

Public Relations in Industrial Work Practice at SMK Negeri 2 Tabanan

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Abstract

This study examines the role of school public relations (PR) in implementing Industrial Work Practice (Prakerin) at SMK Negeri 2 Tabanan, Bali. Using a qualitative case-study approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis involving the Vice Principal for Public Relations, the Prakerin Coordinator, supervising teachers, participating students, and partner-industry representatives. The findings show that PR performs three interrelated functions: communicating program information to internal and external stakeholders, facilitating student preparation and placement administration, and building partnerships with business and industry through memoranda of understanding, industrial visits, and joint evaluation. Implementation is constrained by limited human resources, delayed responses from some industry partners, occasional mismatches between placements and student competencies, limited parental participation, and budget constraints. As a single-school case study, the findings are context-specific and are not intended for statistical generalization. The study contributes practical guidance for strengthening school-industry coordination in vocational education. Its novelty lies in examining PR simultaneously as communicator, facilitator, and relationship builder across the Prakerin implementation process.

Keywords: *public relations, industrial work practice, vocational education, school-industry partnership, school communication*

1. Introduction

Vocational high schools (Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan, SMK) have a strategic mandate to prepare skilled, competent, and work-ready human resources. Unlike general senior high schools, SMK are designed to equip students with practical skills relevant to the needs of the business and industrial world (Dunia Usaha dan Dunia Industri, DU/DI). One of the main instruments for achieving this goal is the Industrial Work Practice program (Praktik Kerja Industri, Prakerin), which is an integral part of the Dual System of Education (Pendidikan Sistem Ganda, PSG). Prakerin provides students with the opportunity to experience the real work environment, apply theories learned at school, and develop soft skills that cannot always be taught in the classroom.

SMK Negeri 2 Tabanan, as one of the public vocational high schools in Tabanan Regency, Bali, has the responsibility to implement Prakerin effectively. The school offers four competency areas: Accounting and Financial Institution, Multimedia, Software Engineering, and Culinary Arts. The success of Prakerin at this school depends not only on the quality of the curriculum and teachers but also on the school's ability to establish and manage relationships with industry partners. In this context, Public Relations (PR) plays a strategically important role.

PR in the school environment, often referred to as School and Community Relations, has a strategic function to bridge communication between the school and various stakeholders, including DU/DI. In the context of Prakerin, PR acts as the spearhead in finding internship placements, establishing cooperation, preparing students, and ensuring that the program runs according to its objectives. Without optimal PR performance, Prakerin risks becoming merely a formality without significant impact on student competence.

Nevertheless, research on the role of PR in the implementation of Prakerin at SMK Negeri 2 Tabanan is still limited. Most existing studies focus more on general Prakerin management or on other

schools. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by providing an in-depth and comprehensive picture of how PR at SMK Negeri 2 Tabanan performs its role in supporting the success of Prakerin.

2. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

2.1. The Concept of Public Relations in Schools

Public Relations (PR) is a management function that seeks to build and maintain mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and its publics. In the educational context, school PR can be defined as a planned and continuous effort to create and maintain mutual understanding between the school and the community. The main objectives of school PR are to build a positive image, gain public support, and establish productive cooperation with various parties, including parents, the community, and the industrial world.

According to Frida Kusumastuti (2002), the purpose of PR is to maintain and form positive cognition, affection, and behavior of the public toward an organization or institution. In practice, school PR carries out internal and external functions. Internal functions include delivering information to all school members, such as meetings, student council coaching, and other school agendas. External functions include delivering information to the surrounding community, the school committee, and DU/DI, as well as establishing cooperation to support school programs, especially Prakerin.

School PR has several key roles. First, as a communicator, PR is responsible for delivering accurate and timely information to internal and external publics. Second, as a relationship builder, PR fosters good relations with various stakeholders to create a positive image and gain support. Third, as a facilitator, PR helps smooth the implementation of school programs by providing administrative services, mediation, and other support. These roles are highly relevant in the context of Prakerin, where PR becomes the main link between the school and DU/DI.

