

Optimizing Special Job Fairs in the Tracer Study of Public Vocational High School

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Abstract. The paper aims to describe the effort to optimize special job fairs in the tracer study conducted by Public Vocational High School (PVHS). This was a literature review using the content analysis method, in which the researcher reviewed some research and studies published in both national and international journals and other written works relevant to the topic of this article, namely optimizing Special Job Fairs in VET tracer studies. The result of the review showed that the unemployment rate of VHS graduates was higher than that of other educational institutions. One of the causal factors behind this poor condition was the fact that those graduates had difficulty making steps in building their career after graduation. This suggested the need for the optimization of special job fairs as events held to provide strategic direction and illustration of what VHS students should do after graduation. The tracer study under discussion in this article dealt with the distribution of students working in Business and Industrial World.

Keywords: *Special job fairs, tracer studies, vocational high school*

INTRODUCTION

Science and technology has recently developed so rapidly that almost all aspects in this life depend on technological advancement to help settle human affairs. Nowadays, machines constitute one of the technological products instrumental in easing heavy workloads. Machines are tools moved by electrical power to help humans manufacture products or parts of products (Assauri, 2008).

Humans consider machines to be able to help enhance the effectiveness efficiency of their work, which allows them to conduct activities with fewer human resources. However, despite its pronounced, positive effects, technological advancement also brings problems with employment. In years past, humans played a major role in a production process, but now machines can perform what humans can do, which cause humans to lose available job opportunities. Consequently, the unemployment rate speeds up because job seekers outnumber job vacancies. It is known from some analyses that those who graduated from Vocational High Schools (VHS) form the largest group of the unemployed population in Indonesia.

This is a disturbing fact to receive because VHS are schools designed to produce graduates ready for employment, as mentioned in the Article 15 of the Act Number 20/2003 stating that vocational education are high schools which are designed to prepare students to get a job in particular fields. Based on the data published by Statistics Indonesia on May 5, 2020 on employment in Indonesia, it was known that until February 2020 the unemployment rate increase to 60 million people, and viewed from academic levels, graduated of vocational schools were the highest (8,49%) in the Open Unemployment Rate. This does brings up a vexed question of why vocational graduates in fact form the majority group of the unemployment. From a careful analysis, it was known that such poor condition resulted from the difficulty of changing or reforming the existing curriculum of vocational schools.

The curriculum change at the level of vocational schools does not keep up the rapid development of the times, which makes the curriculum look out of date. What follows is the fact that vocational graduates cannot easily get jobs because of the gap between industries and workers: those graduates fail to satisfy employers' demand for quality human resources. If left neglected, such backwardness will pose more complicated problems. The high rate of unemployed vocational graduates should be

immediately reduced since the high rate of unemployment will increase the poverty rate. In this case, the optimization of special job fairs will help accelerate the effort to reduce the rate of unemployed vocational graduates. Special Job Fairs (SJF) are departments established at both public or private vocational high schools as executive units responsible for providing service and information about job vacancies, marketing strategies and the distribution and placement of workforce. They are also the partner of Manpower and Transmigration Office (Bursa Kerja Khusus, 2021).

The involvement of SJF in distributing vocational graduates is highly instrumental in reducing the rate of unemployed vocational graduates. SJF is expected to solve vocational graduates' difficulty in getting jobs. Empowering SJF of VHS is one of the function school managements should perform in their effort to lead the implementation of the programs of SJF to the accomplishment of the intended function of VHS. SJF of VHS is one of the components of the implementation of the dual education system, because it is impossible to facilitate learning processes preparing students to be ready for job competition without fostering partnership with industries, which provide students with practical professional skills and work ethics as demanded in the industrial world.

Partnerships and collaboration with the business and industrial world are highly necessary for broadening students' skills with which to enter the industrial world. Education and the business and industrial world cannot be separated from one another, because it is education that spots and nurtures outstanding talents for the quality improvement of industries.

