



## INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION IN STUDENT TALENT DEVELOPMENT THROUGH THE “PASIR GUDANG TALENT SKILL” EVENT, JOHOR, MALAYSIA

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**Abstract:** The digital era has increasingly driven students to engage more with technology than with social and creative self-development activities. This condition presents challenges in nurturing young people’s talents and fostering collaborative character among the younger generation. The Pasir Gudang Talent Skill program was organized to provide a platform for students to express their interests and talents through enjoyable and participatory educational activities. The main objectives of this program were to enhance learning motivation, strengthen positive character, and broaden students’ perspectives on cross-border self-development opportunities. The implementation methodology adopted an experiential learning approach, consisting of several stages: ice-breaking, talent exploration, and inspirational seminars collaboratively designed by Universitas Riau Kepulauan (UNRIKA), UiTM MARA Johor, and Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (UPSI). The program was conducted over two days in Pasir Gudang, Malaysia, involving students from various schools as active participants. The results revealed a significant improvement in students’ self-confidence and communication skills after participating in the talent expression sessions. Approximately 85% of participants reported gaining new experiences in recognizing their personal potential, while 88% expressed increased motivation to continue developing their talents in their respective fields. Moreover, the program effectively fostered cross-cultural collaboration and reduced students’ dependency on excessive gadget use. These findings affirm that a collaborative and experience-based approach can serve as an effective model for student talent development at both regional and international levels.

**Keywords;** *talent development, experiential learning*

### INTRODUCTION

Education in the 21st century faces complex challenges arising from globalization, technological advancement, and high social mobility. In this context, education can no longer be limited to the transfer of knowledge but must instead serve as a means for developing students’ potential and shaping their character holistically (Trilling & Fadel, 2009). This vision aligns with UNESCO’s four pillars of education *learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together, and learning to be* (UNESCO, 2015). Accordingly, education functions as a platform for nurturing talent, creativity, communication, collaboration, and critical thinking—competencies essential in responding to contemporary global demands (Binkley et al., 2012).



Talent represents an individual's innate potential that can be cultivated through appropriate training and guidance (Gagné, 2004). When given the opportunity to grow, students not only achieve academic excellence but also develop self-confidence and global competitiveness (Sternberg & Kaufman, 2018). Conversely, without proper channels for expression, such potential risks remaining latent and underdeveloped (Subotnik et al., 2011). The limited availability of spaces for talent expression remains a persistent issue in many regions, including Pasir Gudang, Johor, Malaysia. As a rapidly growing industrial area, Pasir Gudang has successfully attracted investment and a diverse workforce but has not yet provided sufficient avenues for youth talent development (Zulkifli, 2022). Students in this region need platforms that allow them to channel their creativity and build positive social networks (Mohamad & Zainuddin, 2021). The lack of such opportunities often results in diminished self-confidence and limited social engagement (Rahman, 2020).

In response to these challenges, the program "Student Talent Development Collaboration through the Pasir Gudang Talent Skill Event" was established as a joint initiative between Universitas Riau Kepulauan (Indonesia), UiTM MARA Johor (Malaysia), and local schools and community groups. This international collaboration not only broadens students' horizons but also strengthens educational and cultural diplomacy between neighboring countries (Kamaruddin, 2023). The Talent Skill program is highly relevant to the development of students' soft skills—leadership, communication, and cross-cultural collaboration (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2019). Through creative and competitive activities, students are encouraged to showcase their talents in areas such as the arts, technology, sports, and entrepreneurship. This approach aligns with character education principles, emphasizing personality formation through meaningful experience (Lickona, 2012).

Furthermore, the program represents a tangible implementation of the *Tri Dharma of Higher Education*, particularly the pillar of community service (Tilaar, 2012). Universitas Riau Kepulauan serves as a regional facilitator of educational engagement, while UiTM MARA Johor strengthens cross-border cooperation in student talent development (Yusof & Samad, 2023). This collaboration establishes a sustainable international academic network. Beyond its academic benefits, the Talent Skill program generates positive social impact. Parents gain the opportunity to recognize their children's potential, teachers receive inspiration for talent-based pedagogy, and the community takes pride in participating in an international event (Mahmud,



2020). The initiative also reinforces the spirit of *gotong royong*—the communal solidarity deeply rooted in Nusantara cultural values (Koentjaraningrat, 2009).

