



# Improvement of Vocational Skills of SMK Muhammadiyah Rappang Students Through an Entrepreneurship-Based Training Program in Pancarijang District, Sidenreng Rappang Regency

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**Abstract:** This study aims to improve students' entrepreneurial skills at SMK Muhammadiyah Rappang through an entrepreneurship-based training program in Pancarijang District, Sidenreng Rappang Regency. Amid the challenges of globalization and technological advancements, SMK Muhammadiyah Rappang faces mismatched competencies between what is taught and the job market's needs. Many students come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds and have limited access to relevant entrepreneurial training. This training program is designed to address challenges in production and marketing by providing the necessary skills to create quality products and market them using digital technology. The methods used in this research include initial needs assessment, product innovation training, and digital marketing and branding training. The program also provides guidance on implementing the marketing and production strategies taught. The results of this training show improved students' skills in product innovation, more efficient production management, and the ability to market products online through social media and e-commerce platforms. The discussion highlights that, although challenges in production and marketing still exist, the use of appropriate technology and an understanding of digital marketing can enhance the competitiveness of local products. This program provides students with entrepreneurial skills and empowers the local community to become independent and innovative entrepreneurs. The success of this program is expected to create new job opportunities and strengthen the local economy in Sidenreng Rappang Regency.

**Keywords:** Entrepreneurship, Entrepreneurial Training, Product Innovation, Digital Marketing, Merdeka Belajar, MBKM.

## Introduction

Vocational education in Indonesia, particularly at Vocational High Schools (SMK), is vital in equipping students with the skills needed in the workforce. One of the most critical aspects of SMK education is the development of entrepreneurial skills, which are key to creating a generation of young people who are not only ready to enter the workforce but are also capable of

creating jobs for themselves and others (Yulianti & Ahmad, 2020; Zulkarnain, 2021). Amid a constantly evolving economy, it is essential for vocational schools to adapt their curriculum and educational programs to remain relevant to industry needs and market challenges (Kurniawan, 2020; Wibowo, 2019). SMK Muhammadiyah Rappang, located in Pancarijang District, Sidenreng Rappang Regency, South Sulawesi Province, as one of the vocational education institutions,

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also faces significant challenges in enhancing the entrepreneurial skills of its students to become more competitive in the global market.

Many students at this school come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, making them more vulnerable to high unemployment rates after graduation (Sutrisno, 2022). Although SMK Muhammadiyah Rappang offers various study programs to prepare students for the workforce, such as information technology and accounting, many students still struggle with practical skills, particularly entrepreneurship. A lack of understanding and skills in business management, marketing, and product innovation is a significant obstacle in starting independent businesses after graduation (Alfarizi, 2022; Kusuma, 2021; Maulana & Sari, 2022). Pancarijang District, where SMK Muhammadiyah Rappang is located, has significant economic potential, especially in the agriculture, trade, and handicraft sectors. However, much of this potential is underutilized by the local community, mainly due to a lack of entrepreneurial skills to start and manage a business (Sutrisno, 2022). Educated students from SMK Muhammadiyah Rappang must be able to act as agents of change—not only prepared to work in large companies but also capable of creating businesses that provide employment for themselves and others. Therefore, developing entrepreneurial skills is highly important in this context.

One way to address this issue is by implementing a more structured entrepreneurship training program based on practical experience. This training should cover two main aspects of entrepreneurship: production and marketing. By equipping students with the skills needed to create marketable products and to promote them using digital technology effectively, it is hoped that students will be motivated to start their businesses and contribute to the local economy (Abdurrahman, 2021; Darsih, 2020; Pramudito, 2021).

Through this entrepreneurship training program, SMK Muhammadiyah Rappang students are expected to develop technical skills in production and understand the importance of business management and proper product marketing. This training aligns with the principles of the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) policy, which emphasizes experiential learning outside the classroom. The MBKM concept encourages students to engage directly in entrepreneurial projects that benefit themselves and the surrounding community (Prawiro, 2021; Setiawan & Gunawan, 2020).

Applying appropriate technology in the production process and digital marketing is a key element of this training program. In an increasingly connected world, digital marketing through social media platforms and e-commerce has become an effective way to expand market reach and improve the

competitiveness of local products (Aditama & Rahman, 2020; Gunawan & Lestari, 2019; Nuryanti, 2020). Therefore, introducing digital marketing to students will help them promote the products they create more effectively in local and global markets (Fitriani & Suryadi, 2021; Prasetyo & Wahyuni, 2021).

