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Evaluations for Community Vocational Training Centers to Become Business Incubators in East Java, West Nusa Tenggara, and East Nusa Tenggara

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ABSTRACT

Background: This study addresses the broader issue of enhancing the economic impact and sustainability of community vocational training centers (BLKK). It focuses on the BLKK programs in East Java, West Nusa Tenggara, and East Nusa Tenggara, with the purpose of evaluating their potential to evolve beyond training facilities into effective business incubators that foster community entrepreneurship.

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of the study is to assess the capacity of BLKK centers to function as business incubators. The objectives are to identify the critical factors such as human resources, leadership, environment, and collaboration necessary for this transition and to provide actionable recommendations for improvement.

Methods: The study employs a mixed-methods approach, utilizing field visits and questionnaires to collect empirical data from the targeted BLKK centers. The analysis is framed within a holistic perspective that considers integrated organizational and ecosystem development.

Results: The findings underscore that transforming BLKK centers into effective incubators requires a comprehensive strategy. Key recommendations include aligning training curricula with market demands, improving tenants' access to capital, expanding professional and business networks, and instituting robust post-incubation support mechanisms. The study concludes that continuous monitoring and evaluation, coupled with these strategic enhancements, are vital for developing a competent workforce and promoting sustainable business practices within the community.

Keywords

Business Incubators, Incubation Process, Training Program, Networking And Collaboration

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Introduction

In analyzing recommendations for improving the performance of community vocational training centers (BLKK) to serve as effective business incubators, several important aspects must be considered. First, the importance of developing human resources (HR) through effective training programs is paramount. Research by Utami indicates that the effectiveness of job training programs at vocational training centers (BLKs) in Surabaya significantly contributes to alleviating unemployment, with participants following a structured, systematic progression (Utami & Zafira, 2023). Additionally, the competency-based training programs at the BLK aim to enhance the skills and abilities of participants, which in turn can improve their performance in the workforce (Kusnadi, 2020).

In order to enhance BLKK's performance as a business incubator, collaboration among the government, the private sector, and educational institutions is necessary. Research by Putri et al. shows that government support in the form of regulations and policies is crucial for encouraging the growth of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) through the development of entrepreneurial incubators. Thus, the BLKK must play an active role in establishing strategic partnerships with various parties to create an ecosystem that supports business development (Putri et al., 2020).

Career development and job training are key factors in enhancing employee performance. Sihotang studied the influence of career development and job training on employee performance at the State Treasury Service Office (KPPN) of North Sumatra, finding that both factors have a significant positive impact on employee performance (Sihotang, 2022). This is in line with research by Nuraeni et al., which shows that BLKK play a crucial role in providing the skilled workforce needed by the business world and industry, thereby supporting their role as business incubators (Nuraeni et al., 2022). Effective leadership within the BLK also plays a crucial role in enhancing employee performance. Research by Syafitri et al. shows that good leadership can create a positive work culture and encourage productivity (Syafitri et al., 2024). In this context, transformational leadership style can motivate employees to enhance their performance, as expressed by Nena et al. in their study on the influence of leadership style on teacher performance (Nena et al., 2021). In addition, the importance of creating a supportive work environment cannot be overlooked. Rahimah et al. studied how an inclusive work environment can enhance the performance of employees with disabilities in business incubators, showing that accessibility and job satisfaction contribute to better performance (Rahimah et al., 2022). Thus, the BLKK needs to ensure that the work environment created supports all training participants, including those with special needs.

Another aspect to consider is the measurement of performance and the evaluation of training programs. Research by Fakhira emphasizes the importance of a clear operational model for training in preparing a professional workforce, which includes ongoing evaluation of the effectiveness of training programs (Nur Fakhira & Darusman, 2022). This is in line with research by Mahmud and Tesniwati, which shows that digital transformation in public services can enhance organizational performance, including in the context of job training (Mahmud & Tesniwati, 2023).

