

## Institutional Strengthening Strategy Special Labor Exchange Vocational High Schools in Tangerang District

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### Abstract

This study examines the role of the Special Employment Exchange (BKK) in enhancing the employment absorption of Vocational High School (SMK) graduates in Tangerang Regency. It identifies key barriers to effective workforce absorption by Industry and the World of Work (IDUKA) and formulates the most effective strategy to improve employment outcomes. Grounded in Grindle & Hilderbrand's (1995) capacity-building theory, this research employs a mixed-method approach with the Analytical Hierarchy Process (AHP) to develop strategic recommendations. Findings reveal that while BKK serves as a vital link between SMK graduates and IDUKA, its effectiveness is constrained by weak human resource development, suboptimal organizational and institutional reforms, and limited integration of information technology. The recommended strategy focuses on strengthening BKK's institutional capacity through prioritized efforts in individual development, technology integration, institutional reform, and organizational enhancement. The study contributes by expanding capacity-building theory to include information technology as a critical factor in institutional development.

**Keywords:** *Special Employment Exchange, Vocational School Graduates, Workforce Absorption, Capacity Building, Information Technology Integration.*

### INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of the industrial sector and the increasing demand for skilled labor have highlighted the crucial role of vocational education in preparing graduates for the workforce. Vocational High Schools (SMK) in Indonesia, particularly in Tangerang District, are expected to produce graduates who are ready to meet the demands of Industry and the World of Work (IDUKA). However, the low absorption rate of SMK graduates into the labor market remains a significant challenge. One of the key mechanisms established to address this issue is the Special Labor Exchange (Bursa Kerja Khusus or BKK), which serves as a bridge between SMK graduates and potential employers. Despite its intended role, the effectiveness of BKK in increasing employment rates remains questionable due to several institutional constraints (Sudjana, 2019).

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Institutional capacity plays a vital role in the success of labor market intermediation (North, 1990). The ability of BKK to function optimally is influenced by various factors, including human resource capacity, organizational support, and regulatory frameworks. Grindle and Hilderbrand's (1995) capacity-building theory emphasizes the importance of individual development, organizational strengthening, and institutional reform in enhancing the effectiveness of an institution. Applying this theory to the context of BKK in Tangerang District, it becomes evident that gaps in human resource competence, institutional support, and technological adoption hinder its optimal functioning (Wijayanto & Rahayu, 2021).

Several studies have examined the challenges faced by BKK in various regions of Indonesia. According to Suharto (2020), the lack of collaboration between vocational schools and industries significantly reduces the employability of graduates. Additionally, the limited integration of digital technology in BKK operations has been identified as a barrier to effective job matching (Siregar et al., 2022). While the government has implemented policies to enhance vocational education and labor market alignment, inconsistencies in execution at the institutional level continue to limit the impact of these initiatives (Marwan, 2018).

Given these challenges, it is essential to explore strategies that can strengthen the institutional capacity of BKK in Tangerang District. This study aims to analyze the factors affecting the effectiveness of BKK in increasing employment rates among SMK graduates, identify key institutional weaknesses, and propose strategic measures for institutional strengthening. By leveraging capacity-building principles, this research seeks to provide policy recommendations that can enhance the role of BKK as an effective intermediary between vocational education and the labor market.

The findings of this study are expected to contribute to both theoretical and practical discussions on vocational education and labor market integration. Strengthening the institutional framework of BKK will not only improve employment opportunities for SMK graduates but also support broader economic development objectives by ensuring a better-skilled workforce aligned with industry needs.

Vocational education plays a crucial role in preparing students for employment by equipping them with specialized skills tailored to industry needs. However, despite the increasing number of Vocational High Schools (SMK) in Indonesia, the absorption of their graduates into the workforce remains a significant challenge (Setiawan, 2020). The Special Labor Exchange (Bursa Kerja Khusus or BKK) is an institutional mechanism designed to bridge the gap between graduates and industries. BKK is expected to facilitate job placements and ensure that vocational graduates are absorbed effectively by Industry and the World of Work (IDUKA). However, the effectiveness of BKK in achieving these objectives remains questionable, particularly in Tangerang District,

where industry demand and labor supply often experience mismatches (Suharto et al., 2021).