This program also aims to empower the local community in Pancarijang District to utilize their potential in more innovative ways. Through entrepreneurship training, it is hoped that students and community members will be able to optimize their local products and develop businesses more efficiently and competitively (Mulyani & Anwar, 2020). The development of entrepreneurial character that is independent and creative is the primary focus of this program. Collaboration between educational institutions and the business world is crucial. In implementing this program, SMK Muhammadiyah Rappang is committed to working with various stakeholders, including the government, the private sector, and the local community. This collaboration aims to strengthen the existing entrepreneurship training and ensure that the implemented program has a lasting and positive impact on students and the community. This training program also integrates technology-based learning to enhance students' entrepreneurial skills, helping them better understand market dynamics and introducing them to innovative product production techniques (Alamsyah, 2020). The training goes beyond production techniques, encompassing business management, marketing strategies, and sound financial management. SMK Muhammadiyah Rappang must adapt its curriculum to deliver more comprehensive entrepreneurship education to achieve these goals. The program aims to produce graduates who are prepared to work in large companies and are capable of creating and managing their own businesses. With strong entrepreneurial skills, students will be better equipped to survive in an increasingly competitive global environment.

Through this hands-on entrepreneurship training program, a generation of creative, innovative young people is expected to emerge, capable of confidently facing economic challenges. Moreover, the success of this program will positively impact the local economy, enabling students and the community to actively create jobs and improve the quality of local products that can compete in broader markets. Thus, developing entrepreneurial skills at SMK Muhammadiyah Rappang is an effort to produce work-ready graduates and a crucial step in building local economic independence (Yulianti & Ahmad, 2020; Zulkarnain, 2021).

## Method

The research method in this program focuses on developing students' entrepreneurial skills at SMK Muhammadiyah Rappang through an entrepreneurship-based training program implemented in Pancarijang District, Sidenreng Rappang Regency. This program aims to address two main problems faced by students and the local community: product production and marketing. Implementing this program involves an in-depth analysis of local needs, relevant practical training, and continuous evaluation to ensure the success and sustainability of the program. Below is a detailed explanation of the research method used to implement this program. The research approach used in this program combines qualitative and quantitative approaches through a participatory community service method. This program focuses on empowering students and the community through entrepreneurship training based on real needs in the field. The study aims to identify the problems faced by students of SMK Muhammadiyah Rappang and provide solutions based on practical knowledge and appropriate technology.

This study employs an action research design that involves direct interaction between the researchers (the proposing team) and partners (students and the community). The proposing team will evaluate the initial conditions, design and implement entrepreneurship-based training programs, and analyze the outcomes. This method allows researchers to make continuous improvements based on feedback from program participants. The program is implemented in several stages, each with specific objectives and steps to ensure the involvement of students, the community, and university students throughout the process. These stages include;

The first step in program implementation is conducting a needs analysis involving assessing the current production and marketing conditions at SMK Muhammadiyah Rappang and the local community. This assessment aims to identify obstacles faced by students and the community related to production capacity, marketing skills, and the use of technology in both areas. This process includes interviews and direct field observations to obtain a clear picture of the situation. Partner Participation; Students and the community will provide data on their current production and marketing conditions and challenges in running their businesses. Student Involvement; University students will assist in collecting data and analyzing the results of interviews and observations.

Based on the initial assessment results, the training will focus on improving the technical skills of students and the community in producing innovative

and quality products. This training includes applying appropriate technology in the production process, aiming to improve efficiency and product quality. Participants will be taught how to optimize tools and production machines to enhance quality and efficiency. Partner Participation; students and the community will attend training focused on innovative production techniques and the efficient use of production technology. Student Involvement; University students will act as facilitators and mentors during the training, ensuring each participant understands and can apply the material in practice.

After enhancing production capacity, the next stage is digital marketing and branding training to help students and the community market their products to a broader audience. This training involves using digital platforms such as social media, e-commerce, and effective branding strategies to increase product visibility. Partner Participation; Partners will be trained to market their products via social media, create e-commerce accounts, and build a strong brand identity. Student Involvement; University students will assist in creating digital content, managing social media accounts, and providing training on effective online marketing strategies. After the training, students and the community will receive mentoring to implement the training outcomes in the field. This mentoring ensures that participants can directly apply the techniques and strategies taught to their business contexts. Partner Participation; Partners will begin implementing the new technologies and marketing strategies they have learned. They will also evaluate these implementations to determine their success. Student Involvement; University students will conduct monitoring and field mentoring, provide feedback to partners on their progress, and help resolve any issues.