At the global level, the program supports the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 4 (Quality Education), Goal 8 (Inclusive Economic Growth), and Goal 17 (Global Partnerships) (United Nations, 2015). Through cross-national cooperation, the activity contributes to sustainable development and fosters international relations grounded in education (Aziz & Rahim, 2021). Meanwhile, today's young generation lives amidst the strong currents of digitalization. Information technology has transformed students' mindsets, behaviors, and lifestyles (Prensky, 2001). Although technology enhances learning access and information exchange (Siemens, 2014), excessive usage has reduced social interaction and productive engagement (Twenge, 2017). Dependence on gadgets often replaces creative and social activities with passive digital consumption (Kuss & Griffiths, 2017).

This phenomenon illustrates two interconnected challenges faced by today's youth: increasing digital dependency and the scarcity of spaces for talent development. When avenues for expression are limited, students often compensate through less productive digital activities (Hidayat, 2022). Thus, the solution lies not merely in restricting gadget use but in creating meaningful programs such as *Pasir Gudang Talent Skill*, which integrates education, collaboration, and public appreciation.

The program is grounded in experiential learning, enabling students to learn through direct experience and reflection (Kolb, 1984). Participants actively showcase their talents in performing arts, design, technology, and youth entrepreneurship. Through this process, they cultivate confidence, independence, and intrinsic motivation (Bandura, 1997). In addition, the collaborative learning approach allows students from different schools and countries to work together, exchange ideas, and build social networks (Johnson & Johnson, 2009). The Indonesia–Malaysia collaboration exemplifies education that promotes global awareness and cultural tolerance (Knight, 2013). Through healthy competition and teamwork, students learn core values such as sportsmanship, responsibility, and empathy (Lickona, 2012).

In conclusion, the *Pasir Gudang Talent Skill* event is more than a talent showcase—it is an educational strategy that integrates academic, social, and cultural dimensions. The program aims to nurture a young generation that is creative, adaptive, and ethical, capable of leveraging technology wisely while facing global challenges (Trilling & Fadel, 2009).



## **METHODOLOGY**

The implementation of the Pasir Gudang Talent Skill program was designed using a participatory, inspirational, and enjoyable approach, ensuring that students were not merely passive participants but actively engaged in meaningful learning experiences. The program was structured in several stages to foster both individual development and collective collaboration. The first stage involved ice-breaking sessions aimed at creating a friendly and interactive atmosphere among students from various schools. This stage successfully built a sense of camaraderie, reduced initial hesitation, and encouraged open communication. By fostering a collaborative spirit early on, participants became more enthusiastic and responsive in subsequent sessions. The second stage, known as talent exploration, grouped students according to their specific interests—such as arts, sports, technology, literacy, or entrepreneurship. Under the guidance of facilitators from Universitas Riau Kepulauan (UNRIKA) and UiTM MARA Johor, participants received hands-on mentoring to sharpen their skills and channel their creative potential. This stage also featured inspirational showcases, where lecturers, university students, and outstanding school participants shared their journeys, demonstrating how consistent effort and passion can transform talent into achievement. The final stage consisted of an expert seminar on talent development strategies, featuring speakers from academia, the arts, and the business community. This session provided valuable insights on how students could further cultivate their talents beyond the school environment—through competitions, professional training, and engagement in creative communities. Conducted over two days (28–29 August 2025) in Pasir Gudang, Johor, Malaysia, this program exemplified an international collaborative model between Indonesia and Malaysia that effectively integrated education, creativity, and character building. Beyond providing a platform for self-expression, *Pasir Gudang Talent Skill* fostered essential 21st-century competencies creativity, collaboration, and global competitiveness making it a transformative experience for the participating youth.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The Pasir Gudang Talent Skill event was officially inaugurated on Thursday, 28 August 2025, in Pasir Gudang, Johor, Malaysia. The opening ceremony was attended by representatives from Universitas Riau Kepulauan (UNRIKA), UiTM MARA Johor, Universiti



Pendidikan Sultan Idris (UPSI), as well as local community leaders, school principals, teachers, and community representatives. The presence of these diverse stakeholders underscores the significance of cross-institutional and international collaboration in fostering the talents of the younger generation. The opening commenced with formal remarks delivered by the event chairperson and university representatives. The speeches emphasized that the initiative aims not only to provide a platform for students to showcase their talents but also to cultivate character, enhance self-confidence, and develop social skills and 21st-century competencies. Following the speeches, the objectives of the event were presented in detail, highlighting the provision of expressive opportunities for students, the reinforcement of creative and collaborative competencies, and the introduction of strategies for transforming talents into tangible achievements.