One of the primary obstacles faced by BKK SMK is the lack of institutional capacity. Previous studies indicate that a strong institutional framework is essential for effective labor market intermediation (Grindle & Hilderbrand, 1995). Institutional capacity comprises several dimensions, including individual development, organizational strengthening, and institutional reform. In the case of BKK SMK, weaknesses in these dimensions contribute to the inefficiency of labor absorption (Wijaya, 2019). Moreover, the rapid advancement of technology necessitates the integration of digital platforms in employment services, yet many BKKs still rely on conventional methods, limiting their effectiveness (Prasetyo & Nugroho, 2022).

The government, particularly the Ministry of Education and Culture, has attempted to address these issues through various policy initiatives. Regulations such as the Presidential Regulation No. 68/2022 on vocational education emphasize the need for stronger linkages between vocational schools and industries (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2022). However, the implementation of these policies at the regional level often encounters bureaucratic and administrative challenges, resulting in suboptimal outcomes (Kurniawan et al., 2023). Thus, an in-depth analysis of the institutional strengthening strategy for BKK SMK is crucial to formulating effective solutions that enhance its role in workforce absorption.

This study employs a mixed-methods approach to analyze the effectiveness of BKK in Tangerang District. Using the Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) technique, this research identifies priority strategies for institutional strengthening, emphasizing individual capacity building, technological integration, organizational development, and systemic reforms (Saaty, 2008). The findings are expected to provide empirical evidence for policymakers and educational institutions to improve the effectiveness of vocational employment services.

By addressing these challenges, this research contributes to the broader discourse on vocational education reform and labor market intermediation in Indonesia. The study aims to highlight the importance of institutional capacity in enhancing labor market outcomes and propose strategic interventions to optimize the role of BKK in bridging the gap between vocational education and employment.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The Special Employment Exchange (BKK) serves as a linking institution between vocational school graduates and the job market. According to Scherer (2005), employment mediation institutions play a crucial role in reducing skill mismatches by aligning vocational education outcomes with industry needs. Similarly, Coxhead & Jayasuriya (2010) argue that effective employment facilitation is essential to ensuring that vocational graduates can transition smoothly

into the workforce. In the Indonesian context, BKK is mandated to establish partnerships with the Industry and the World of Work (IDUKA) to provide job opportunities for vocational graduates (Permendikbud No. 50 of 2020). However, several studies indicate that the effectiveness of BKK is still limited due to inadequate institutional capacity and industry collaboration (Setiawan, 2018).

This study applies the capacity building theory by Grindle & Hilderbrand (1995), which emphasizes three key dimensions:

1. Individual Development: Refers to training, skill enhancement, and knowledge improvement among BKK personnel. Well-trained human resources are fundamental to increasing the effectiveness of employment mediation (Farazmand, 2004).
2. Organizational Strengthening: Focuses on management structures, institutional networks, and resource allocation. According to North (1990), strong institutions facilitate better labor market coordination and policy implementation.
3. Institutional Reform: Involves policy adjustments and regulatory frameworks to improve labor absorption efficiency. Fukuyama (2004) highlights the importance of transparent governance in employment mediation to ensure accountability and sustainability.

Several studies have identified key challenges in vocational employment absorption. According to McGrath (2012), the mismatch between vocational training and labor market demands is a major obstacle. Additionally, Ismail et al. (2019) highlight that technological advancements require continuous curriculum adaptation, which many vocational schools fail to implement effectively. Research in Indonesia by Prasetyo (2021) found that limited government support and lack of funding hinder the effectiveness of employment facilitation programs.