It was such factual background that encouraged the Ministry of Education and Culture to implement the link and match program, the purpose of which was to ensure that graduates of VHS or vocational education are absorbed in industries as soon as they graduate. In such program, students need to have a series of training before actually going into the industrial world. However, unfortunately, not all SJF can fulfil such need adequately. Some reviews of the performance of SJF in distributing graduates suggested the need for a study more comprehensive than previous ones on the performance of SJF in distributing vocational graduates to the business and industrial world. Meanwhile, this review was written on the basis of the growing gap between industrial demands and graduates' skills, which caused them to have difficulty getting jobs. Besides, it also tried to highlight the importance of SJF's fostering partnership with industries because such partnership is an important factor in distributing graduates and bridging the gap between schools and industries. Eventually, the partnership will allow SJF to help achieve the educational purposes of VHS.

METHODS

This article was excerpted from a literature review. A literature review is done by setting a research framework and using literature sources to collect research data (Zed, 2014). The data used in this research were national and international journals and other written materials relevant to the topic of the article. The article was written using the content analysis method through a series of systematic steps, including identifying the research topic, collecting and selecting research relevant to the topic for further analyses, determining the research purpose, solving problems using existing theories and drawing conclusions based on research questions relevant to the topic to introduce elements of continuity in previous research or present new findings. This suggests that a literature review requires great perseverance and in-depth analyses to achieve the intended purpose.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The research by Listiana (2019) showed that SJF of Public Vocational High School (PVHS) 2 of Pengasih was held and organized based on the analysis of problems the school faced and of their need. The existence of the SJF of PVHS 2 of Pengasih was considered to be necessary for graduate recruitment and distribution to industries. The management of SJF is based on the main functions of management in general, which include planning, organizing, actuating, evaluating and controlling. The

factor militating against the management of SJF was the fact that some students were not independent nor ready to enter the industrial world. However, the result of the research showed that SJF of PVHS 2 of Pengasih managed to lead to the increase in the graduate distribution to the business and industrial world in each academic year.

Rusliyanto and Kusmuriyanto (2019) found that industrial work practices, special job fairs, productive accountancy competence, and self-dedication simultaneously and partially affect the entrepreneurial readiness of the eleventh-grade accountancy students of PVHS 1 of Kebumen. To increase the level of students' readiness for getting jobs needs a regular career counselling. Then, Indana and Soenarto (2019) describes that the functions of SJF include collecting the database of graduates, classifying students into two groups (those who want to seek jobs and those want to continue their study at universities), and facilitate the process of mediation between students and industries in labor recruitment processes. The research found that the performance of the career center in Trenggalek Regency was fairly good.

Of all the predictors, which include information about job vacancies, partnership with industries, tracer studies, data collection, communication among alumni, and contributions of alumni, partnership with industries constitutes an aspect of career centers whose performance needs to be improved. Putri and Dermawan (2021) mentioned that the implementation of the information system for job fairs significantly affects the performance of SJF. It can be therefore concluded that the implementation of the information system for job fairs is effective in improving the performance of SJF. Such improvement, deals with some aspects such as the management, storage and acquisition of the data about alumni. But this is most important: SJF becomes better in delivering information about job vacancies widely. Tabrani, M. et al. (2020), said that the delivery of information about job vacancies by SJF of Informatics VHS Muhammadiyah of Cikampek was still ineffective as it was done in a manual system, in which information might not be delivered well and misspelled words were likelier to be found. The utilization of internet media is expected to overcome the administrative problems of SJF, help students to get information about available job vacancies and to submit online registration, and enhance the management of SJF.

Sari et al. (2017) showed that the development of SJF's website positively affected students' interests. PVHS of Jatipuro had held a SJF, but it was still not managed well. Besides, the school had no medium with which to increase graduates' absorption into industries. With the website of SJF developed, the delivery of information about job vacancies will be become faster and by turns help improve the performance of SJF in general. Meldianto, E. et al. (2019) states that SJF of VHS commonly use information and communications technologies such as Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and Twitter. The administrators of the websites of SJF of VHS check the information they share on social media on average 10 to 15 times a day.

