocational specialization subjects. Related subjects such as textiles, sewing technology, patterns, and design for class X, are integrated in the Fundamentals of Skills Programme subjects. The basic competencies in the 2013 curriculum in these subjects are the same as the Learning Outcomes in the Independent Curriculum, although there are differences in the organization of subjects.

For the implementation of the Center of Excellence Vocational School Program, the curriculum structure not only includes general and vocational subjects but also the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project. SMK Swasta Delisha implemented this project with the theme "anti-bullying" through a three-day workshop for 30 student representatives. However, the implementation of this action has not covered all students optimally. Roots Day, as the culmination of a series of actions, only involves symbolically pronouncing a pledge and signing not to commit bullying at school. In addition, the theme chosen is less relevant to vocational education and the process of linking and matching with the world of work, so it is not fully effective in developing students' soft skills and hard skills.

The syllabus in the independent curriculum was developed into the Learning Objectives Flow (ATP). The content of the Syllabus and ATP is the same, with differences in the achievement of the Pancasila Student Profile. However, the achievement indicators of the Pancasila Student Profile are not included pragmatically. Teaching modules and lesson plans are collected in one teaching module, making them more efficient for students and teachers to use.

Overall, Delisha Private Vocational School has implemented the Independent Curriculum by the provisions of the Ministry of Education and Culture. However, the development of the curriculum with the World of Work is still not optimal, because cooperation with the World of Work will only be established in August 2023. The preparation of a curriculum that directly involves the world of work has not been implemented, so it has not met the minimum standards of the Link and Match Partnership.

Project-Based Learning

Data from the research shows that the implementation of Field Work Practice (PKL) on the competency of Fashion Design and Production (DPB) expertise at Delisha Private Vocational School currently lasts for three months. This duration has not met the Link and Match Partnership standard which requires street vendors for one semester or six months. This short period does not provide adequate opportunities for students to gain in-depth and comprehensive work experience. In addition, the implementation of street vendors has not been fully by the curriculum structure of the Central Excellence Vocational School which places street vendors in grade XII in the first semester, so the preparation of street vendors is not optimal. Although Delisha Private Vocational School has collaborated with various industries, such as CV. Prestasi Jaya Mandiri, Rumah Mode Wulan Gumilang, W/B Rumah Sewing House, Yuwa Boutique, and Adah Mode, the placement of students is still based on their grades or competencies. Students with less competence are often placed in locations agreed with parents at vocational schools, they should be given opportunities in the industry for hands-on experience.

To improve the quality of street vendors, teachers need to prepare students better, both in terms of knowledge and skills. Cooperation with the world of work also needs to be expanded and improved, by establishing a more comprehensive MoU. This will increase the relevance and effectiveness of street vendors, thereby meeting the standards of Link and Match Partnership and providing more equitable benefits for all students.

The Role of Instructors from the World of Work

Based on the results of the research, the competence of the DPB Private Vocational School Delisha has brought in instructors from the world of work by inviting experts to provide learning to class XII students in preparation for the Expertise Competency Test. This activity is carried out using a block system. The learning process that was carried out by instructors from the world of work at that time was in the form of providing materials, then a question and answer session with students, and ending with drawing practice.

The implementation of the learning process by experts is carried out by the expertise competence of the DPB of the Delisha Private Vocational School with a block system whose implementation time is compiled into one time and carried out in 10 days on November 11 – 22, 2023. This implementation time is effective enough to be able to develop students' competencies continuously. Especially if the implementation of this learning process is also implemented in preparation for the Expertise Competency Test. The implementation of Instructors from the world of work using the block system in Ten Days is the number of lesson hours that have been successfully used, which only reaches a total of 100 lesson hours. This is by the minimum standard of the *Link and Match Partnership* which stipulates that the achievement of the learning process by instructors from the world of work reaches 50 hours/semester/expertise program.

Field Work Practice (PKL)

The data from the research shows that the implementation of Field Work Practice (PKL) on the competency of Fashion Design and Production (DPB) expertise at Delisha Private Vocational School has been carried out for three months. However, this duration does not meet the Link and Match Partnership standard which requires street vendors to last for one semester or six months. This short implementation period does not provide enough time for students to gain in-depth and comprehensive work experience. In addition, the implementation of street vendors has not been adjusted to the curriculum structure of the Central Vocational School of Excellence, which places street vendors in class XII in the first semester, so that the preparation of street vendors is less intensive.

