

Strengthening Sustainable and Responsible Creative Economy Literacy among Vocational High School Students

Harfiahani Indah Rakhma Ningtyas^{1*}, Anis Nusron², Silvani Adinda³, Elsa Nur Syafrilia⁴, Nadiya Zahrani Fayza⁵

Institut Teknologi dan Bisnis Yadika Pasuruan, Jawa Timur, Indonesia^{1,2,3,4,5}

harfiahanityas@itbyadika.ac.id^{1*}, anisnusron@itbyadika.ac.id², silvaniadinda77@gmail.com³, elsanursyafrilia123@gmail.com⁴, nadiyazahranifayza@gmail.com⁵



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Abstract

Purpose: This community service program aimed to strengthen vocational high school students' literacy in developing sustainable and responsible creative economy businesses.

Research Methodology: The two-day participatory program involved 50 Grade XI Accounting students and combined short lectures, guided discussions, group exercises, market feedback, Business Model Canvas development, and break-even-point calculations. Learning outcomes were evaluated descriptively using a one-group pre-test–post-test design and paired t-tests.

Results: The class mean increased from 50 to 90, representing a 40-point increase, an 80% relative improvement, and a normalized gain of 0.80.

Conclusions: The results indicate substantial program-associated improvement and show the practical value of integrating creativity, market validation, sustainability, business modeling and accounting competence in vocational learning.

Limitations: Individual paired scores, dispersion measures, validated instrument evidence, and a comparison group were unavailable; therefore, the findings should not be interpreted as causal.

Contributions: The program offers an applied framework for embedding material efficiency, waste reduction, product safety, honest marketing, transparent records, financial feasibility, and customer feedback into students' business models.

Keywords: *Business Model Canvas, Creative Economy, Financial Literacy, Sustainable Business, Vocational Education*

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1. Introduction

The creative economy transforms creativity, knowledge, skills, and intellectual assets into products and services with economic value. Indonesia Law No. 24 of 2019 defines the creative economy as the added value derived from intellectual property originating from human creativity ([n.d.](#)). The law also emphasizes systematic, structured, and sustainable management of creative-economy potential ([Adinugraha, Fikri, & Andrean, 2024](#); [Dutta, 2023](#)). This policy direction is relevant to vocational high schools because vocational education is expected to prepare learners for employment, further

study, and independent economic activity ([Pangestika, Hidayah, & Purnamasari, 2026](#); [Živaljić & Trstenjak, 2022](#)).

Creative economy education at the vocational school level should move beyond generating attractive product ideas. Students also need to identify customer problems, formulate value propositions, test market assumptions, estimate costs and revenues, and make responsible decisions regarding materials, production, promotion, and financial records ([Divianto, Kamaludin, Santi, & Saiful, 2024](#)). These competencies connect creativity with business feasibility and help learners understand that innovation creates value only when it addresses real needs and can be delivered through a workable business model ([Pratama, Siregar, Amelia, & Lubis, 2024](#); [Rahman & Hakim, 2024](#)).

The sustainability dimension is becoming increasingly important in vocational education ([Rosati & Faria, 2019](#)). UNESCO-UNEVOC 2025 describes green skills as the knowledge, abilities, values, and attitudes required to adapt products, services, and processes to environmental and climate-related requirements ([Tarigan & Larasati, 2025](#)). In a school business project, sustainability can be introduced through choices that are close to students' decisions: reducing material waste, selecting safer inputs, minimizing unnecessary packaging, using resources efficiently, and identifying social consequences. Responsibility also includes product safety, fair group participation, honest product claims, attention to consumer feedback, transparent recording of costs and revenues, and realistic financial planning ([Hermawan, 2025](#); [Santoso et al., 2022](#)).

SMK Negeri 1 Rembang implemented a creative and entrepreneurship workshop as a continuation of its students' business-project activities. The program focuses on validating product or service ideas through initial prototypes and market feedback, followed by business model testing. The participants developed ideas for food and beverages, candles, and soap. These product categories provide an accessible context for connecting creativity, customer value, operational choices and financial feasibility. However, a product should not be labeled as sustainable merely because it is handmade or locally produced. Sustainability must be demonstrated through specific decisions and evidence ([Popescu, Hitaj, & Benetto, 2021](#); [Testa, Boiral, & Iraldo, 2018](#)).