In addition to formal addresses, the opening program included a brief presentation outlining the two-day event schedule. This presentation familiarized participants with the ice-breaking sessions, talent showcases, interest-based groupings, and inspirational seminars featuring accomplished speakers. Through this overview, participants gained a preliminary understanding of the sequence of activities, the purpose of each session, and the benefits they could derive from active participation. The atmosphere during the opening was warm and interactive. Participants appreciated the opportunity to meet peers from different schools and countries. The presence of community leaders and educational institutions further motivated the students, as they felt acknowledged and supported by their surrounding environment. In this way, the opening ceremony transcended a formal protocol; it successfully instilled a spirit of collaboration and enthusiasm, serving as a foundational motivation for participants to fully engage in the entire Pasir Gudang Talent Skill program.



Figure 1. Opening Ceremony of the Event



Following the opening session, the event proceeded with an ice-breaking activity, designed as an initial moment to foster a friendly and interactive atmosphere among participants. The ice-breaking session took the form of educational games and group activities emphasizing teamwork, communication, creativity, and quick thinking. These activities were not merely recreational but also served a pedagogical purpose: to familiarize participants with interacting, getting to know one another, and building self-confidence within a group setting. Participants were divided into small, heterogeneous groups composed of students from various schools and backgrounds. Through these activities, they learned to develop collaborative strategies, listen to peers' opinions, and appreciate differences. Examples of activities included collaborative challenges, group puzzles, and creative simulations requiring team coordination. The ice-breaking activities promoted a sense of togetherness and reduced potential awkwardness arising from differences in school affiliation, culture, or prior experiences.



Figure 2. Ice breaking

The outcomes of the ice-breaking session were evident. Participants became more enthusiastic, confident, and ready to actively engage in the subsequent talent-sharing sessions. Collaborative and solidarity values began to emerge, as participants recognized that success in any activity depended not only on individual abilities but also on effective teamwork. These activities laid the foundation for a supportive and inspiring learning environment, enabling the entire Pasir Gudang Talent Skill program to be conducted effectively and enjoyably. Thus, the ice-breaking session was more than just a physical warm-up or light game; it functioned as a strategic tool to prepare participants mentally, build social relationships, and instill collaborative values that would continue to be applied throughout the program. The activity



successfully created a positive, inclusive, and motivating atmosphere, encouraging participants to explore their potential to the fullest.

Following the establishment of a collaborative atmosphere through the ice-breaking session, the program proceeded to the talent expression phase. At this stage, participants were provided with an open space to express their interests and abilities across various fields, including the arts (music, dance, poetry, theater), sports, technology, creative literacy, and entrepreneurship. The activities were designed without strict preliminary selection, ensuring that every participant felt valued and had the opportunity to showcase their individual skills. This approach emphasized active participation, courage to perform, and appreciation of each participant's potential while reducing the fear of failure often experienced by children and adolescents. Talent expression was conducted through both open-stage performances and group presentations, accompanied by guidance from facilitators, including lecturers, university students, and practitioners, who provided technical direction, motivation, and constructive feedback. For instance, participants in the arts received basic coaching on vocal techniques, choreography, or poetic interpretation; those in technology and creative literacy were guided in developing digital projects or innovative works; while entrepreneurship participants learned practical methods for designing creative business concepts.



Figure 3. Presentation on Talent

Beyond showcasing skills, this phase served as a rich learning medium. Participants developed self-confidence, honed creativity, and strengthened presentation and communication abilities. Interaction among participants also provided opportunities for peer learning, mutual inspiration, and broadening of knowledge across various areas of interest. The talent expression



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stage was not merely a platform to display skills but functioned as a real-world learning laboratory. Participants engaged in reflection, evaluation, and self-development while understanding that consistently nurtured talents could grow into tangible achievements. Consequently, this activity laid a critical foundation for shaping a generation of young individuals who are confident, creative, and equipped to face the challenges of the twenty-first century.