2.2. Industrial Work Practice (Prakerin) as Part of the Dual System

Industrial Work Practice (Prakerin) is an education and training program carried out in the workplace, with the aim of providing real experience to SMK students about the work environment, work culture, and competency demands required. Prakerin is the implementation of the Dual System of Education (PSG), an educational approach that combines learning at school with learning in industry. The legal basis for Prakerin in Indonesia includes Law Number 20 of 2003 on the National Education System and Law Number 15 of 2005 on Teachers and Lecturers, as well as various ministerial regulations governing vocational education.

The objectives of Prakerin include: (1) improving student competence according to the needs of DU/DI; (2) equipping students with real work experience; (3) fostering discipline, responsibility, and work ethic; (4) introducing students to industrial culture; and (5) increasing the competitiveness of SMK graduates in the job market. Prakerin is usually implemented in the final semester of grade XI or XII, with a duration of at least three months, depending on school policy and agreements with DU/DI.

The success of Prakerin is largely determined by the quality of cooperation between the school and industry. Schools need to ensure that the selected Prakerin placements are truly relevant to students' competency areas and capable of providing meaningful learning experiences. Therefore, school PR needs to conduct industry mapping, establish intensive communication, and conduct regular joint evaluations. Without good cooperation, Prakerin will only become a formality that does not provide positive impacts for students or the school.

2.3. The Role of Public Relations in the Implementation of Prakerin

In the implementation of Prakerin, school PR plays a vital role. Based on the literature review, the role of PR in Prakerin can be categorized into three main dimensions: as a communicator, as a facilitator, and as a relationship builder.

As a communicator, PR is responsible for delivering information about the Prakerin program to internal and external publics. To students, PR conveys information about schedules, requirements, and rules of Prakerin. To parents, PR provides explanations about the objectives and benefits of Prakerin, as

well as requesting their support. To DU/DI, PR submits cooperation proposals, explains student competencies, and negotiates placements. Effective two-way communication is essential to ensure that all parties have the same understanding and are ready to contribute.

As a facilitator, PR plays a role in preparing and smoothing the implementation of Prakerin. As a student facilitator, PR serves students in making permission letters, creating Prakerin guidebooks or manuals, and introducing students to the Prakerin placements. PR also works with internal school units, such as curriculum and student affairs, to determine the right time, provide briefing, and handle problems that arise during Prakerin. With this role, PR ensures that all administrative and logistical aspects of Prakerin run smoothly.

As a relationship builder, PR is responsible for establishing and maintaining cooperation with DU/DI. This involves activities such as industry tracing, signing memoranda of understanding (MoU), industrial visits, and joint evaluations. PR also needs to promote the school to industry to attract their interest in becoming Prakerin partners. According to research at SMK Telkom Malang, promotion is carried out through various media, such as brochures, banners, emails, websites, and social media. This strategy is important to build the school's image as a competent and responsive institution to industry needs. By maintaining good relationships, PR can ensure that the school has a sufficient network of industry partners to accommodate all students who will carry out Prakerin.

3. Methodology

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study method. The qualitative approach was chosen because this study aims to understand in depth how the role of PR in the implementation of Prakerin at SMK Negeri 2 Tabanan is carried out, as well as to explore the meanings and experiences of the actors involved. The case study allows the researcher to investigate the phenomenon in a real context, focusing on a single case, namely SMK Negeri 2 Tabanan.

The research location is SMK Negeri 2 Tabanan, located at Jalan Wisnu Belayu Marga, Batannyuh, Marga District, Tabanan Regency, Bali. This school was chosen because it is one of the public vocational high schools in Tabanan that has a Prakerin program and has established cooperation with various DU/DI. The research subjects include: (1) the Vice Principal for Public Relations, as a key informant who understands PR policies and strategies; (2) the Prakerin Coordinator, who is responsible for the technical implementation of Prakerin; (3) supervising teachers, who accompany students during Prakerin; (4) students of grade XI or XII who are currently or have already participated in Prakerin; and (5) representatives of partner DU/DI, who provide perspectives from the industry side. Informants were selected purposively, with the criteria being those directly involved in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of Prakerin.