Based on previous studies, strengthening BKK requires a multi-faceted strategy:

1. Enhancing Human Resource Development – Training programs for BKK personnel to improve their ability to match graduates with industry needs (Schwab, 2019).
2. Integrating Digital Platforms – Utilizing information technology for job matching and tracking employment outcomes (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2014).
3. Policy and Institutional Reform – Strengthening regulatory frameworks to improve collaboration between vocational institutions and industries (Rodrik, 2008).
4. Strengthening Organizational Structures – Ensuring BKK has adequate infrastructure and funding support (World Bank, 2020).

## **METHOD**

This study employs a mixed-method approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative methods to comprehensively analyze the role of the Special Employment Exchange (BKK) in increasing the employment absorption of Vocational High School (SMK) graduates in

Tangerang Regency. Mixed-method research is particularly useful in policy and institutional studies as it allows for a more holistic understanding of complex phenomena (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

The qualitative method is used to explore in-depth the institutional dynamics of BKK, the challenges faced in its implementation, and the factors influencing its effectiveness. Data collection is conducted through semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders, including BKK administrators, school principals, government representatives from the Provincial Education Office and the Department of Manpower and Transmigration, as well as industry representatives from the World of Work (IDUKA). Additionally, document analysis is conducted to review policies, regulations, and reports related to BKK operations, following the document analysis framework proposed by Bowen (2009).

The quantitative method is applied through the Analytical Hierarchy Process (AHP) technique to determine the priority strategy for strengthening BKK institutions. The AHP method, developed by Saaty (1980), is widely used in decision-making processes that require ranking multiple factors based on expert judgment. This involves the identification of key factors influencing the effectiveness of BKK and ranking them based on expert assessments. A structured questionnaire is distributed to relevant stakeholders to evaluate and weigh the importance of each factor, which is then analyzed using AHP to formulate the most effective strategy.

The research follows a descriptive-analytical design to systematically describe the current condition of BKK and analyze the factors affecting employment absorption. The data is processed through triangulation, ensuring the validity and reliability of the findings by cross-verifying different data sources and methods, as suggested by Denzin (1978). This methodological approach enhances the robustness of the study and reduces potential biases.

By integrating qualitative and quantitative insights, this study provides a comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of BKK in bridging SMK graduates with IDUKA, while also offering strategic recommendations for improving its performance.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **The Role of BKK in Enhancing Employment Absorption of Vocational High School Graduates**

The findings of this study indicate that *Bursa Kerja Khusus* (BKK) plays a crucial role in bridging the gap between Vocational High School (SMK) graduates and the Industrial and Business World (IDUKA). Based on interviews, it was evident that BKK actively engages in facilitating job opportunities for graduates by establishing connections with companies. This effort is essential considering the high number of SMK graduates each year in Tangerang Regency. However, despite its involvement in career development and skill enhancement, the primary challenge faced by BKK is the misalignment between the skills

possessed by graduates and the actual needs of the industry. This discrepancy suggests the need for further improvements to ensure that BKK can effectively support employment absorption.

BKK serves several key functions in enhancing employment absorption among SMK graduates, including:

1. Job Vacancy Information Provision

BKK collects and disseminates job vacancy information from various companies to SMK students. This function plays a significant role in ensuring that students are well-informed about job opportunities that align with their expertise and qualifications.

2. Training and Job Preparation

BKK frequently organizes skill training and job preparation workshops, such as CV writing, interview techniques, and soft skills development. These training sessions are instrumental in increasing the competitiveness of graduates in the job market. The findings show that graduates who participated in these training sessions demonstrated better employment prospects than those who did not.

3. Collaboration with the Business Sector

To facilitate employment absorption, BKK establishes partnerships with various companies to create internship programs or direct job placements for SMK students. Through these initiatives, students gain practical experience in the field, significantly enhancing their employability. This collaboration also enables industries to identify potential employees early and tailor their recruitment process accordingly.