The program will be evaluated periodically to assess the success and effectiveness of each stage. Evaluations will be conducted through satisfaction surveys, participant interviews, and observation of technology and marketing applications in the field. This evaluation is crucial to determine whether the implemented solutions effectively address the partners' challenges and to design necessary improvements. Partner Participation; Partners will provide feedback on the training received and changes observed after its implementation. Student Involvement; University students will collect evaluation data and assist in preparing the evaluation report, which will be used to refine the program.

Data collection is conducted using several methods. Interviews are used to obtain qualitative information about the partners' initial conditions and the challenges faced in production and marketing. Field Observation; to assess the actual conditions of

production and marketing practices used by students and the community. Surveys; to measure participants' satisfaction with the training provided and the outcomes after implementation. Documentation; to record every activity that takes place, including training materials and field applications. The collected data will be analyzed descriptively using both qualitative and quantitative methods. Qualitative data from interviews and observations will be analyzed to identify key themes related to the program's successes and challenges. Quantitative data from satisfaction surveys and performance evaluations will be analyzed to measure participant production and marketing capacity changes. Program evaluation will be conducted after each phase to assess the effectiveness of the training and mentoring provided. The proposing team will analyze the outcomes achieved and recommend program improvements. Program sustainability will be ensured through continued mentoring for partners after the program ends, enabling them independently and sustainably implement the training outcomes. Through this structured method, the program is expected to significantly impact SMK Muhammadiyah Rappang students and the surrounding community in developing their entrepreneurial skills.

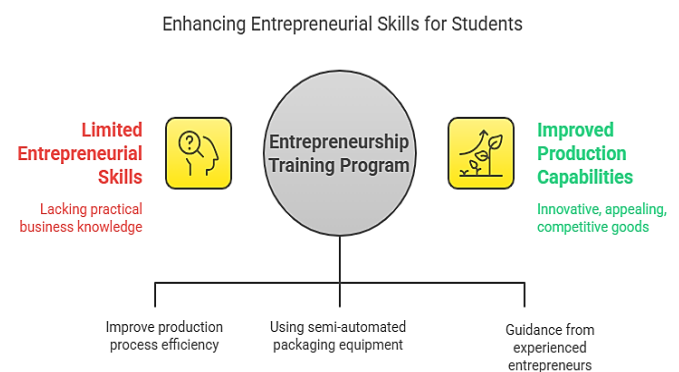
## Result and Discussion

The entrepreneurship training program implemented at SMK Muhammadiyah Rappang was developed as a strategic response to the need to equip students and the surrounding community with practical skills in running and growing businesses. This initiative focused on improving competencies in two significant areas: product development and marketing. The training aimed to introduce participants to the technical aspects of entrepreneurship and enhance their mindset, confidence, and motivation in engaging with entrepreneurial activities. As a vocational school, SMK Muhammadiyah Rappang is critical in bridging the gap between formal education and practical work life. Hence, the program emphasized real-world applications, problem-solving, and cultivating innovation and resilience, which are necessary for surviving and thriving in today's competitive economy.

Before the program's implementation, many students lacked awareness and knowledge regarding efficient production techniques. Their products often failed to meet market quality, design, and innovation standards. A limited understanding of the importance of branding, consumer preferences, and cost management compounded this. In rural areas like Pancarijang District, entrepreneurial initiatives often face additional constraints such as limited access to appropriate

technology, minimal exposure to market demands, and traditional mindsets resistant to change. Therefore, this program was expected to transform these limitations into opportunities through workshops, mentoring sessions, and hands-on training.

One of the most noticeable outcomes of the program was the significant improvement in students' technical skills in the production process. After receiving intensive training in appropriate technology, modern production equipment, and efficient methods of processing raw materials, students showed enhanced abilities in producing more innovative, appealing, and competitive goods. The training introduced them to tools to increase accuracy, reduce material waste, and speed up production cycles. For instance, they learned how to use semi-automated packaging and labeling equipment, which had previously been done manually and inefficiently. This shift allowed them to reduce raw material waste by approximately 15% and shorten production time by up to 10%, representing tangible productivity improvements.



**Figure 1.** Enhancing Entrepreneurial Skills for Students

Innovation was another key element embedded within the training. Through product innovation sessions, students were encouraged to design new products aligned with market trends and consumer preferences. They participated in brainstorming sessions, market observation activities, and customer feedback analysis to determine which products had high demand and which features attracted consumer attention. As a result, at least five new products were successfully developed during the training, each exhibiting distinct design, utility, and packaging improvements. These innovations increased the local products' competitiveness in a market saturated by mass-produced and imported goods. This development supports the perspective of Prasetyo & Wahyuni (2021), who emphasized that innovation is a cornerstone of sustainable micro-entrepreneurship in rural economies.