Data collection techniques used include: (1) in-depth interviews, to gather rich and deep information from informants; (2) participant observation, to directly observe PR activities and interactions with DU/DI; and (3) document analysis, to examine related documents, such as PR work programs, MoUs with industry, Prakerin guidelines, and evaluation reports. The collected data were then analyzed using thematic analysis techniques, which involve data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. To ensure data validity, the researcher used source and method triangulation. Source triangulation was done by comparing information from various informants, while method triangulation was done by comparing data obtained from interviews, observations, and documents.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. General Overview of SMK Negeri 2 Tabanan

SMK Negeri 2 Tabanan was established in the 2004/2005 academic year as a response to the community's need for vocational education in Tabanan Regency. The existence of this school was fought for by the people of Belayu Traditional Village, who provided traditional village land as the school site. Initially, the school only had one competency program, namely Software Engineering. However, as it developed, the school opened several other competency programs, such as Multimedia, Accounting and

Financial Institution, and Culinary Arts. Currently, SMK Negeri 2 Tabanan has more than 1,200 students and has been accredited B.

The vision of SMK Negeri 2 Tabanan is “The realization of students who are educated, intelligent, skilled, independent, and globally competitive.” The school’s missions include: instilling faith and piety through the practice of religious teachings; implementing education through maximum learning, training, and guidance processes; developing fields of knowledge, technology, and life skills based on students’ interests, talents, and potential; fostering student independence through habituation, entrepreneurship, and planned and sustainable self-development activities; and establishing harmonious cooperation among school members, the environment, and other related institutions, both national and international. This last mission explicitly emphasizes the importance of cooperation with other institutions, including DU/DI, which is the main domain of PR.

In the school organizational structure, PR is under the coordination of the Vice Principal for Public Relations. PR is responsible for managing internal and external communication, building the school’s image, and establishing cooperation with various parties. In the context of Prakerin, PR works with the Prakerin Coordinator, supervising teachers, and other relevant units. The PR at SMK Negeri 2 Tabanan is currently held by Ni Putu Nanik Puspita Rini, S.S., M.Pd., who is also active in school activities, such as student council social actions.

4.2. The Role of Public Relations as a Communicator in the Implementation of Prakerin

The findings show that PR at SMK Negeri 2 Tabanan performs its role as a communicator quite well, although there are still some obstacles. As a communicator, PR is responsible for delivering information about Prakerin to internal and external publics. To students, PR conveys information about the Prakerin schedule, requirements, rules, and available placements. This information is delivered through various channels, such as socialization meetings, announcement boards, WhatsApp groups, and the school website. According to one student, “PR gave a fairly clear explanation of what we had to prepare before Prakerin, including the equipment and ethics we had to maintain.”

To parents, PR conveys information through parent meetings and circular letters. The main purpose of this communication is to gain parents’ support and understanding of the importance of Prakerin for their children’s future. However, based on interviews with several parents, some still feel they do not receive adequate information about the technical details of Prakerin, such as financing mechanisms and insurance. This indicates that communication to internal publics still needs improvement, especially in terms of transparency and completeness of information.

To DU/DI, PR communicates through official letters, emails, and direct meetings. PR submits cooperation proposals, explains the competencies of students to be placed, and negotiates the number of students that can be accepted. According to a representative of one partner DU/DI, “Communication with PR at SMK Negeri 2 Tabanan is quite smooth, but sometimes we have to wait several days to get confirmation about the students who will be sent.” This delay in response can be an obstacle, especially if the DU/DI has a tight schedule.

In general, the role of PR as a communicator has been carried out in accordance with the theory proposed by Frida Kusumastuti, which emphasizes the importance of two-way and planned communication. However, to improve its effectiveness, PR needs to be more proactive in delivering information, use more communication channels, and ensure that all parties receive consistent and timely information.