Accordingly, this community service article addresses the following question: To what extent did the two-day training program improve students' literacy regarding creative-economy planning, business-model development, market feedback, and responsible business decisions? The program aimed to strengthen students' understanding and practical ability to transform ideas into structured business plans using the Business Model Canvas and break-even-point analysis, while introducing sustainability and responsibility as decision criteria ([Rodríguez-Insuasti, Montalván-Burbano, Suárez-Rodríguez, Yonfá-Medranda, & Parrales-Guerrero, 2022](#)).

2. Research Methodology

2.1 Program design and participants

The activity was designed as a two-day community service training program at SMK Negeri 1 Rembang, Pasuruan Regency, East Java, Indonesia, in November 2025. The participants were 50 Grade XI students from the accounting program. The school was selected as the community partner because the activity was part of its Creative and Entrepreneurship Project program. The instructional approach combined explanations, question-and-answer sessions, guided discussions, practical planning, and feedback ([Dutta, 2023](#)).

2.2 Stages of implementation

The program consisted of five sequential stages designed to guide participants from an initial assessment of their knowledge to the development and evaluation of feasible business ideas. The sequential structure is important because students need to understand the relationship between creativity, customer needs, market evidence, operational requirements, and financial feasibility rather than studying each component separately ([Churniawati, Ningtyas, Murtadho, & Bayhaqi, 2025](#)).

First, the participants completed a pre-test to establish their initial understanding of the creative economy, market validation, business model development, sustainability, and basic financial analysis. This stage provided a descriptive baseline against which the participants' understanding of the program could be compared. It also helped the facilitator identify concepts that required greater emphasis during learning activities.

Second, the facilitator introduced the relationship between creative ideas, customer problems, product value, market feedback, and business model feasibility. This stage emphasizes that an attractive product idea does not automatically constitute a viable business opportunity. A business idea becomes more relevant when it addresses an identifiable customer problem, offers a clear value proposition, and is supported by positive market feedback. Therefore, the explanation provided a conceptual foundation before the participants began developing their business models.

Third, the participants worked in groups to develop or refine ideas related to food and beverages, candles, and soap. They translated these ideas into nine components of the Business Model Canvas (BMC) ([Nishitani, Nguyen, Trinh, Wu, & Kokubu, 2021](#); [Yeow & Ng, 2021](#)). Group-based work was used to encourage discussion, division of responsibilities, and comparisons of different perspectives. The BMC also helped students examine the internal consistency of their ideas by connecting customer segments and value propositions with channels, customer relationships, revenue streams, key resources, activities, partnerships, and cost structures. Fourth, the students examined costs, selling prices, expected sales volumes, revenues, and break-even points. This stage connected creative economy planning with the participants' accounting competencies. This reinforces the argument that creativity and market attractiveness must be accompanied by financial calculations because a product that attracts customers may still be difficult to sustain when its costs, prices, and sales targets are unrealistic.

Fifth, each group received feedback on the clarity, consistency, responsibility, and feasibility of its proposed business model before completing the posttest. Feedback was positioned as an essential part of business idea validation because it enabled students to identify weak assumptions and revise their plans. A post-test was then administered to describe changes in participants' understanding after completing the full learning sequence. The program report documented presentation materials covering all nine BMC components, examples of student business canvases, and the implementation of group activities ([Ningtyas, Mualim, & Nusron, 2026](#)). Overall, these stages combined conceptual explanation, collaborative application, financial analysis, and reflective evaluation to create a coherent vocational-learning experience.

2.3 Sustainability and responsibility lens

Sustainability and responsibility were operationalized as decision prompts that could be integrated into the conventional Business Model Canvas (BMC). The use of decision prompts was considered appropriate because sustainability can be difficult for vocational students to apply when presented only as an abstract concept. Translating this into practical questions enabled students to examine how their choices concerning materials, production, packaging, customers, partners, pricing, and financial records could influence the environmental, social, and economic feasibility of their business ideas ([Landrum & Ohsowski, 2018](#); [Ningtyas, 2024](#)). This approach also allowed for the incorporation of sustainability without replacing the nine components of the conventional BMC. Environmental prompts addressed material efficiency, waste prevention, packaging reduction, safe inputs, and responsible resource use. Students were encouraged to consider whether the quantity of materials could be reduced without lowering product quality, whether production waste could be prevented or reused, and whether excessive packaging could be avoided. For food and beverage ideas, considerations included portion planning, ingredient efficiency, food loss prevention, and appropriate packaging. For candle and soap ideas, the prompts directed attention to material selection, production residue, reusable or refillable containers, and responsible use of water and other resources. These considerations emphasize that environmental responsibility begins with realistic operational decisions rather than unsupported sustainability claims ([Zairinayati, Anggraini, & Fitria, 2025](#)).