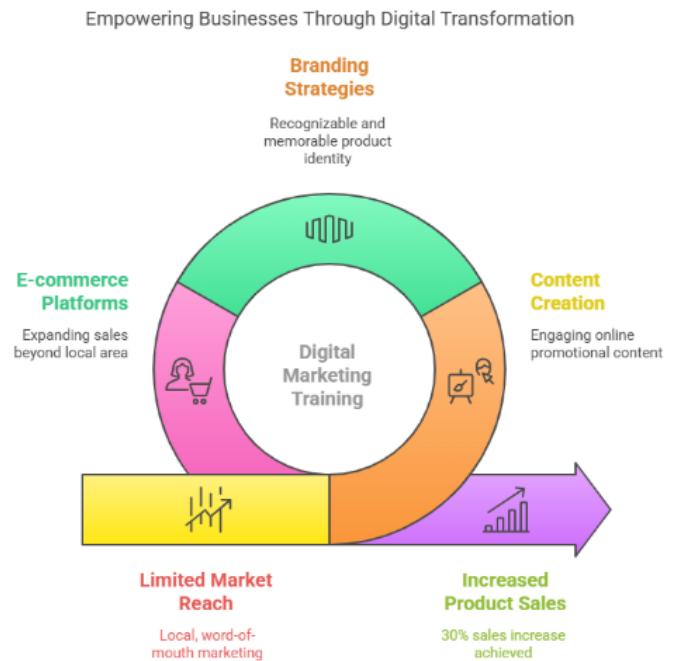
The program also paid special attention to improving business management skills, especially regarding using appropriate technology in production.



Students were introduced to lean production and how technology could assist in reducing costs while maintaining quality. They learned how to map out production processes, identify bottlenecks, and apply simple quality control methods. Additionally, participants were trained to manage inventories, reduce production errors, and calculate production costs more accurately. These efforts helped instill a deeper understanding of efficiency and sustainability in business operations. Analyzing production costs and minimizing waste improved their profit margins and taught students to make strategic decisions in sourcing raw materials and setting product prices.

In marketing, the shift from conventional to digital strategies marked a fundamental transformation for students and local entrepreneurs. Before the training, marketing was limited to local marketplaces, relying heavily on word-of-mouth and personal networks. These methods were ineffective in expanding reach or building consistent customer bases. During the training, participants were introduced to modern digital marketing tools such as social media advertising, content creation, branding, and e-commerce platforms. They were taught how to create attractive product photos, write compelling captions, and engage customers online through Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp Business. These strategies proved to be transformative in increasing product visibility and reach.

A breakthrough occurred when students began applying their new digital marketing skills. With proper guidance, they created promotional content that attracted more online engagement, leading to an estimated 30% increase in product sales. This growth was due to better content and the implementation of branding strategies that made their products more recognizable and memorable. By developing logos, slogans, and packaging identities, students established a cohesive brand image for their businesses. Brand awareness on social media increased by about 25%, and some products even gained repeat customers from outside the local area. Argue that branding and digital marketing strategies can significantly boost the performance of small enterprises in rural settings.



**Figure 2.** Empowering Businesses Through Digital Transformation

Another critical aspect of the training involved understanding consumer behavior and market segmentation. Students were trained to identify potential customer groups, analyze their preferences, and tailor their products and marketing strategies. They learned how to conduct simple surveys, interpret feedback, and adjust product features based on customer needs. This market-oriented approach helped students become more responsive and adaptive in their business strategies. As a result, they were able to offer products that better matched consumer expectations, leading to increased customer satisfaction and loyalty.

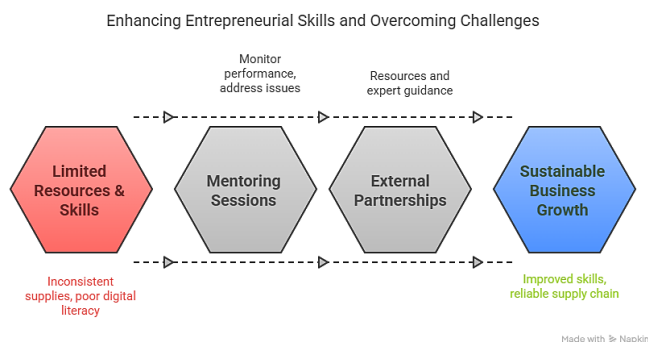
The program also emphasized the importance of supply chain management and cost control. Students were introduced to basic supply chain principles, including sourcing, procurement, logistics, and inventory management. By optimizing their raw material procurement and production scheduling, students managed to reduce operational delays and costs. These efforts improved coordination between production and sales, ensuring timely product availability and fulfillment. Moreover, participants learned how to compare prices from different suppliers and negotiate better deals, further enhancing their profitability and business resilience.