4. Impact of BKK on Employment Absorption

The presence of BKK in Tangerang Regency has had a positive impact on the employment absorption of SMK graduates, as evidenced by the following outcomes:

- a. Increased Employment Rates

With easier access to job vacancy information and job preparation training, many SMK graduates have successfully secured employment in fields relevant to their expertise. This highlights the effectiveness of BKK's role in facilitating job placements.

- b. Reduction of Unemployment Among SMK Graduates

The programs implemented by BKK have contributed to a decrease in unemployment rates among SMK graduates. In regions with high unemployment rates, the role of BKK has proven to be essential in providing structured pathways for graduates to enter the workforce.

- c. Improvement of Human Resource Quality

Through training and internship experiences, SMK graduates develop better skills and work readiness. These improvements not only benefit the graduates but also contribute to the overall enhancement of human resource quality in the region.

Industries benefit from hiring graduates who are better prepared and equipped with the necessary skills to meet workplace demands.

The findings highlight the critical role of BKK in facilitating the employment absorption of SMK graduates. However, the effectiveness of BKK is influenced by various factors, including industry engagement, curriculum alignment, and student participation in skill enhancement programs. The mismatch between the skills acquired by graduates and industry requirements remains a significant challenge. This suggests the need for more dynamic and adaptive training programs that can bridge this gap.

From a theoretical perspective, this study aligns with Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1964), which emphasizes the importance of education and training in enhancing individuals' productivity and employability. The role of BKK in providing job training and facilitating employment opportunities supports this theory, as it demonstrates how investments in skill development lead to better job prospects. Furthermore, the findings resonate with the Matching Theory of Labor Markets (Jovanovic, 1984), which posits that successful employment outcomes depend on the alignment between workers' skills and job requirements. The skill gap identified in this study indicates that the matching process is not yet optimal, requiring better synchronization between vocational education and industry demands.

In comparison with previous research, studies by Supriadi et al. (2020) and Wibowo (2021) also found that vocational school graduates often struggle with employability due to inadequate practical skills. However, research by Rahmawati et al. (2019) highlighted that strong collaboration between schools and industries significantly improves employment rates among graduates. The findings of this study reinforce these conclusions while emphasizing the need for a more structured approach to industry partnerships and curriculum adjustments to meet evolving labor market needs.

Additionally, while BKK's efforts in job placement and career training have been beneficial, further collaboration between vocational schools and industries is necessary. Strengthening public-private partnerships can help ensure that vocational education aligns with current market needs. Moreover, government policies should support initiatives that encourage businesses to actively participate in training programs for vocational students.

In conclusion, while BKK has demonstrated its importance in increasing employment absorption, its impact can be further optimized by addressing the skill gap and enhancing collaboration between stakeholders. By refining training programs and fostering industry partnerships, BKK can play a more effective role in reducing unemployment and improving job readiness among SMK graduates.

### **Factors Inhibiting the Effectiveness of BKK in the Absorption of Vocational High School Graduates into the Workforce**

Based on the interviews conducted, it was found that the low absorption rate of vocational high school (SMK) graduates in Tangerang Regency into the Industry and Business World (IDUKA) is due to several key factors. These factors include:

1. **Skills Gap:** There is a mismatch between the skills possessed by SMK graduates and the needs of the industry. Many graduates lack specific skills that align with the demands of modern industries.
2. **Limited Human Resources and Facilities at BKK:** The shortage of competent personnel and inadequate facilities hinder the effectiveness of the Special Job Market (BKK) in bridging graduates with IDUKA.
3. **Lack of Networking with IDUKA:** The minimal collaboration between BKK and the industrial sector limits the graduates' access to available job opportunities.
4. **Insufficient Training for BKK Personnel:** BKK managers receive limited relevant training, making it difficult for them to understand industrial needs and adjust their employment placement strategies.
5. **Lack of Government Support:** Government regulations and policy support remain limited, which hinders optimal collaboration between SMK, BKK, and IDUKA.