4.3. The Role of Public Relations as a Facilitator in the Implementation of Prakerin

As a facilitator, PR at SMK Negeri 2 Tabanan plays a role in preparing for and facilitating the implementation of Prakerin. This role is reflected in various activities, from planning to evaluation. In the planning stage, PR works with the Prakerin Coordinator to determine placements that match students’ competency areas. PR also conducts industry mapping, namely listing DU/DI that have the potential to become Prakerin partners. According to the Vice Principal for Public Relations, “We always try to find

Prakerin placements that are relevant to students' majors, so that they can truly develop the skills they have learned at school."

In the preparation stage, PR develops a Prakerin guidebook or manual given to students. This guidebook contains information about rules, schedules, report formats, and other matters that students need to know. PR also facilitates the making of permission letters and introduction letters for students who will depart for Prakerin. In addition, PR works with the student affairs unit to provide briefing to students, which includes character education, discipline, and work ethics. According to a supervising teacher, "The briefing provided by PR and student affairs greatly helps students to be mentally and physically ready before entering the world of work."

In the implementation stage, PR monitors student progress through communication with supervising teachers and DU/DI representatives. If problems arise, such as students being absent without notice or mismatched placements, PR acts as a mediator to find solutions. For example, if a student is placed in a location that does not match their major, PR will try to find a more relevant replacement placement. This is in line with research findings at SMK Yudya Karya Magelang, where PR made a revocation letter and found a new Prakerin placement if the placement was not suitable.

In the evaluation stage, PR collects reports from students and supervising teachers, as well as requests feedback from DU/DI. This evaluation is used to improve the quality of Prakerin in the following year. However, based on document analysis, the evaluation carried out is still administrative in nature and has not fully explored the impact of Prakerin on student competence. PR needs to develop a more comprehensive evaluation instrument, which not only measures the satisfaction of related parties but also measures the improvement of student skills.

Overall, the role of PR as a facilitator has been running well, but there is still room for improvement, especially in terms of data management, monitoring, and evaluation. PR needs to utilize information technology, such as a web-based Prakerin management system, to improve efficiency and data accuracy.

4.4. The Role of Public Relations as a Relationship Builder with DU/DI

The role of PR as a relationship builder with DU/DI is one of the most crucial aspects in the implementation of Prakerin. Without good cooperation with DU/DI, Prakerin will not run. PR at SMK Negeri 2 Tabanan has established cooperation with various DU/DI, both in the Tabanan area and outside Tabanan, such as in Denpasar and Badung. This cooperation is outlined in the form of an MoU (Memorandum of Understanding) signed by both parties.

The process of fostering relationships with DU/DI is carried out through several stages. First, PR conducts industry tracing, namely identifying DU/DI that are relevant to the school's competency areas. Second, PR sends cooperation proposals and makes presentations about the school profile and student competencies. Third, if the DU/DI agrees, PR signs an MoU and agrees on the number of students to be placed. Fourth, PR conducts industrial visits to monitor the implementation of Prakerin and strengthen relationships. Fifth, PR holds joint evaluations with DU/DI to assess student performance and improve cooperation in the future.

According to a representative of one partner DU/DI, "Cooperation with SMK Negeri 2 Tabanan is running well. The students sent have adequate basic skills, although some still need improvement in terms of communication and teamwork." This feedback indicates that PR needs to focus more on developing students' soft skills, which often become obstacles in Prakerin.

Besides establishing cooperation with DU/DI, PR also plays a role in promoting the school to the community and industry. Promotion is carried out through various media, such as the school website, social media, and activities such as job fairs and industrial visits. According to research at SMK Negeri 6 Malang, programs such as industrial classes and job fairs significantly contribute to improving students' technical and soft skills, as well as improving the school's reputation in the eyes of the community. PR at SMK Negeri 2 Tabanan can adopt a similar strategy to strengthen relationships with industry.

However, PR faces challenges in fostering relationships with DU/DI. One of the main challenges is the mismatch of expectations between the school and industry. The school expects DU/DI to provide a

comprehensive learning experience, while DU/DI expects students who are already work-ready and can contribute immediately. In addition, the number of available DU/DI is limited, especially for certain majors such as Accounting and Financial Institution. PR needs to be more creative in finding new partners, for example by cooperating with MSMEs or government agencies.