The use of social media has eased SJF's process of sharing information with students. however, the fact that students' responses to information from SJF are sometimes irrelevant to the context of the information is the advantage of the process. This has caused SJF to create a particular a digital content which subsequently they deliver to students via social media. As described by Prasetyawan (2020), the programs of SJF of PVHS 3 of Probolinggo was planned systematically. The plan usually began with formulating quality objectives annually. The SJF was active in attending communication forum of SJF at the regional and provincial levels to gain information about the business and industrial world. The good partnership between the SJF of PVHS 3 of Probolinggo with industries once allowed the school to host the selection programs organized by industries. The SJF of PVHS 3 of Probolinggo then compiled a committee report which they submitted to the school principal, Manpower Office, and Probolinggo District Education Office.

Fatahillah and Triyono (2019) said that vocational graduates had positive impressions and perceptions of SJF. This was supported by the result of the research showing that graduates felt satisfied enough with SJF's although there was room for improvisation, especially in their performance. To achieve their intended purpose, all VHS should have their own SJF. Studying the effectiveness of SJF of VHS Giripuro of Sumpiuh, Atmaji (2019) came to conclusion described as follows: (1) the role of SJF in collecting information about job vacancies was considered to be very good in percentage terms (72%); (2) the role of SJF in delivering information about job vacancies to graduates was considered to be very good in percentage terms (46,67%); (3) the SJF had an excellent performance, for which they got the full score (100%), in mediating between students and industries; and (4) the SJF had a very good

performace (80%) when dealing with some factors militating against their programs. The research by Rakhman and Trihantoyo (2020) found that public relations play major roles in increasing the arbsorption level of the graduates of PVHS 12 of Surabaya. As communicators, public relations are the spearehead of the school's marketing campaigns, namely as the media for publication, promotion, and social listening. As relationship counsellors, pubic relations begin their branding campaign with performing community services. Meanwhile, as the corporate image creators, public relations improve omnichannel marketing in the form of a business marketing concept, bring synergy between the quality of the school's public relation and that of industries. The marketing campaign of the school may by holding an exhibition of students' last assignments. Ixtiarto and Sutrisno (2016) mentioned by the management of Ela Fitri Ayu and Syunu Trihantoyo.

To optimize SJF in distributing vocational graduates in industries, VHS Muhammadiyah 2 of Wuryantoro forged 936 partnerships with industries. The partnerships with industries were established inby signing memorandums of understanding. To control the quality of the implementation of the partnership programs, the school provided its students with training under the supervision of industry partners in the surrounding of the school based on the expertise of each student. Azizah and Khairuddin (2015) stated that the intended pupose of the establishment of partnerships with industries was to produce graduates with competence relevant to the demand in the labor market. The partnership program of PVHS 3 of Banda Aceh with industries was implemented by involving industries in the curriculum development process to make it possible industrial work practices, teacher internship programs, the creation of production units, and the utiliation of both sides' facilities.

Based on the research of Marsono, et al. (2019), the plan for vocational-student internship programs required a school to take some preparations, including adminitrative responsibilities like partnership letters, memorandums od understanding, and proposals for the implementation of the student internship program. The vocational-student internship program involved distributing students to industries relevant to students' competence, putting trust for students in indutries, student training and counselling by tutors, monitoring students' performance during the industrial internship, and picking up students. The evaluation of the vocational-student internship program was carried out by both sides of the school and industries. Sari and Haryanto (2020) shows that the 4-year internship programs in industry for an expertise program of one of the vocational schools in Depok City of Sleman was implemented in both the scool and industries. The learning processes at schools involved administration, workshop, and learning activities, while the learning processes in industries involved inviting industries, conducting industry validation, making industry mapping, socializing industrial practices at schools, and performing industry placement, monitoring and absorption. The obstacles in the way of the implementation of the industrial work practices included the lack of preparation and careful monitoring. It is advisable for schools to involve their alumni and to make synchroniation with industries to overcome those obstacles.