Social prompts focused on product safety, consumer needs, accessible value, fair collaboration and responsiveness to feedback. Product safety is particularly important because the proposed products can come into direct contact with consumers or be used in households. Students were therefore encouraged to consider hygiene, accurate ingredient information, safe use instructions, appropriate product claims, and the potential risks associated with production and consumption. Customer feedback was also treated as a form of responsibility because businesses should respond to actual consumer experiences instead of relying exclusively on producers' assumptions. Fair collaboration further required students to consider the distribution of tasks and responsibilities among group members ([Masyithoh, Ningtyas, Subroto, Assari, & Mawarni, 2025](#)). Governance prompts address role clarity, accurate cost and revenue records, honest marketing, transparent pricing, and responsible partner selection. These prompts were relevant to accounting students because sustainable business practices depend not only on environmental intentions but also on reliable financial information and accountable decision-making. Accurate records support realistic pricing and financial evaluation, whereas honest marketing helps prevent misleading claims about product quality, health benefits, or environmental performance. Responsible partner selection also encourages students to consider the reliability and conduct of suppliers and other parties involved in their proposed businesses.

Integrating environmental, social, and governance considerations helped students evaluate whether the different BMC components supported one another. For example, an environmentally preferable material could affect the cost structure, supplier selection, selling price, value proposition, and customer segments. Sustainability was therefore presented as a set of interconnected business decisions rather than as an additional label attached to the final product ([Rumefi, Suriyok, Churniawati, & Indah, 2026](#)).

2.4 Evaluation and data analysis

Learning outcomes were evaluated using a one-group pre- and post-test design. The available program data consisted of class mean scores on a 0-100 scale: 50 for the pre-test and 90 for the post-test. Therefore, the analysis was limited to descriptive statistics. The absolute increase was calculated as the post-test mean minus the pretest mean. The relative improvement was calculated against the pre-test mean. The normalized gain was calculated as $(\text{post-test} - \text{pre-test}) / (\text{maximum score} - \text{pre-test})$. Because individual paired scores, standard deviations, instrument items, and a comparison group were unavailable, no inferential statistical tests or reliability analyses were performed ([Nasihin et al., 2025](#); [Rumefi, Ningtyas, & Mauwalim, 2024](#)).

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Implementation outputs

The workshop guided students from product ideas to structured business planning. The product categories included food and beverages, candles, and soaps. Students were asked to define customers, identify customer needs and problems, articulate value propositions, select sales channels, plan customer relationships, estimate revenue sources, identify required resources and activities, select potential partners, and describe the cost structure ([Masyithoh, 2025](#)). The financial component extended the canvas by requiring students to consider the selling price, variable and fixed costs, expected sales, and the break-even point ([Churniawati, 2025](#)).

This sequence strengthens the practical relevance of creative economy literacy ([Alam, Wati, & Marlianingrum, 2024](#); [Pratama et al., 2024](#)). Creativity is not treated as an isolated ability to invent a product. Instead, students had to connect ideas with customer evidence, operational requirements and financial consequences. For Accounting students, the inclusion of cost structure and break-even analysis provides a direct link between their vocational competence and creative-economy activities. Documentation of the Community Service (PkM) activity, conducted through a Business Model Canvas workshop at SMK Negeri 1 Rembang, is shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Implementation of Community Service (PkM) activity through a Business Model Canvas workshop at SMK Negeri 1 Rembang.

3.2 Descriptive learning outcomes

To assess changes in students' creative economy literacy following the training, the pre- and post-test mean scores were compared descriptively using absolute increase, relative improvement, and normalized gain. The results of these calculations are listed in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive comparison of pre-test and post-test mean scores

Indicator	Value	Calculation	Interpretation
Pre-test mean	50	-	Initial literacy level
Post-test mean	90	-	Literacy level after training
Absolute increase	40 points	$90 - 50$	Substantial score increase
Relative improvement	80%	$40 / 50 \times 100\%$	Increase relative to baseline
Normalized gain	0.80	$40 / (100 - 50)$	High descriptive gain

As shown in Table 1, the mean score increased from 50 to 90, representing an absolute increase of 40 points in the post-test. Relative to the baseline mean, this result indicates an 80% improvement in the mean. Using a maximum possible score of 100, the normalized gain was 0.80, indicating a high gain. This pattern is consistent with a substantial improvement in students' understanding following training and supports the practical usefulness of combining the Business Model Canvas, market feedback, and financial calculations in a short vocational learning intervention.