The Ministry of Manpower (Kemnaker) has collaborated with several universities to implement a BLKK mentoring program since 2021, serving as a business incubator. The accompanying activities that have been carried out include registration in the Information and Evaluation Registration System for Incubation (SIPENSI) owned by the Ministry of Cooperatives and SMEs (KemenkopUKM), training on the registration of Intellectual Property Rights (IPR), and assistance in the preparation of Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) and reports on tenant incubation activities. The performance enhancement of BLKK as a business incubator requires a holistic approach that includes human resource development, effective leadership, a supportive work environment, training program evaluation, and collaboration with various parties. Thus, the purpose of this program is to evaluate BLKK's potential to become a business incubator by conducting appropriate feasibility studies. By implementing these recommendations, it is hoped

that BLKK can function optimally in preparing a competent workforce ready to compete in the business world.

Method

The assistance of BLKK as business incubators in this program has been carried out in 23 BLKKs, with details of 17 located in the eastern part of East Java (Blitar, Lumajang, Probolinggo, Situbondo, Bondowoso, Jember, Banyuwangi), five BLKKs in West Nusa Tenggara (NTB), and one BLKK in East Nusa Tenggara (NTT). In conducting program monitoring and evaluation, field visits and Likert-scale questionnaires are often used to collect relevant, objective data. This method allows researchers to gain direct insights into the program's implementation and participants' perceptions of its execution. The Likert scale, which ranges from strongly disagree (score 1) to strongly agree (score 5), provides a systematic way to measure respondents' attitudes and opinions towards various aspects of the program. The questionnaire indicators are described in Table 1.

Field visits allow evaluators to directly observe conditions and situations on the ground and to interact with participants and program organizers. This is in line with research by Freedman et al., which shows that field-based evaluations can provide more in-depth and contextual information regarding the effectiveness of training programs in community health centers (Freedman et al., 2014). By conducting direct observations, evaluators can identify challenges that may not be revealed through quantitative data alone.

Meanwhile, the use of questionnaires with a Likert scale offers advantages in terms of more structured measurement. According to research by Helitzer et al., the Likert scale in evaluating patient communication can help evaluate changes in healthcare providers' communication skills after training. In this way, evaluators can analyze data quantitatively and gain a clear picture of participants' perceptions of the program being implemented (Helitzer et al., 2011).

Table 1. Indicators for Evaluating Incubator Recommendations

Code	Statement
I1	The incubator's facilities and infrastructure need improvement to better support tenants.
I2	The existing mentor competencies need improvement, or the number of mentors should be increased to better support the tenants.
I3	The incubator training program needs to be adjusted to market trends and the needs of prospective entrepreneurs.
I4	The incubator needs to improve access to capital or create more financing opportunities for tenants.
I5	The incubator needs to expand its networks and collaborations with more external institutions to strengthen support for tenants.
I6	The incubator requires new strategies to broaden market access for tenants.
I7	The monitoring and evaluation system for tenant development during the incubation period needs improvement.
I8	The incubator needs to provide post-incubation services to support the sustainability of tenant businesses.
I9	The incubator has maximized the potential of local businesses.
I10	The incubator managers are ready to face the challenges in implementing the incubation program.

Result

The accompanying activities carried out by the Kemnaker in collaboration with several universities since 2021 directly contributed to addressing these needs. These mentoring and facilitation processes included 1) registration in the SIPENSI owned by the KemenkopUKM. This step formally integrates the BLKKs into the national incubation ecosystem, which is essential for expanding networks (Indicator I5) and providing structured support. 2) Training on the registration of Intellectual Property Rights (IPR). Securing IPR is a fundamental step in legitimizing and protecting tenant businesses, an operational detail crucial for attracting future capital (Indicator I4). 3) Assistance in the preparation of Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) and reports on tenant incubation activities. These operational guidelines directly support the efficiency of the incubation process and align with the need for better management and structure. Documentation of the monitoring survey activities at this location is shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Field Survey Documentations

Monitoring and evaluation of the assisted BLKK by conducting field surveys to the location. This survey was conducted by dividing the team into three groups: the first group went to the BLKK area in the northeastern part of East Java, specifically the regions of Probolinggo, Situbondo, and Bondowoso. The second group headed to the southeastern part of East Java, covering Blitar, Lumajang, Jember, and Banyuwangi. Finally, the third group went to the BLKK locations in NTB and NTT. Each group conducted surveys and interviews with the managers of the BLKK recommended by the Kemnaker to become business incubators. The interviews focused on the activities the BLKK has undertaken in its efforts to establish itself as a business incubator, as well as on the strengths and weaknesses of the BLKK programs implemented. Thus, the results of this interview constitute a qualitative analysis comprising several recommendations for each assisted BLKK. The list of recommendations is provided in 5. Post-Incubation Services

Most respondents agreed that incubators need to provide post-incubation services to support the sustainability of tenant businesses. Recommendations for this matter include providing ongoing support after the incubation period ends and establishing an alumni community that can support one another and offer guidance to new tenants.