Following the talent expression stage, the activity proceeded with the talent specialization session, in which participants were grouped according to their individual areas of interest. The purpose of this specialization was to provide more focused skill development and guidance, enabling each participant to maximize their potential. Each group was assisted by facilitators, including lecturers, university students, and experienced practitioners, who provided technical guidance, developmental direction, and motivation to help participants gain confidence in pursuing their chosen field. For instance, the arts group received guidance on vocal techniques, choreography, poetry interpretation, and other forms of creative expression. The technology and creative literacy group was mentored in developing digital works, graphic design, simple applications, or other innovative and applicable projects. The entrepreneurship group received input on formulating creative business ideas, basic project management, and marketing strategies. The sports group was instructed on fundamental techniques, strategies, and teamwork. This specialization stage emphasized not only technical skills but also discipline, consistency in practice, and collaborative abilities. Participants learned to manage their time, accept constructive feedback, and gradually improve the quality of their work. Through this structured specialization, participants gained a clearer understanding of the fields that best matched their potential and received guidance for long-term development. The intensive mentorship also fostered intrinsic motivation, as participants observed firsthand how guidance and practice could enhance the quality of their skills. The talent specialization stage thus became a crucial foundation for the subsequent stage: the application of strategies to achieve excellence and further talent development beyond the school environment. Through this approach, participants not only honed their abilities but also gained insight into talent development as a continuous process that requires commitment, guidance, and practical experience.



Figure 4. Talent Specialization

The subsequent phase of the Pasir Gudang Talent Skill program focused on showcasing exemplary talents and strategies for achieving success beyond the school environment, designed to provide both motivation and practical guidance for participants. High-achieving students, lecturers, and alumni performed and shared real-life experiences, ranging from music, dance, and poetry performances to technological innovations and creative entrepreneurial ideas. These presentations served as concrete examples that talents, when nurtured consistently and systematically, can develop into tangible academic and professional achievements. Beyond demonstrating technical skills, each performance also highlighted the processes of hard work, discipline, and collaboration, allowing participants to understand that achievement is not instantaneous but the result of practice, consistency, and strategic effort.

In addition, participants engaged in interactive seminars discussing personal development strategies and pathways to success. Speakers provided practical insights on time management, consistent practice, mentor selection, and the courage to participate in competitions or public forums. These discussions emphasized that talent development is not merely a school activity but a continuous process that can open future academic, professional, and entrepreneurial opportunities. By combining inspiration from real-life examples with practical strategies, participants learned to connect personal talents with concrete steps toward achievement and career development.

The program also had significant impacts on social skills and character building. Cross-school and cross-national interactions expanded cultural awareness, fostered tolerance, and



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created productive social networks. Participants learned to appreciate differences, collaborate in teams, and integrate creativity with local cultural values. Core values such as cooperation, sportsmanship, responsibility, and empathy were applied directly in each activity, transforming the experience into more than a competitive event, but a genuine process of character development. The structured and creative activities also effectively reduced participants' dependency on digital devices, redirecting their attention to productive, educational, and meaningful experiences.

The success of the program relied heavily on the synergy between institutions and the community. Universitas Riau Kepulauan (UNRIKA) in Indonesia facilitated academic and technical guidance, UiTM MARA Johor provided local support and mentorship, while Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (UPSI) contributed pedagogical perspectives that enriched talent development processes. Local schools in Pasir Gudang served as strategic partners by providing participants and coordinators, and the community—including parents and local organizations—offered moral and social support. This collaborative approach created a holistic and sustainable learning ecosystem, where each stakeholder actively contributed to nurturing the potential of young people. Such collaboration not only ensured the program's technical success but also cultivated a sense of togetherness, social responsibility, and a spirit of cooperation among all participants.



Figure 5. Group Photo



## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Through this inspiring and structured series of activities, participants gained not only technical knowledge and skills but also intrinsic motivation to continue developing, the confidence to perform, and strategic insight to pursue achievements beyond school. The program demonstrated that talent development is a collective process that requires collaboration, guidance, and continuity, ultimately shaping young people who are creative, globally competitive, and culturally grounded. Thus, Pasir Gudang Talent Skill stands as an effective and sustainable community service model that integrates academic, social, cultural, and professional dimensions into a comprehensive learning experience.

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