Nevertheless, the results must be interpreted conservatively. A class-mean comparison does not show how many students improved, whether gains were evenly distributed, or whether the instrument reliably measured each intended competency. The absence of individual scores also prevents the assessment of statistical uncertainty. In addition, the design cannot separate the program's effect from testing effects, facilitator influence, prior school activities, or other contextual factors. Therefore, this finding is evidence of program-associated improvement, not proof of causality.

3.3 Integrating sustainability into student business models

The sustainability lens can make the BMC more responsible without replacing its core structure. In the value proposition block, students can identify customer benefits and environmental or social benefits (Ningtyas, 2025). In terms of key resources and activities, they can evaluate material efficiency, production safety, and waste. In terms of channels and customer relationships, they can consider packaging, clear information, and complaint handling. In partnerships, they can assess supplier reliability and responsible sourcing. In terms of cost structure and revenue streams, they can test whether responsible choices remain financially feasible.

Table 2. Sustainability and responsibility prompts for student product ideas

Product idea	Environmental decisions	Social responsibility	Governance and finance
Food and beverages	To reduce food loss, plan portions, choose minimal or recyclable packaging, and use inputs efficiently.	Maintaining hygiene, providing accurate ingredient and allergen information, and responding to consumer feedback.	Record unit costs; price transparently; calculate BEP; and avoid misleading claims.
Candles	Minimize excess material; evaluate safer materials; and consider reusable containers where feasible.	Provide safe-use instructions, test product function, and protect students during production.	Document materials and costs, define quality criteria, and select reliable suppliers.
Soap	Packaging should be reduced, refill options should be considered, water and material use should be managed, and irresponsible disposal should be avoided.	Prioritize ingredient safety, provide clear instructions, and avoid unsupported health claims.	Maintain production records, calculate costs and BEP, and label products honestly.

Table 2 should be understood as a pedagogical decision guide rather than as evidence that each product achieved a verified sustainability standard. Its contribution is to help students ask better questions before production and marketing processes. For example, a lower-cost material is not necessarily responsible if it creates safety or waste problems, whereas environmentally preferable packaging may not be viable if its cost is ignored. Connecting these trade-offs to BEP calculations encourages students to consider economic continuity, along with environmental and social responsibility (Cahyani, Hidayat, & Marcelino, 2023; Oktiani, Permadi, Raharja, & Abdullah, 2026).

The observed score improvement is broadly consistent with research showing that BMC-based learning can support entrepreneurship knowledge and mindsets. The present program adds vocational relevance by linking the canvas development to market feedback and accounting calculations. It also responds to the greening-TVET agenda by converting sustainability into product-level and business model decisions. The strongest future development would be to require each group to document one environmental target, one social responsibility commitment, and one governance or financial control practice in its final canvas.

The two-day community service program provided 50 Grade XI Accounting students at SMK Negeri 1 Rembang with a structured learning pathway for transforming creative product ideas into market-informed, financially considered, sustainable and responsible business models. The program achieved its main objective of strengthening students' creative economy literacy by connecting creative thinking with practical business planning competencies. Through the development of food and beverage, candle, and soap business ideas, the students learned that creativity alone is insufficient to establish a feasible business model. A creative idea must also address customer needs, offer a clear value proposition, respond to market feedback, use resources appropriately, and demonstrate its financial viability. These activities enabled students to apply the nine components of the Business Model Canvas (BMC) in a practical context. They identified customer segments, formulated value propositions, considered appropriate customer relationships and distribution channels, estimated potential revenue streams, and examined the key resources, activities, partnerships, and costs required to implement their ideas. The incorporation of customer feedback also encouraged students to view a business idea as an assumption that should be tested and refined, rather than as a final concept that cannot be changed. Meanwhile, the break-even-point calculation helped students connect business model development with their accounting competencies by considering selling prices, fixed and variable costs, expected sales volumes, and the minimum level of sales required to avoid financial losses.