6. Utilization of Local Business Potential

Some respondents feel that the incubator has maximized the utilization of local business potential. However, to improve this, it is recommended to encourage locally based product innovation that utilizes local resources. Increased collaboration with local communities is also necessary to ensure a broader impact of the incubation program.

7. Readiness of the Managers

Respondents expressed confidence that the incubator managers are prepared to face the challenges of running the incubation program. To support this, the recommendations provided

include managerial training for managers to be more effective in implementing the program. In addition, adequate policy support from the government, such as guidelines on incubation management, is very important for strengthening managers' position in addressing existing challenges.

Table 4. Recommendations for Incubator in NTB and NTT (Group 3)

No	Incubator Name	Recommendations
1	Inkubator Karitas Peduli Lembata, NTT	Establishment of Alumni Association: To maintain relationships and collaboration among alumni. Human Resource Training for Trainers and Managers: To make incubator management more effective and professional.
2	Inkubator Attamimy Praya, NTB	Mobile Housekeeping Training: To expand the reach of training and enhance the skills of alumni. Enhancing Understanding of Incubator Function: So that all stakeholders understand the roles and benefits of incubators.
3	Inkubator Usaha Nurul Madinah, NTB	Expanding Training Coverage: To reach more potential tenants from various sectors. Advanced Guidance Post-Incubation: To support alumni in developing their businesses.
4	Lembaga Inkubator Qomarul Huda, NTB	Assistance for Collaboration on Capital and Equipment: So that the incubator can obtain the necessary resources. Preparation of Technical Guidelines: To provide clear operational guidance.
5	Inkubator Bintang Sembilan Mandalika, NTB	Digital Marketing Training: To enhance the marketing skills of alumni. Assistance in Capital Development: So that alumni can access the funds needed for their businesses.
6	Inkubator Bisnis Wahidul Majid, NTB	Conversion of BLKK: To adapt to local conditions and community needs. Facilitating Work Networks: To connect the workforce with market needs.

, 5. Post-Incubation Services

Most respondents agreed that incubators need to provide post-incubation services to support the sustainability of tenant businesses. Recommendations for this matter include providing ongoing support after the incubation period ends and establishing an alumni community that can support one another and offer guidance to new tenants.

6. Utilization of Local Business Potential

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Discussion

The evaluation of BLKK as a business incubator highlights several key recommendations to enhance its effectiveness in developing a competent workforce. First, it is crucial for BLKK to adjust its training programs to align with current market trends and the specific needs of prospective entrepreneurs. Regular market research should be conducted to identify evolving skill requirements, and diversifying training offerings to include modern skills such as digital marketing

will better equip participants for the competitive business landscape.

Furthermore, a quantitative analysis was conducted by completing a monitoring questionnaire against the given indicators. The results of this quantitative survey are shown in Figure 2. The highest indicators are I4 (improving access to capital or creating more financing opportunities for tenants) and I5 (expanding networks and collaborations with more external institutions to strengthen support for tenants), each with a score of 5. This data strongly suggests that the BLKK managers and stakeholders overwhelmingly agree on the critical need to focus the mentoring and facilitation efforts on securing funding and establishing robust external partnerships to enhance the incubation process.



Figure 2. Average Evaluation Assessment Results Based on Recommendation Indicators

Based on the results of monitoring and field surveys, several recommendations have been obtained that need to be implemented by the BLKK in general, including:

1. Adjustment of the Training Program

Most respondents agree that the incubator training program needs to be adjusted to market trends and the needs of prospective entrepreneurs. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct regular market research to understand current skill requirements and adjust training programs accordingly. Diversifying the program by adding new training, such as digital marketing and other technical skills, is an important recommendation to enhance its relevance.

2. Access to Capital and Financing Opportunities

There is consensus among respondents that incubators should expand access to capital and create more financing opportunities for tenants. The recommendations include developing partnerships with financial institutions to make loan access easier for tenants. In addition, the capital support program from local corporate social responsibility (CSR) and the government will be very helpful for tenants in starting their businesses.

