

Training and Mentoring Correspondence at Sman 1 Sinjai

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Abstract

Community service is conducted at SMAN 1 Sinjai to provide assistance in enhancing the understanding of students and staff regarding correspondence. This assistance aims to equip participants with knowledge about how to compose proper letters based on the principles of correspondence. Writing letters correctly is an essential administrative skill that supports effective communication in both academic and professional settings. The main objective of this community service activity is to improve participants' ability to create and compile formal letters correctly while also introducing proper archiving methods. By mastering these skills, participants can enhance their administrative capabilities, which are essential for academic and professional success. This activity is carried out in three main stages: (1) the preparation stage, where materials and lesson plans are structured, (2) the implementation stage, where participants receive direct training and practice writing different types of letters, and (3) the evaluation stage, where the effectiveness of the training is assessed. The results of this community service activity indicate that participants have improved their letter-writing skills, administrative abilities, and overall understanding of effective correspondence. This initiative not only strengthens participants' technical competencies but also prepares them for future academic and professional challenges in administrative and managerial roles.

Keywords : Correspondence, archiving, training

Introduction

SMAN 1 Sinjai is a public senior high school located at Jalan Pers Raya No. 13, Balangnipa, North Sinjai District, Sinjai Regency, South Sulawesi. The school was established on May 28, 2008, based on the Decree of the Minister of National Education Number 79/SK/B.III. SMAN 1 Sinjai is recognized for its high-quality education, as evidenced by its A accreditation, which was awarded on October 28, 2016, based on the Decree of the National Accreditation Board for Schools/Madrasahs Number 150/SK/BAP-SM/X/2016.

The school operates on a six-day academic schedule and is supported by adequate facilities, including high-speed internet access and a reliable electricity supply from PLN. With a total land area of 6,386 square meters, SMAN 1 Sinjai provides a comfortable learning environment with spacious classrooms. The school's commitment to quality education is reflected in its diverse extracurricular programs and specialized initiatives designed to develop students' potential. Additionally, the school maintains an official website that provides easily accessible information to the public and an official email system for effective communication.

SMAN 1 Sinjai places great importance on human resource development, recognizing the value of its graduates for business, industry (DU/DI), and government agencies. To support this, the school implements both internal and external training programs, such as the School Learning Program and

the Industrial Engineering Program in collaboration with DU/DI and relevant government institutions.

Training in Administrative Management and Official Letter Writing

Based on the above considerations, a training program on administrative management is being implemented. This program includes a course on composing official letters, which is one of the five key competency areas in office administration.

Writing letters is an important activity that provides significant benefits for the writer. According to Eka Wahyu, Senja Oktora, Nurbaya, Dwi Pribadi, and Suyono (2021), a letter serves as a communication tool that can be written on one or more pages and addressed to individuals or organizations. In addition to serving as documentation, letter writing can also help save time and costs. Efficient and effective document management significantly impacts the retrieval of information, which is crucial for executives in decision-making processes (Kristiningsih, Suwarni, Dwi Pribadi, Estu Amanda, & Nurul Aini).

Akhadiah (1995) highlights several benefits of writing, including:

1. Recognizing one's abilities and potential.
2. Developing ideas and reasoning skills.
3. Encouraging deeper research and mastery of information related to the writing topic.
4. Organizing thoughts systematically and expressing them clearly in written form.
5. Reviewing and evaluating one's ideas objectively.
6. Solving problems through structured written analysis.
7. Encouraging active learning.
8. Training oneself to think and communicate in an organized manner.

In today's digital era, many people tend to write or type letters by simply following existing templates without making improvements or edits before sending them. As educators, we have observed that many students, especially first-year students, make similar mistakes in their written communication, particularly in correspondence courses. These recurring errors often stem from incorrect understanding inherited from previous educational institutions.

This issue has motivated us to conduct community service activities in the form of counseling and training on the proper use of the Indonesian language in correspondence. The ability to use proper and effective language in official correspondence is essential for organizational growth, smooth bureaucratic processes, and clear communication. Addressing this issue requires skilled human resource management, particularly in administrative and correspondence matters.

SMAN 1 Sinjai is highly committed to addressing these challenges. The primary cause of these issues is not necessarily a lack of education but rather a lack of awareness among administrative staff regarding the importance of using proper Indonesian in official documents. Our experience in conducting training sessions has shown that more than 90% of participants have a bachelor's degree, and some even hold master's degrees. However, their difficulties in writing effective letters indicate that the problem lies in their awareness rather than their educational background.

Knowing how to speak Indonesian does not necessarily mean being proficient in writing it correctly. Writing, especially in official correspondence, requires attention to several key aspects, including spelling, punctuation, word choice, sentence structure, and the appropriate format for institutional documents. Therefore, we feel a strong responsibility to address this issue and, at the very least, minimize these challenges through targeted training programs.