The class mean increased from 50 in the pre-test to 90 in the post-test. This change represented an absolute increase of 40 points, an 80% improvement relative to the baseline mean, and a normalized gain of 0.80. Descriptively, these results indicate a substantial program-associated improvement in students' understanding of creative economy planning, market validation, business model development, and basic financial analysis. This improvement suggests that combining concise explanations, guided discussions, collaborative exercises, practical calculations, and direct feedback can support meaningful learning within a relatively short vocational training program. Nevertheless, the results indicate an association with participation in the program and should not be interpreted as proof of a causal relationship ([Adams & Abhayawansa, 2022](#); [Ferrón-Vílchez, Valero-Gil, & Suárez-Perales, 2021](#)). The program further demonstrates that sustainable and responsible creative economy principles can be translated into concrete decisions within student business models. These principles include material efficiency, waste and packaging reduction, product and consumer safety, accurate product information, honest marketing communication, transparent financial records, fair collaboration, responsiveness to customer feedback, and realistic assessment of financial feasibility. Integrating these considerations into the BMC helped prevent sustainability from being treated as a promotional label ([De Silva Lokuwaduge & De Silva, 2022](#); [Li, Li, Seppänen, & Koivumäki, 2023](#)). Instead, sustainability and responsibility became practical criteria that students could use to evaluate product design, production processes, customer relationships, pricing, and resource use.

The program highlights the educational value of integrating creativity, market validation, business-model development, sustainability, responsible business conduct, and accounting competence in vocational-school community service ([Shi, Ma, Jiang, Wei, & Yue, 2023](#); [Yeow & Ng, 2021](#)). This integrated approach can help students develop a more comprehensive understanding of entrepreneurship, in which business success is evaluated not only through the attractiveness of a product or its potential profitability, but also through its responsiveness to customer needs, operational feasibility, environmental awareness, and social responsibility. Therefore, the program provides a relevant applied-learning model for supporting vocational students in developing business ideas that are more realistic, accountable, adaptable, and aligned with the principles of a sustainable and responsible creative economy.

4. Conclusions

4.1 Conclusion

The two-day program strengthened the creative economy literacy of 50 Grade XI Accounting students at SMK Negeri 1 Rembang by integrating the Business Model Canvas, market validation, sustainability, and financial analysis. The mean score increased from 50 to 90, with a normalized gain of 0.80, indicating substantial program-associated improvement. Overall, the program provided a practical framework for developing feasible, responsible, and sustainable student business models.

4.2 Research Limitations

This program evaluation has some limitations. First, it employed a one-group pre-test–post-test design without a comparison or control group. Consequently, the observed improvement cannot be attributed solely to the program because it may also have been influenced by testing effects, facilitator involvement, previous school activities, or other contextual factors. Second, the evaluation relied solely on class-level mean scores. Individual paired scores and measures of dispersion were unavailable, preventing the assessment of the number of students who improved, the distribution and consistency of their gains, and the statistical significance of the observed difference. Third, the validity and reliability of the assessment instruments were not formally examined. Therefore, the extent to which the instrument accurately measures each intended competency remains uncertain. Finally, the evaluation focused on students' immediate learning outcomes. It did not systematically assess the quality of each business model, the implementation of the proposed business ideas, changes in students' entrepreneurial behavior, or the long-term retention of the knowledge and skills acquired during the program.

4.3 Suggestions and Directions for Future Research

Future programs should employ validated assessment instruments that represent the main competencies covered by the training, including market validation, BMC development, sustainability, responsible-business practices, and basic financial analysis. Individual paired pre- and post-test scores should be retained to enable more rigorous statistical analyses, including measures of dispersion, effect sizes, and tests of statistical significance. Where feasible, future evaluations should include a comparison group or adopt a quasi-experimental design to provide stronger evidence of the program's effectiveness. Follow-up assessments should be conducted to determine whether participants retain and apply their knowledge after training.

Future research could evaluate students' business models using standardized rubrics and examine whether the proposed products are implemented, tested in actual markets, and improved in response to the customer feedback. Long-term studies may also investigate changes in entrepreneurial competence, sustainable business practices, financial decision-making, and business performance. In addition, involving more schools and students from different vocational specializations would improve the applicability and generalizability of these findings.

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