Although Delisha Private Vocational School has collaborated with various related industries, such as CV. Prestasi Jaya Mandiri, Rumah Mode Wulan Gumilang, W/B Rumah Jemhit, Yuwa Boutique, and Adah Mode, the placement of students is still carried out based on their grades or competencies. Students with less competence are often placed in locations agreed with parents at vocational schools when they should be placed in industries to gain hands-on experience.

To improve the quality of street vendors, teachers must better prepare students, both in terms of knowledge and competence, so that they are ready to face challenges in the industry. Cooperation with the world of work needs to be expanded and improved, especially by establishing a more comprehensive MoU with related industries, to increase the relevance and effectiveness of street vendors. Thus, the implementation of street vendors can meet the standards of the Link and Match Partnership and provide more equitable benefits for all students.

Competency Certification

Students at the DPB expertise competency of Delisha Private Vocational School have carried out Competency

Certification through the Professional Certification Institute (LSP) P1 from SMK Negeri 8 Medan because Delisha Private Vocational School does not have its assessor. Ideally, as the implementer of the Center of Excellence Vocational Vocational Program, Delisha Private Vocational School should have its own LSP to facilitate the implementation of the Expertise Competency Test and increase the effectiveness of vocational education. However, all teachers in the DPB expertise competency of Delisha Private Vocational School have been certified as teachers and vocational fields of DPB, qualified to become a Center of Excellence Vocational School. Additional certifications beyond teacher competence, although not mandatory, are still needed to support the practical learning process and prepare students before entering the world of work.

The basic competencies that must be possessed by teachers, according to Law No. 14 of 2005, include the ability to develop the curriculum, understand the character of students, assessment, and evaluation, as well as master basic standards and competencies. To provide vocational competencies to students, the involvement of professional experts from the world of work is very important. Instructors from industry can provide practical materials, strengthen vocational schools' partnerships with the world of work, and increase the relevance of the curriculum.

Competency Certification, which is carried out in class XII as a graduation requirement, refers to the Indonesia National Work Competency Standards (SKKNI), such as the competence of sewing party clothes. To be more varied, competency exams should cover various fields according to students' interests.

Delisha Private Vocational School is currently using the Professional Certification Institute (LSP) from SMK Negeri 8 Medan for competency certification. However, the Link and Match Partnership standard requires certification as well from the world of work. Because cooperation with the World of Work only began in August 2023, competency certification from the World of Work is still in the planning stage. Alternatively, teachers can explore cooperation with related companies to expand certification options and increase relevance to industry needs.

Upskilling Reskilling Teacher

The minimum standard of the Center of Excellence Vocational School Program in Link and Match Partnership requires every teacher to take upskilling and reskilling training from the world of work. At Delisha Private Vocational School, DPB productive teachers have participated in training through SIMPKB, focusing on pattern making and design. However, this competency does not include the basic standards that must be possessed according to Law No. 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers, which includes four competencies: pedagogic (ability to manage learning), personality (teacher's character), professional (ability to perform teacher duties), and social (effective communication with students, education staff, and the community).

After evaluating the basic competencies required by Law No. 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers, it can be seen that the upskilling reskilling activities followed by the DPB Delisha Private Vocational School expertise competency teachers are less relevant to the basic competencies that a teacher must have. Therefore, it is more effective if this training not only focuses on practical skills

but also develops basic competencies such as learning models and strategies, as well as curriculum development.

To maximize training results, upskilling reskilling should include basic and practical competencies, for example, training on learning strategies related to practical materials and methods of using learning media. Another problem faced is the implementation of upskilling reskilling which has not been routinely carried out, due to difficulties in compiling a schedule at the same time between the learning and training processes. This often results in a lack of focus on learning and training.

Even if teachers already have upskilling reskilling certificates, it is important to ensure that the training is relevant to the basic competency standards that teachers must have. Thus, improving teacher competence can include the necessary practical and basic aspects.

Teaching Factory

The implementation of the Teaching factory in the competence of the DPB of Delisha Private Vocational School has not been realized because it is constrained by the availability of facilities and infrastructure. On the other hand, the successful cooperation between the competence of the DPB of Delisha Private Vocational School and the world of work, namely CV. Jaya Mandiri's achievements have just been obtained so the implementation of the teaching factory production unit is still in the planning stage. Although the competence of the DPB Private Vocational School Delisha has not yet reached the stage of creating a teaching factory production unit, it has produced products resulting from collaboration with expertise competencies in the form of school uniforms.