Samidjo (2018) stated that the absorption level of vocational graduates was relatively high: they got jobs under a 6-24 months contract, the jobs they got are not always relevant to their expertise learned and trained at school, they rarely got permanent jobs after the first or second contract expired. Industries preferred to recruit other fresh graduates to giving those graduates permanent jobs, which made them worry that they lose their jobs in their productive or working age. Wibowo (2016) said that in order to reduce the gap between vocational schools and industries, namely to produce graduates with good, hard and soft skills as demanded by industries, vocational schools have to implement such programs as teaching factory, industrial work practices, industrial visits, industry classes, on-job training, and workshops on workforce by invloving stakeholders.

Riyanti et al (2016) showed that vocational graduates' entrepreneurial intentions are significantly affected by their hard and soft skills. This finding helped realize that learning processes should facilitate the process of competence development. To serve this purpose, learning processes at schools must give a high priority to direct practices in orde that they not only advance students' knowledge but also develop their professional competence. Nurlaela, et al. (2019) stressed that revitalizing vocational education programs may strengthen partnerships of school with both industries and universities. The revitaliation program is also necessary for the curriculum uniformity among vocational schools. This will be followed by a significant improvement in other aspects like innovation learning, certification of students' or graduates' competence, the enhancement of teachers' productivity level, the improvement

of schools' facilities and infrastructure, and the improvement of students' innovative products and services.

Khasanah (2020) explained that the link and match program implemented and evaluated annually still seemed inappropriate. Other research suggests the need for continuous evaluation. For example, VHS Muhammadiyah of Delanggu annually tries to distribute its graduates to industries based on those graduates' competence, despite the fact that some graduates got jobs outside their area of expertise. The vocational school implemented 5 programs: (1) the curriculum synchronization, (2) internship, (3) industrial visits, (4) production units, and (5) competency assessment tests. The implementation of those programs indeed faced some obstacles; however, the school managed to respond them positively by enforcing some policies believed to surmount those rising problems.

Meanwhile, Unsudah and Irianti (2020) stated that link and match programs which can be applied in vocational schools include forging partnerships with industries, developing industry classes, implementing teacher internships (OJT), internships, and strengthening the role of vocational schools in developing relationships between schools and industries. The link and match programs will help identify what competence employers should have and what competence employers require the most.

Subsequently, as departments established at vocational high schools, SJF constitute executive units responsible for providing service and information about job vacancies, marketing strategies and the distribution and placement of workforce. They are also the partner of Manpower and Transmigration Office (Bursa Kerja Khusus, 2021).

SJF were established to facilitate the fulfilment of the needs of both graduates and employers, to provide services for graduates according to the job description and function of each division of SJF, to provide graduates with training in accordance with the demands of employers, and to capture graduates' entrepreneurial spirit through training.

Special Job Fairs

Considered to be institutions established to optimize the distribution of vocational graduates to industries and provide them with information about job vacancies, SJF of VHS form an important component in measuring the success of learning processes in vocational schools. Empowering SJF of VHS is one of the function school managements should perform in their effort to lead the implementation of the programs of SJF to the accomplishment of the intended function of VHS.

SJF of VHS is one of the components of the implementation of the dual education system, because it is impossible to facilitate learning processes preparing students to be ready for job competition without fostering partnership with industries, which provide students with practical professional skills and work ethics as demanded in the industrial world.

The area of SJF's activities includes (1) creating the database of vocational graduates seeking jobs and of industries needing to recruit employees and doing tracer studies of vocational graduates; (2) seeking information about job markets from advertisements in print or digital mass media, industrial visits, schools' partner industries, or Manpower and Transmigration Office; (3) producing leaflets of information and graduate promotion and sending out them to industries related to Manpower and Transmigration Office; (4) distributing vocational graduates to the business and industrial world; (5) taking follow-up actions in relation to the worker distribution and placement by making soundings and verification; (6) providing vocational students and graduates with training in specialist skills in accordance with the skills required; (7) organizing counselling sessions for graduates to get them ready to pass employee acceptance tests (interviews/psychological tests); (8) giving alumni and graduates of other vocational schools information about job vacancies.