Implementation Method

This activity is part of a counseling and training program focused on the proper use of Indonesian in correspondence for students, staff, and teachers at SMK Negeri 1 Bantaeng. The program is scheduled to take place in December 2024. Issues related to correspondence are considered significant in maintaining the continuity of administrative systems in office environments. Addressing these issues will greatly benefit school staff and teachers in applying the principles of proper correspondence. Participants will receive instructions and guidance on the correct use of Indonesian in official letters.

This initiative is not a one-time effort but should be followed up with continuous training, considering that correspondence is directly related to skills and expertise required in administrative tasks. The teaching staff and school administration must ensure that students acquire competency in administrative skills as part of their vocational education. However, theoretical knowledge alone is not sufficient. Therefore, this program must be complemented with practical training to develop skilled, intelligent, and reliable human resources in the field of administration.

Methodology

The approach used in this activity is training-based, incorporating lectures, discussions, mentoring, and hands-on practice. The material will be delivered through lectures and discussions, followed by practical exercises in drafting and composing official letters using proper Indonesian language conventions. The final stage of the program involves an evaluation to assess participants' ability to compose various types of official letters in proper Indonesian. The assessment will be based on the following criteria:

- a. Accuracy
- b. Correctness
- c. Proper and appropriate use of Indonesian
- d. Neatness and formatting

During the counseling sessions, the lecture method will be used, supported by PowerPoint presentations and interactive Q&A sessions. Meanwhile, the corrective method will be applied in the training sessions. The implementation steps for the corrective method are as follows:

1. Collecting examples of letters that contain errors in Indonesian language usage.
2. Categorizing errors based on specific aspects, such as spelling, word choice, and sentence structure.
3. Participants identifying and correcting the errors.
4. The coaching team evaluating participants' corrections.
5. The coaching team providing guidance on proper proofreading techniques.

By integrating both theoretical and practical approaches, this program aims to enhance participants' proficiency in writing official correspondence, ensuring that they develop the necessary administrative skills for their future careers.

Results and Discussion

The material to be presented at the activity counseling among others.

1. Spelling rules which include three things , namely :
 - a. Writing letter
 - b. Writing Words
 - c. Use of Punctuation
2. Use Correct Diction
3. Compilation Sentence Effective and Terms and Conditions Sentence Effective .

The results of training and mentoring activities for correspondence can usually include several things, depending on the purpose of the training and who is involved in the activity. Here are some common results found from these activities:

1. Improved Participant Understanding: Training participants can better understand the importance of formal correspondence and how to write it correctly, including the structure of the letter, the use of appropriate language, and the procedures for conveying information clearly.
2. Ability to Write Proper Letters: Participants are expected to be able to write various types of letters, be it official letters, personal letters, letters of application, letters of resignation, and others with good and correct grammar.



Figure 1 Training in Writing Correct Letters

3. Improvement of Administrative Skills: Training participants become more skilled in administrative correspondence, including how to manage and archive letters properly and comply with applicable procedures.
4. Effective Letter Writing: With guidance, participants can learn to write letters that are more effective in achieving specific goals, such as obtaining approval, requesting information, or providing notification.

5. Increased Self-Confidence: Participants feel more confident in dealing with administrative correspondence tasks in their jobs or organizations.
6. Evaluation and Feedback: Training is often accompanied by an evaluation that provides feedback to improve participants' skills in writing letters that better suit their needs.

Conclusion

The correspondence training activity was successfully conducted with the primary objectives of improving participants' ability to write official letters and implementing effective correspondence practices. Based on the results of the PKM (Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat) activities carried out by the team, it can be concluded that:

1. Participants demonstrated the ability to write official letters correctly and in accordance with proper Indonesian language conventions.
2. The training significantly enhanced participants' administrative skills, particularly in drafting and structuring official documents.
3. Participants gained the capability to compile effective and structured official letters, which is essential for professional and academic correspondence.

Furthermore, this community service initiative was well-executed and received strong support from SMAN 1 Sinjai, contributing to the overall success of the program.

Recommendations

To further strengthen the impact of this program, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. **Continuous Training and Practice** – It is essential to conduct follow-up training sessions to reinforce participants' understanding and application of correspondence principles. Regular workshops and refresher courses should be organized to maintain and improve their proficiency.
2. **Integration into the Curriculum** – Given the importance of correspondence skills in professional settings, schools should consider incorporating structured correspondence training into their curriculum, particularly for students in vocational and administrative programs.
3. **Use of Digital Tools** – Introducing participants to digital correspondence tools, such as email etiquette, document formatting software, and automated proofreading applications, will enhance their efficiency and adaptability in modern office environments.
4. **Mentorship and Peer Review** – Establishing a mentorship program where experienced staff and teachers guide students in correspondence practices can improve their skills through continuous feedback and real-world applications.
5. **Evaluation and Certification** – Conducting periodic assessments and providing certification upon completion of training will motivate participants to take the program seriously and recognize their achievements.

By implementing these recommendations, the training program can have a long-term impact, equipping students and staff with essential communication and administrative skills necessary for their future professional and academic endeavors.

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