Despite these achievements, several challenges were encountered during the implementation phase. One major obstacle was the region's limited access to high-quality raw materials. Many students still depended on local sources that often provided an inconsistent supply or poor-quality materials. This

situation affected the final product outcomes, even when modern production techniques were applied. Some participants also struggled with adjusting to the new equipment, especially those with minimal machinery experience. Addressing these challenges requires collaboration with external parties such as suppliers, business mentors, or government institutions.

Another challenge was the disparity in digital literacy among students and community members. While some quickly adapted to digital tools, others found operating social media accounts challenging, designing marketing content, or managing e-commerce platforms effectively. The variance in skill levels hindered the uniform implementation of digital marketing strategies. Consequently, some participants required additional coaching and mentoring beyond the scheduled training sessions. Post-training support and mentoring are crucial for sustaining entrepreneurship development programs.

The school has initiated periodic mentoring and evaluation sessions to ensure the program's sustainability. These follow-up activities are designed to monitor business performance, address emerging issues, and reinforce the skills acquired during training. Participants are encouraged to share their progress, exchange ideas, and discuss challenges collaboratively. These activities maintain motivation and build a support network among student entrepreneurs. Moreover, the school is exploring partnerships with local business organizations and financial institutions to provide further resources and guidance.



**Figure 3.** Enhancing Entrepreneurial Skills and Overcoming Challenges

The program's success also lies in its broader social and economic impact. By enhancing youth and community members' entrepreneurial capacities, the program reduced unemployment and stimulated economic activity in Pancarijang District. Some students even hired local workers to assist in production and packaging, thus creating employment opportunities at the grassroots level. This ripple effect is consistent with the findings of Santos et al (2019) and Shepherd et al

(2021), who emphasized the role of entrepreneurship education in driving local economic development and poverty alleviation.

Another noteworthy outcome is the increased self-confidence and leadership skills among participants. Students developed stronger communication and decision-making abilities by presenting their products, interacting with customers, and making business decisions. They became more proactive in seeking opportunities and solving problems. These soft skills are essential for long-term entrepreneurial success and personal development. Several students expressed interest in continuing their business after graduation, viewing entrepreneurship as a viable career path.

As a model for future initiatives, the entrepreneurship program at SMK Muhammadiyah Rappang offers valuable lessons. It demonstrates the effectiveness of combining technical training with innovation, digital literacy, and mentoring. Other vocational schools in Indonesia can adopt similar frameworks, adapted to their local contexts, to foster entrepreneurship among students and support the development of regional economies.

In conclusion, the entrepreneurship training program has effectively empowered students and the surrounding community to engage in productive and innovative business practices. By integrating appropriate technology, digital marketing, and strategic business management, participants could improve their production processes, expand their market reach, and increase their income. The sustainability of this program relies on ongoing mentoring, resource support, and strategic partnerships. As a successful case study, this program highlights the transformative power of entrepreneurship education in preparing youth for the future and promoting inclusive economic development at the regional level.

## Conclusion

The entrepreneurship training program implemented at SMK Muhammadiyah Rappang successfully enhanced the entrepreneurial skills of students and the local community, particularly in production and marketing. With a focus on developing technical and managerial competencies, the program has significantly empowered students and community members to start their own businesses and contribute to the local economy. Improvements in production skills through appropriate technology and product innovation have enabled students and the community to produce higher-quality products at more efficient costs. Using such technologies has reduced raw material waste and improved production time, directly contributing to

increased production capacity. Moreover, digital marketing and branding training successfully introduced new ways for participants to promote their products through digital platforms, significantly increasing sales and expanding the market reach of local products. Nevertheless, the program also encountered several challenges, particularly limited access to quality raw materials and difficulties some participants face in fully managing digital marketing. Therefore, continuous mentoring and stronger collaboration with suppliers and business partners are necessary to ensure their ventures' sustainability and further development.

Overall, the program has improved the technical skills of students and the community and contributed positively to reducing unemployment and empowering the local economy. By further developing and expanding this program, SMK Muhammadiyah Rappang is expected to become a model for other vocational schools to foster more sustainable and market-relevant entrepreneurship. The continuity of this program will highly depend on ongoing support and collaboration with various stakeholders to address existing challenges and ensure that students and the community can fully harness their entrepreneurial potential.

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Lastly, our thanks go to all partners who collaborated to ensure the success of this initiative. We hope this collaboration will continue and benefit students, the community, and the local economy. May this program create a sustainable, positive impact and serve as an essential step in developing a generation of creative and innovative entrepreneurs. Thank you for all the support that has been given.

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