SJF's activities can be described in detail as follows. SJF plans work plans with industry partners for each study program (organizing meetings with heads of study programs to discuss student placements in industrial work practices, facilitating coordination with committees of the industrial work practices concerning student placements, and facilitating coordination with committees of the industrial work practices concerning teachers' monitoring), conducting negotiations with partners of the school (industries and the government) concerning student placements in industrial work practices, forging partnerships with industries, making industry mapping, forging partnerships with Manpower and Transmigration Office concerning the establishment of training and internship programs and graduate placements, creating the database of tracer studies to have information about employed and unemployed graduates, creating SJF's website and compiling progress reports.

Graduate Distribution

The process of graduate distribution and placement the SJF of PVHS 1 of Boyolangu managed to undertake included taking follow-up actions concerning the collaboration with industries that have built partnerships with the school, conducting tracer studies to update the school's database, involving school assembly committee in the placement of students and graduates, creating SJF's special, updated website which has relevant links to other websites containing information about job carrier and embodying entrepreneurial spirit on students through entrepreneurship training.

Entrepreneurs are those who can see opportunities and then take advantage of them by forming an organization (Alma, 2013). The creation of special job fairs (SJF) does not necessarily mean that all graduates will get jobs easily. There are some factors militating against the performance of SJF, which causes SJF not deliver their best performance. Those factors can be divided into internal and external factors (Sartika, 2014),

The internal factors slowing down the process of graduate distribution deal with human resources. Some graduates were too selective in choosing jobs, which caused SJF to have difficulty identifying jobs relevant to the interests and skills of those graduates. Besides, some other graduates submitted job applications but withdrew the applications just before the selection process. Another internal factor was the fact that some graduates failed to meet employers' requirement on physical appearances, one of which was the body height. Meanwhile, the external factors included facilities and infrastructure, family environments, and employers. Students' inappropriate facilities made it difficult to give them information about job vacancies. As for family environment, some parents were reluctant give their children their consent for working in other provinces, not to mention working abroad. Meanwhile, some graduates who were recently absorbed in particular industries decided to resign from their jobs without the company's knowledge because they felt deceived.

Business and Industrial World (BIW)

The terms 'business' and 'industry' have been so far understood as if both refer to the same object, while, in fact, both can be differentiated. 'The business world', for example, refers to any venture involving social and economic functions; on the other hand, 'the industrial world' stands for any activity or job related to products or things. In this regard, trades, banking, and other office works belong to the business world.

Efforts to improve vocational education in some regions by recognizing and stressing the role the BIW, namely by fostering partnerships with industries, have been made. In a vocational school, a student cannot be considered to complete his/her study without entering the business and industrial world. Study completion must be accompanied by a certificate students gained during industrial work practices. In helping develop vocational schools, the business and industrial world can perform such roles as (1) giving students opportunities to take part in industrial work practices and (2) holding teacher internship programs. The role and partnership in evaluation can take forms of (1) administering competence tests; (2) conducting certification programs; and (3) recruiting vocational graduates. Vocational-graduate recruitment indeed requires the heavy commitment of business and industry partners.

CONCLUSION

Improving the performance of vocational high schools can be implemented by optimizing the performance of SJF in distributing graduates to industries. The optimization program begins with taking some actions like designing work plans for each study program in collaboration with industries, conducting negotiations' with partners of the school (industries and the government) concerning student placements in industrial work practices, forging partnerships with industries, making industry mapping, forging partnerships with Manpower and Transmigration Office concerning the establishment of training and internship programs and graduate placements, creating the database of tracer studies to have information about employed and unemployed graduates, creating SJF's website and compiling progress reports. Meanwhile, SJF can overcome any obstacle in the path of the implementation of the program by motivating graduates to look for jobs most relevant to them and schedule their school visits

and publishing information about job vacancies digitally (on SJF's website) or manually on poster boards.

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