4.5. Challenges Faced by Public Relations in the Implementation of Prakerin

Based on the research findings, there are several challenges faced by PR at SMK Negeri 2 Tabanan in carrying out its role in the implementation of Prakerin. First, limited human resources. School PR does not only handle Prakerin but also other tasks, such as website management, publication of school activities, and relations with parents. This causes PR to be unable to fully focus on developing cooperation with DU/DI. According to the Vice Principal for Public Relations, “We only have one PR staff member, so we are often overwhelmed when there are many tasks that must be completed simultaneously.”

Second, slow responses from some DU/DI. PR often experiences difficulty in getting confirmation from DU/DI regarding the number of students that can be accepted and the Prakerin implementation schedule. According to experience at SMK Telkom Malang, some companies even do not reply to proposals for up to three months, so the school is forced to cancel sending students to those companies. PR at SMK Negeri 2 Tabanan needs to anticipate this problem by having a list of backup DU/DI and establishing more intensive communication.

Third, mismatched placement of students with competency areas. Although PR has tried to find relevant placements, there are still students placed in locations that do not fully match their majors. This can reduce the effectiveness of Prakerin in improving student competence. PR needs to expand its network of industry partners and conduct stricter selection of DU/DI.

Fourth, lack of parental participation in supporting Prakerin. Some parents still consider Prakerin an unimportant activity, so they provide less support, especially in terms of financing. PR needs to increase socialization to parents about the benefits of Prakerin and involve them in the preparation process.

Fifth, limited budget. PR activities, such as industrial visits and joint evaluations, require considerable costs. Without an adequate budget, PR cannot carry out its role optimally. Schools need to allocate a sufficient budget for PR activities, especially those related to Prakerin.

4.6. Implications and Recommendations

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that the role of PR at SMK Negeri 2 Tabanan in the implementation of Prakerin is very important, but it still faces various challenges. To optimize this role, several recommendations can be proposed. First, strengthening PR capacity through training and competency development, especially in communication, negotiation, and cooperation management. Second, utilizing information technology to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of PR work, for example with a web-based Prakerin management system. Third, developing a more proactive and planned communication strategy, by utilizing various communication channels to reach all stakeholders. Fourth, expanding the network of industry partners through participation in industrial exhibitions, seminars, and other activities. Fifth, increasing parental participation through more intensive socialization and involving them in school activities.

Theoretically, this study supports the view that school PR is not only a communicator but also a strategic facilitator and relationship builder. This role is in line with the concept of PR as a management function that helps organizations achieve their goals through mutually beneficial relationships with their publics. This study also confirms the importance of cooperation between schools and industry in vocational education, as mandated by the Dual System of Education policy.

5. Conclusion

5.1. Conclusion

This study concludes that PR at SMK Negeri 2 Tabanan plays a crucial role in the implementation of Prakerin. This role is carried out through three main dimensions: as a communicator, facilitator, and relationship builder. As a communicator, PR delivers information about Prakerin to students, parents, and DU/DI, although there are still obstacles in terms of completeness and timeliness of information. As a facilitator, PR prepares students, develops guidelines, manages administration, and monitors the implementation of Prakerin. As a relationship builder, PR establishes and maintains cooperation with DU/DI through MoUs, industrial visits, and joint evaluations.

5.2. Limitation

This study is limited to a single vocational school and therefore provides context-specific findings rather than statistically generalizable conclusions. The manuscript also requires fuller reporting of the participant profile and analytic procedure so that readers can better assess the transferability and methodological rigor of the findings.

5.3. Suggestion

Nevertheless, PR faces various challenges, such as limited human resources, slow responses from DU/DI, mismatched student placements, lack of parental participation, and limited budget. To overcome these challenges, strengthening PR capacity, utilizing information technology, more proactive communication strategies, expanding the network of industry partners, and increasing parental participation are needed. Thus, the role of PR can be optimized to support the success of Prakerin and improve the quality of graduates at SMK Negeri 2 Tabanan.

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