Project-Based Learning Approach Based on Interpersonal Communication in Improving Vocational High School Students' Work Readiness

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Abstract
This research aims to analyze and evaluate the effectiveness of implementing a Project-Based Learning (PBjL) method based on interpersonal communication in improving the work readiness of vocational high school students. The Project-Based Learning method applied does not only focus on mastering theoretical knowledge but also on developing practical skills relevant to the world of work. This research uses a quantitative approach, with students given pre-tests and post-tests to measure the improvement in their work readiness after the implementation of PBjL. The research results show that there is a significant difference in students' work readiness after implementing interpersonal communication-based PBjL, with an average increase in post-test scores compared to pre-test scores. Interpersonal communication skills developed through PBjL, such as the ability to work in teams, share ideas, and resolve conflicts, have proven effective in preparing vocational high school students to enter the workforce. Therefore, interpersonal communication-based PBjL can be an effective learning model to improve vocational high school students' work readiness.

INTRODUCTION

In the era of globalization and increasingly tight competition, work readiness has become crucial for vocational high school students to compete in job seeking or continuing their education to a higher level. However, in practice, many vocational high school students experience difficulties in applying the knowledge and skills learned in school to real-world work situations. Project-Based Learning (PBL) has been recognized as an effective method in preparing students for the workforce (Wardani, 2023). This method encourages students to work in teams, face real challenges, and develop critical thinking skills and creativity in solving projects relevant to their desired career fields. With PBL, students not only learn theory but also apply and develop their practical abilities (Nuraini, 2017).

PBL learning also requires good interpersonal communication between students and other team members to achieve common goals (Setiawan et al., 2022). Effective interpersonal communication is necessary for students to collaborate well, support each other, and overcome potential conflicts during the learning process (Samudra et al., 2023). This communication includes the ability to communicate information clearly, listen well, exchange ideas, provide and receive feedback, and manage conflicts. However, not all vocational high school students have strong interpersonal communication skills. Many students struggle to express their opinions clearly, lack confidence in public speaking, are unable to listen effectively, and find it difficult to interact with others. This can hinder their PBL learning process and ultimately affect their work readiness.

Research by Ali et al. (2023) and Hardiningsih et al. (2023) has shown that PBL learning can improve vocational high school students' work readiness. However, there is still limited research focusing on students' interpersonal communication development in the context of PBL learning. Therefore, this research will provide a new contribution to this field. Additionally, this research is expected to serve as a guide for teachers in implementing PBL learning oriented towards developing vocational high school

students' interpersonal communication.

In the long term, this research is expected to make a positive contribution to improving the quality of vocational education in Indonesia. Through this research, it is hoped that teachers will consider using learning models that enable vocational high school students to be better prepared to face increasingly complex and dynamic work environments. They will have strong interpersonal communication skills, allowing them to obtain jobs that match their expertise and interests. Consequently, it is expected that unemployment rates will decrease, and vocational high school graduates will find it easier to adapt to diverse work environments.

To achieve these objectives, this research will be conducted using quantitative and qualitative approaches. The quantitative approach will be used to measure the impact of interpersonal communication-based PBL learning on vocational high school students' work readiness through test instruments and questionnaires. The qualitative approach will be used to explore students' and teachers' experiences in implementing this model and its impact on developing students' interpersonal communication skills.

This research is also expected to provide recommendations to schools, government, and other relevant stakeholders regarding the importance of integrating PBL learning with interpersonal communication development in the vocational school curriculum. These recommendations can serve as a basis for policymakers to improve the quality of vocational education in Indonesia. Thus, this research has the potential to make a significant contribution to the development of vocational education in Indonesia, particularly in efforts to enhance vocational high school students' work readiness. Through this research, it is hoped that vocational high school students can acquire the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to succeed in the workforce and compete in increasingly complex and global job markets.

Moreover, the results of this research are expected to be a valuable scientific contribution to the development of vocational education theory and practice, especially in implementing PBL learning oriented towards developing students' interpersonal communication skills. Consequently, this research is expected to provide a tangible contribution to advancing vocational education in Indonesia. With all the efforts and expected contributions, this research is hoped to become a foundation for positive change in vocational education in Indonesia, particularly in improving vocational high school students' work readiness through the development of interpersonal communication-based PBL learning modules. May this research provide significant benefits for vocational education and scientific development in the future.

METHODS

Research methods are the ways or techniques for researchers to conduct studies, test predetermined hypotheses, discover the truth, and evaluate the results of the research (Sugiyono, 2018: 17). This research falls into the category of quantitative research. In this study, there are two types of variables: independent variables and dependent variables.

The data collection techniques used in this research include: (1) Observation sheets, used for observing students' conditions, (2) Interviews, conducted to understand students' circumstances, (3) Documentation, aimed at obtaining direct illustrations of the research site, including relevant books, activity reports, photos, and data related to the research.

The data analysis techniques used comprise descriptive statistical analysis and inferential statistical analysis. Inferential statistical analysis is used to determine the effect of Project-Based Learning (PjBL) Media Based on Interpersonal Communication in Enhancing Vocational High School (SMK) Students' Work Readiness.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Result

Validity Test

According to (Riska, 2019), validity testing is used as a tool to measure the validity of a questionnaire/survey. The condition illustrates the arrangement of related instruments that are capable of measuring what is intended to be measured (Yuliardi & Nuraeni, 2017).