Although the competence of the DPB Vocational Vocational School Delisha's competence has produced collaboration products, this is still not by the standards of the Link and Match Partnership because the product is a collaborative product, so the competence of the DPB Vocational Vocational School Delisha's expertise does not yet have a teaching factory production unit. Therefore, the planning for the implementation of the teaching factory together with CV. Jaya Mandiri's achievements must be well prepared, both in terms of the readiness of students or teachers and other supporting aspects such as the availability of land to create production tools, procurement of materials, the availability of sufficient electricity, and so on. However, before implementing teaching factory-based learning, it is ensured that this method is by the characteristics of the school environment so that the teaching factory can be carried out effectively and will not harm any party.

Absorption Commitment

Absorption commitment is a commitment that comes from the world of work to absorb vocational school graduates so that they can work in the industry. The commitment to absorption has been obtained by the competence of the DPB expertise of the Delisha Private Vocational School from CV. Jaya Mandiri's achievement is one of the points contained in the MoU of cooperation. CV. Prestasi Jaya Mandiri will conduct an open *recruitment* to graduates of DPB Delisha Private Vocational School with expert competencies. However, the competency certification is given by CV. Jaya Mandiri's achievements still cannot be proven to be effective, because *open recruitment* for graduates of DPB

expertise competencies at Delisha Private Vocational Schools will only be held in the 2024/2025 school year.

In addition, to increase the percentage of absorption of graduates of DPB Delisha Private Vocational School expertise competencies, it would be better if the number of industries from the world of work that provide absorption commitments was also added. So that the job opportunities available for vocational school graduates will be wider. However, it can be said that the competence of the DPB of Delisha Private Vocational School has received a commitment to absorb from the world of work, namely CV. Jaya Mandiri Achievement. This is by the minimum standard of *link and match partnership*, namely that each Central Vocational School of Excellence must get an absorption commitment from the world of work, although the number of industries that are willing to provide an absorption commitment to the expertise competence of the DPB of Delisha Private Vocational Schools through the MoU must still be increased.

Collaborate

The minimum standard of cooperation between the implementation of the Center of Excellence Vocational School Program and the world of work can be in the form of scholarships, equipment donations, or others. Cooperation that comes from the world of work has been obtained by the competence of the expertise of the DPB of the Delisha Private Vocational School, which comes from CV. Prestasi Jaya Mandiri which is an apparel industry company in August 2023. Cooperation is carried out in various forms by the points contained in the MoU which can be seen in the attachment In this cooperation agreement CV. Prestasi Jaya Mandiri will also provide facility grants so that Delisha Private Vocational School together with CV. Prestasi Jaya Mandiri will create a teaching factory production unit.

Because the cooperation from CV Perstasi Jaya Mandiri is relatively new and there are not many cooperation points that have been carried out, this cooperation process still cannot determine its influence on the process of implementing *link and match* and there have been no significant changes due to this collaboration. Therefore, there needs to be a continuous evaluation in the implementation of this cooperation, so that both parties get equal benefits.

Although this collaboration is still relatively new and is still in the planning stage, it is necessary to revisit the effectiveness of the implementation of this collaboration both for the implementers of the Center of Excellence Vocational School Program and for the world of work, but the competence of the expertise of DPB Private Vocational School Delisha has received cooperation from the world of work, therefore it can be said that this collaboration is by the minimum standards of *link and match* partnerships which require the Central Vocational School of Excellence to have cooperation with the world of work.

Conclusion

The implementation of the Center of Excellence Vocational School program on the competence of Fashion Design and Production (DPB) expertise at Delisha Private Vocational School within the framework of the link and match partnership still needs improvement. Of the nine points that are indicators of link-and-match partnerships, only five points have been implemented according to the minimum

standards set by the General of Vocational Education. Points that have met the standards include the development of a curriculum with the world of work, the role of instructors from the world of work, the implementation of upskilling and reskilling for teachers, as well as the commitment and cooperation that exists with the world of work. Several points have not reached the minimum standard. These points include the implementation of project learning that does not fully reflect real projects from the world of work, competency certification that is still carried out with LSP from educational institutions, and the absence of a teaching factory production unit due to limited facilities and infrastructure. Improvements in these areas are needed so that the implementation of the Center of Excellence Vocational School program can be more effective and by the expectations of the link-and-match partnership.

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