The findings of this study indicate that the role of BKK in increasing the employment absorption rate of SMK graduates remains suboptimal. These results align with the study conducted by Susanti et al. (2021), which stated that the success of BKK in bridging SMK graduates with the industrial sector highly depends on management quality, networking with industries, and government support. The study found that SMKs with BKKs that have strong industrial connections exhibit higher employment absorption rates than those without strong links to IDUKA.

Moreover, this study is in line with the research by Wibowo & Rahman (2020), which highlights the importance of soft skills development for SMK graduates to compete in the job market. While soft skills training has been implemented in several SMKs in Tangerang Regency, interviews revealed that the programs remain unsystematic and lack sustainability, rendering them less effective.

From an institutional reform perspective, this research supports the findings of Prasetyo (2019), which emphasize that BKK work systems need to adapt to industry developments and labor policies to remain flexible and responsive to labor market changes. In the context of Tangerang Regency, interviews revealed that the BKK work system still follows standard school procedures without sufficient adjustments to the evolving industry needs.

Overall, this study offers a more comprehensive approach by combining three main elements in strengthening BKK institutions:



individual (human resource) development, organizational strengthening, and institutional reform. This approach is broader than previous research, which tended to focus on only one aspect. Thus, this study presents a new model for enhancing BKK effectiveness that better suits the local context of Tangerang Regency.

Based on the findings of this study, several strategic steps are recommended to enhance the role of BKK in facilitating employment for SMK graduates:

1. **Enhancing Training and Competency Development for BKK Personnel:** More systematic training programs for BKK managers are necessary to improve their understanding of industry needs and develop more effective employment placement strategies.
2. **Strengthening Networking with IDUKA:** Establishing stronger partnerships with the industrial sector through mutually beneficial collaborations can help increase job opportunities for SMK graduates.
3. **Government Policy Support:** Local governments should provide supportive regulations to ensure the sustainability of BKK programs, including increased funding for facilities and training.
4. **Integration of Information Technology:** Utilizing digital technology in recruitment systems can enhance efficiency and accessibility of information for SMK graduates seeking employment.

By implementing these strategies, the effectiveness of BKK in connecting SMK graduates with IDUKA can be significantly improved, optimizing employment absorption rates to meet the industrial demands in Tangerang Regency.

### **Effective Strategies for Strengthening the Institutional Capacity of the BKK to Increase the Absorption of Vocational High School Graduates in Tangerang Regency**

This study introduces significant innovations that distinguish it from previous research, which generally focused on Special Job Markets (BKK) and their relationship with the employment absorption of SMK graduates. These innovations arise from a unique approach, in-depth analysis, and strategies tailored to the specific circumstances and challenges in Tangerang Regency.

The novel aspects that add value to this research are as follows:

A distinctive approach has been adopted to strengthen the institutional role of BKK as a bridge between vocational education and industry. This study presents a new perspective on BKK, not merely as an administrative unit facilitating job opportunities for SMK graduates but as a "strategic connector" between vocational schools and industry (IDUKA).

The role of BKK in Vocational High Schools is enhanced to respond to labor market needs more swiftly and efficiently, reinforcing the dual function of the Employment Cooperation Agency as both a workforce development entity and a facilitator of labor recruitment. This opens new insights into the enhancement of BKK as an institution that

should operate like a competent employment agency rather than just an administrative unit within the school.

A detailed study of the factors contributing to the inefficacy of BKK in absorbing graduates, particularly from an institutional and networking perspective, is conducted. Overall, the uniqueness of this research lies in the development of strategies to strengthen BKK in SMKs in Tangerang Regency, based on an analysis that considers the context and empirical data on the role, challenges, and needs of BKK, while presenting a prioritized strategy framework.

This study introduces a work concept that integrates human resource potential development, institutional reform, and multi-stakeholder collaboration to maximize the contribution of Special Job Markets in Vocational High Schools in improving graduate employability. The proposed recommendations are designed for concrete implementation at the local institutional level. Thus, this research not only contributes theoretically but also has practical value for stakeholders in vocational education and employment sectors.