Table 2. Recommendations for Incubator in Northeast Area of East Java (Group 1)

No	Incubator Name	Recommendations
1	Inkubator Nurus Shobah, Probolinggo	Improving Human Resource Quality: So that graduates are more prepared to face the job market. Networking with the General Public: To develop the potential that exists within the community.

2	Inkubator YPAQ Al-Maimunah, Situbondo	Flexibility in Management: To become more independent in operations and decision-making. Networking with Companies: To facilitate the absorption of graduates into the industry.
3	Inkubator Pondok Pesantren Nurul Khairiyah, Situbondo	Guide for Incubation Activities: To ensure more efficient management. Business License for Export: To be able to operate in the international market.
4	Inkubator Manbaul Hikam, Situbondo	Utilization of Equipment for Other Food Ingredients: For business diversification and enhancing sustainability. Development of MSMEs: By labeling the tools owned by the BLKK.
5	Inkubator Zainul Bahar, Bondowoso	Legal and Business License Preparation: To ensure that the incubator's operations are more formal and secure. Capital Search: To support operational activities.
6	Inkubator Nurut Tholabah, Bondowoso	Training on Learning Media: To enhance the competencies of educators and the quality of training. Enhancing Networking with Industry: So that graduates have better job opportunities.
7	Inkubator Nurut Taqwa, Bondowoso	Improving the Quality of Human Resources: So that graduates possess more competitive skills. Capital for Tenants: To support the businesses that will be run by alumni.
8	Inkubator Darul Falah Bondowoso	Improvement of Facilities and Infrastructure: To maximize the BLKK's functionality for the community. Networking with the Community: To meet local needs and enhance participation.

3. Expansion of Networks and Collaboration

Respondents emphasized the need for an incubator to expand networks and collaborate with more external institutions. The proposed recommendations include building strategic partnerships with universities, the government, and non-governmental organizations. Holding regular networking events can also be an effective way to connect tenants with potential investors and business partners.

4. Market Access Strategy

Respondents indicated that the incubator needs to develop new strategies to expand market access for tenants. The recommendation includes enhancing training on digital marketing to assist tenants in promoting their products online. In addition, organizing exhibitions or bazaars to promote tenant products to the wider community is also considered an effective step.

Table 3. Recommendations for Incubator in Southeast Area of East Java (Group 2)

No	Incubator Name	Recommendations
1	Lembaga Inkubator Bisnis Pertakina, Blitar	Addition of Foreign Language Courses and Other Skills: To enhance the competitiveness of prospective migrant workers. Development of Schools for Migrant Workers' Children: To provide education for the next generation.
2	Inkubator Bisnis Nurul Iman Qur'ani, Lumajang	Guide for Incubation Activities: To help managers understand the steps that need to be taken. Institutional Strengthening: To enhance operational effectiveness.

3	Inkubator Padepokan Rayap, Lumajang	Guide for Post-Incubation: To assist alumni in developing their businesses. Development of Licensing Aspects for MSMEs: So that alumni businesses can operate legally and sustainably.
4	Inkubator Bisnis Nurussalam (Inkubanur), Jember	Business License: For the incubator to operate officially. Capital Support: To enhance the independence and sustainability of the business.
5	Inkubator Bisnis dan Inovasi Inbindafa, Jember	Motivation for Managers: To enhance enthusiasm and commitment in running the incubator. Operational Guidelines: To enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the incubation program.
6	Inkubator PP Raudlatul Ulum, Jember	Guidelines for Incubation Activities: To ensure more directed management of the incubator. Business Licenses for Alumni: So that alumni businesses can operate in accordance with regulations.
7	Inkubator Bisnis Salaf Darussalam, Banyuwangi	Guide for Incubation Activities: To provide clear directions. Strengthening Institutions and Licensing: To make the incubator more organized and professional.
8	Inkubator Bisnis Purnama Digital, Banyuwangi	Guide for Incubator Management: To make management more structured. Increase in External Cooperation: To expand networks and business opportunities.
9	Inkubator Bisnis Darul Falah, Banyuwangi	Guidelines for Incubation Activities: So that all parties understand the process and objectives of incubation. Institutional Strengthening: To enhance capacity and competitiveness.