Table 1. Results of Validity Test

Items	r count	r table	condition	conclusion
Items_1	0,474	0.2542	r count > r table	Valid
Items_2	0,473	0.2542	r count > r table	Valid
Items_3	0,318	0.2542	r count > r table	Valid
Items_4	0,576	0.2542	r count > r table	Valid
Items_5	0,395	0.2542	r count > r table	Valid
Items_6	0,592	0.2542	r count > r table	Valid
Items_7	0,327	0.2542	r count > r table	Valid
Items_8	0,340	0.2542	r count > r table	Valid
Items_9	0,403	0.2542	r count > r table	Valid
Items_10	0,464	0.2542	r count > r table	Valid
Items_11	0,609	0.2542	r count > r table	Valid
Items_12	0,545	0.2542	r count > r table	Valid
Items_13	0,505	0.2542	r count > r table	Valid
Items_14	0,506	0.2542	r count > r table	Valid
Items_15	0,524	0.2542	r count > r table	Valid
Items_16	0,371	0.2542	r count > r table	Valid
Items_17	0,560	0.2542	r count > r table	Valid
Items_18	0,444	0.2542	r count > r table	Valid
Items_19	0,420	0.2542	r count > r table	Valid
Items_20	0,484	0.2542	r count > r table	Valid
Items_21	0,401	0.2542	r count > r table	Valid
Items_22	0,553	0.2542	r count > r table	Valid
Items_23	0,327	0.2542	r count > r table	Valid
Items_24	0,327	0.2542	r count > r table	Valid

Source: Data Processing Results (2024)

Reliability Test

Instrument reliability testing is a prerequisite for instrument validity testing. Although a valid instrument does not necessarily ensure the reliability of measurement results, if an instrument has been used multiple times consistently and yields the same accurate results, it can be said that the instrument has sufficient reliability for use (Yuliardi & Nuraeni, 2017: 102).

Table 2. Reliability Test Results

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
834	24

Source: Data Processing Results (2024)

Based on the reliability test results table above, the conclusion from this calculation indicates that the research instrument has very high reliability.

Hypothesis Test

Based on the hypothesis test, it is found that the independent sample t-test result for the post-test scores of the experimental and control classes shows an average Sig. (2-tailed) value of 0.00 < 0.05. Therefore, according to the decision-making basis in the independent sample t-test, it can be concluded that H0 is rejected and Ha is accepted. Thus, it can be concluded that "There is a significant difference in the average Work Readiness of students after implementing Project-Based Learning with Interpersonal Communication."

B. Discussion

This study evaluates the effectiveness of Project-Based Learning (PjBL) based on interpersonal communication in improving work readiness among vocational high school (SMK) students. It focuses on PjBL's impact on developing soft skills, particularly interpersonal communication and teamwork, which are critical in the modern workforce. Understanding the relevance of PjBL in vocational education and the role of interpersonal communication is crucial to interpreting the findings. PjBL is a pedagogical approach that emphasizes real-world project completion. Unlike traditional teacher-centered methods, PjBL involves students in solving real-world challenges, integrating technical and soft skills. In vocational education, where preparing students for the workforce is paramount, PjBL aligns learning with workplace demands. Wicaksono (2018) highlights that PjBL not only improves practical skills but also fosters critical, creative, and collaborative thinking—attributes highly valued by employers.

Interpersonal communication, an essential component of soft skills, is vital for PjBL's success. Effective communication includes expressing ideas clearly, active listening, and teamwork. In PjBL, students often collaborate in groups, making communication key to achieving project goals. Rahmawati (2017) emphasizes that strong communication enhances collaboration, problem-solving, and conflict resolution, which are critical for workplace readiness. The study's findings reveal that PjBL significantly improves students' work readiness. Post-test scores showed marked improvements compared to pre-test results, indicating that PjBL effectively enhances teamwork, communication, and project management skills. Interpersonal communication emerged as a key success factor, enabling students to collaborate effectively and achieve desired outcomes. These findings align with Supriyadi's (2019) research, which highlights PjBL's role in improving both technical and soft skills.

The implications for vocational education are substantial. As employers increasingly value communication and teamwork, integrating PjBL into vocational curricula is essential. PjBL provides students with opportunities to develop workplace-relevant skills through experiential learning. However, successful implementation requires teacher training to guide students effectively and ensure active participation. Professional development for teachers is crucial for PjBL's success. Despite its benefits, PjBL faces challenges, including the time-intensive nature of projects and reliance on student engagement and teacher support. Without proper guidance, students may struggle to manage projects and achieve results. Schools must provide adequate time for PjBL and equip teachers with the skills to manage projects and facilitate learning. In conclusion, PjBL based on interpersonal communication is an effective approach to enhancing vocational students' work readiness. It equips students with essential skills for the modern workplace, addressing both technical and soft skill development. Vocational schools should prioritize integrating PjBL into their curricula and supporting teachers with training and resources to ensure successful implementation. Through careful planning and sustained support, PjBL can bridge the gap between education and workplace demands, preparing students for success in their future careers.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

A. Conclusion

This study confirms that the Project-Based Learning (PjBL) method based on interpersonal communication is highly effective in enhancing the work readiness of vocational high school (SMK) students. PjBL not only helps students develop technical skills relevant to the workforce but also strengthens their interpersonal communication and teamwork abilities, which are essential in modern work environments. Therefore, PjBL based on interpersonal communication can serve as a highly effective learning model for vocational schools to prepare students for entering the workforce with comprehensive and relevant skills.

B. Suggestion

Based on the findings of this study, to enhance the effectiveness of implementing Project-Based Learning (PjBL) based on interpersonal communication in improving vocational high school (SMK) students' work readiness, it is recommended that vocational schools strengthen teacher training, integrate PjBL extensively into the curriculum, establish close partnerships with industries, and ensure

adequate facilities and resources. Additionally, continuous monitoring and evaluation should be conducted, along with designing projects that encourage intensive collaboration among students. This approach will better prepare SMK graduates to face the challenges of the workforce with relevant and comprehensive skills.

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