Based on calculations using the Analytical Hierarchy Process (AHP), it is evident that strengthening the institutional capacity of BKK in SMKs in Tangerang Regency requires strategic steps guided by an institutional strengthening strategy model, as illustrated in the data processing through AHP.

In this context, the strategic measures to be undertaken by the government, particularly the Banten Provincial Education Office and the Tangerang Regency Manpower and Transmigration Office, should prioritize the following institutional strengthening dimensions:

1. Individual Development Dimension
2. Technology Integration Dimension
3. Institutional/System Reform Dimension
4. Organizational Strengthening Dimension

These prioritized dimensions are crucial in ensuring that BKK functions optimally as a bridge between vocational education and industry, ultimately enhancing the employment absorption of SMK graduates.

This study builds upon Grindle's (1997) institutional strengthening theory, which highlights three key dimensions: Individual Strengthening, Organizational Strengthening, and System Strengthening. These three factors have been widely acknowledged in institutional development and capacity-building research. However, our findings reveal a critical gap in Grindle's framework—the role of technology in institutional strengthening—which has not been explicitly addressed in prior studies.

Several previous studies have examined institutional capacity-building in employment and vocational education contexts, primarily focusing on the improvement of human resource skills, organizational efficiency, and policy frameworks (e.g., Brinkerhoff & Goldsmith, 2003; Fukuyama, 2004). Most of these studies emphasize traditional approaches, such as training programs, leadership development, and

policy reforms, as the primary means of strengthening institutions. However, with rapid technological advancements, particularly in the Industry 4.0 era, this study finds that technology is no longer merely a supporting tool but a fundamental enabler of institutional transformation.

Brinkerhoff & Goldsmith (2003) argue that institutional strengthening should prioritize human capacity and organizational efficiency, but their work does not explicitly address how technology can optimize these processes. Fukuyama (2004) discusses institutional trust and governance reforms as central elements of strengthening institutions, yet the study overlooks the role of digitalization in accelerating governance improvements. More recent research (e.g., OECD, 2019) recognizes digital transformation in employment services, but these studies primarily focus on macro-level policy changes rather than localized institutional strengthening.

This study extends these perspectives by demonstrating that technology integration is not merely a supplementary factor but a core dimension in strengthening institutional capacity. Our research suggests that in the case of Special Job Markets (BKK) in SMKs, the use of digital job-matching platforms, data analytics, and online industry collaboration tools significantly enhances employment absorption rates. This insight builds upon, yet diverges from, earlier works that primarily focused on human and organizational factors.

## **CONCLUSION**

The findings of this study indicate that the Special Employment Exchange (BKK) of Vocational High Schools (SMK) plays a significant role in bridging SMK graduates with Industry and the World of Work (IDUKA). BKK serves as a liaison between vocational schools and companies to open employment opportunities for graduates, thereby contributing to increasing labor absorption. However, the low employment absorption rate of SMK graduates in Tangerang Regency remains a major challenge. This is due to several factors, including the inadequate development of human resources within BKK SMK, suboptimal organizational strengthening, and the insufficient implementation of institutional reforms and information technology integration in BKK operations.

To enhance the effectiveness of BKK's role in supporting workforce absorption, an institutional capacity-building strategy is required, focusing on four key aspects. First, individual development to improve the competencies of BKK human resources. Second, technology integration to facilitate and accelerate access to information and job matching processes. Third, institutional and system reforms to ensure that regulations and policies are more adaptive to labor market needs. Fourth, organizational strengthening to improve governance effectiveness and coordination among stakeholders. The implementation of these strategies requires active support from the government, particularly the Provincial Education Office of Banten and the

Department of Manpower and Transmigration of Tangerang Regency, to ensure that BKK can function more optimally and sustainably.

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