5. Post-Incubation Services

Most respondents agreed that incubators need to provide post-incubation services to support the sustainability of tenant businesses. Recommendations for this matter include providing ongoing support after the incubation period ends and establishing an alumni community that can support one another and offer guidance to new tenants.

6. Utilization of Local Business Potential

Some respondents feel that the incubator has maximized the utilization of local business potential. However, to improve this, it is recommended to encourage locally based product innovation that utilizes local resources. Increased collaboration with local communities is also necessary to ensure a broader impact of the incubation program.

7. Readiness of the Managers

Respondents expressed confidence that the incubator managers are prepared to face the challenges of running the incubation program. To support this, the recommendations provided include managerial training for managers to be more effective in implementing the program. In addition, adequate policy support from the government, such as guidelines on incubation management, is very important for strengthening managers' position in addressing existing challenges.

Table 4. Recommendations for Incubator in NTB and NTT (Group 3)

No	Incubator Name	Recommendations
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1	Inkubator Karitas Peduli Lembata, NTT	Establishment of Alumni Association: To maintain relationships and collaboration among alumni. Human Resource Training for Trainers and Managers: To make incubator management more effective and professional.
2	Inkubator Attamimy Praya, NTB	Mobile Housekeeping Training: To expand the reach of training and enhance the skills of alumni. Enhancing Understanding of Incubator Function: So that all stakeholders understand the roles and benefits of incubators.
3	Inkubator Usaha Nurul Madinah, NTB	Expanding Training Coverage: To reach more potential tenants from various sectors. Advanced Guidance Post-Incubation: To support alumni in developing their businesses.
4	Lembaga Inkubator Qomarul Huda, NTB	Assistance for Collaboration on Capital and Equipment: So that the incubator can obtain the necessary resources. Preparation of Technical Guidelines: To provide clear operational guidance.
5	Inkubator Bintang Sembilan Mandalika, NTB	Digital Marketing Training: To enhance the marketing skills of alumni. Assistance in Capital Development: So that alumni can access the funds needed for their businesses.
6	Inkubator Bisnis Wahidul Majid, NTB	Conversion of BLKK: To adapt to local conditions and community needs. Facilitating Work Networks: To connect the workforce with market needs.

Discussion

The evaluation of BLKK as a business incubator highlights several key recommendations to enhance its effectiveness in developing a competent workforce. First, it is crucial for BLKK to adjust its training programs to align with current market trends and the specific needs of prospective entrepreneurs. Regular market research should be conducted to identify evolving skill requirements, and diversifying training offerings to include modern skills such as digital marketing will better equip participants for the competitive business landscape (Li et al., 2020).

Additionally, expanding access to capital and financing is vital to supporting incubator tenants. Establishing partnerships with financial institutions can facilitate easier loan access, while leveraging local corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives and government funding can provide essential capital support. Furthermore, expanding networks through collaborations with universities, government bodies, and non-governmental organizations will create valuable connections for tenants, fostering a robust entrepreneurial ecosystem (Brivio et al., 2020).

Finally, post-incubation services are essential to ensuring the long-term sustainability of tenant businesses. Ongoing support after the incubation period, along with the establishment of an alumni community, can facilitate mentorship and knowledge sharing among entrepreneurs (Shih & Aboen, 2019). By implementing these recommendations, BLKK can significantly strengthen its role as a vital resource for aspiring entrepreneurs, ultimately contributing to broader economic development goals within the community.

Conclusion

The evaluation of BLKK as a business incubator emphasizes the need for several key

enhancements to improve its effectiveness in workforce preparation. It is essential to align training programs with current market trends and the specific needs of prospective entrepreneurs by conducting regular market research and diversifying offerings to include modern skills like digital marketing. Additionally, improving access to capital through partnerships with financial institutions and leveraging local CSR initiatives can provide vital funding for tenants. Expanding networks through collaborations with universities and government bodies will foster a stronger entrepreneurial ecosystem. Finally, offering post-incubation support and establishing an alumni community will ensure the long-term sustainability of tenant businesses. By implementing these recommendations, BLKK can strengthen its role as a vital resource for aspiring entrepreneurs and contribute to broader economic development within the community.

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