

Analysis of the Effectiveness of Career Guidance Services in Vocational High Schools Based on Graduates' Career Success

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ABSTRACT

This research is motivated by the high unemployment rate produced by Vocational High School (SMK) graduates, as well as the many students who feel confused in determining their career direction after education. The main objective of this study is to evaluate the effectiveness of career guidance services provided when students are in grade XII. The method applied in this study is descriptive qualitative, which provides researchers with the opportunity to explore the experiences and subjective views of the informants. Data collection techniques are carried out through observation, with interview instruments consisting of short questions randomly asked to SMK graduates. Of the total 21 respondents who participated in the interview, the results showed that 15 of them reported the existence of career guidance services during their time at SMK, while the other 6 respondents indicated that the service was not available. These findings lead to the conclusion that the role of career guidance services in SMK can be considered effective, as evidenced by the 15 respondents who felt significant benefits from the guidance they received, which helped them in making decisions regarding their future careers.

Keywords: Vocational High School, Career Guidance, Career

1 Introduction

Adolescence is an important transition phase in an individual's life, where changes in mindset occur quite rapidly. During this period, adolescents are faced with various challenges related to planning and choosing their careers. This process is not easy, because it requires mastery of relevant skills to pursue a successful future career. In determining a career, every individual wants to make the right decision to ensure a better life, and in accordance with their interests and talents. However, to achieve this, it is important for adolescents to have access to extensive information and knowledge about the various career options available.[1]. Unfortunately, many teenagers find it difficult to navigate their career choices, often due to a lack of information or understanding about the career they want to pursue. This highlights the need for effective career guidance programs that can help them plan the right steps towards their desired future.[2].

Career planning is a very important process, especially for students at the Senior High School (SMA) and Vocational High School (SMK) levels. Defines career planning as an approach that focuses on work, where individuals are expected to be able to identify logical career paths that can lead them to progress in the world of work. This is very relevant for vocational high school students, which are designed to prepare themselves to be ready to enter the world of work. A career is not just a series of jobs that have been done, but also a perception of an individual's attitude and behavior related to various activities and experiences throughout their career journey.[1]. Career direction determination is generally more focused on grade XII students, who have begun to seriously consider future steps. Vocational High Schools function as a continuation of previous education, offering educational programs that are more focused on practical skills needed in the world of work. Therefore, it is important for vocational high school stu-

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dents to be involved in effective career guidance, so that they can make the right decisions about their future.[3].

2 Literature Review

According to [4], vocational education is designed to prepare students to become professionals who are ready to contribute to the world of work or continue their education to a higher level. Vocational High Schools (SMK) focus on preparing students with the practical skills needed to work, in contrast to Senior High Schools (SMA) which are more directed at continuing their education at university. In the context of vocational education, the applicable curriculum emphasizes practice more than theory. This is in line with the explanation in Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System, Article 15, which states that vocational education is secondary education that prepares students to work in a particular field. These schools offer a variety of areas of expertise that are tailored to the needs of the surrounding community, so that students can choose a field that suits their abilities and interests. This aims to make it easier for students to apply their potential, from their immediate environment to the wider world of work [5].

The research entitled "Analysis of the Effectiveness of Career Guidance Services in Vocational High Schools Based on Graduates' Career Success" was motivated by the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) noting that there were still 7.2 million unemployed in Indonesia until February 2024. The unemployment phenomenon among vocational school graduates can be caused by various factors, both internal and external. One significant external factor is the effectiveness of career guidance services provided at vocational schools. This service plays an important role as a bridge in helping students to become successful and competent graduates. If career guidance services function optimally, students will get the right information and direction, so they can broaden their horizons and better prepare themselves in determining their future careers.[6]. The existence of effective career guidance services is very important for students' career development, which in turn will affect their success rate in getting a job after graduation. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the extent to which the effectiveness of career guidance services in vocational schools contributes to the career success of graduates.[7].

Career guidance is an important element in education-oriented guidance and counseling, with the aim of helping students plan their careers and prepare for working life. According to [3], this guidance aims to support students in developing a structured career plan. Career guidance not only functions as a tool for planning a career, but also as a means for students to understand themselves. This includes understanding their abilities, potential, interests, talents, personality (both strengths and weaknesses), and the achievements they have achieved. Through career guidance, students are directed to be able to choose a career path that is in accordance with the data and facts in the field, so that they have a strong foundation in making decisions regarding their future.[6]. In vocational high schools (SMK), career guidance services aim to provide comprehensive knowledge, positive attitudes, and practical skills needed in the world of work. Thus, when students graduate and enter the world of work, they are ready and trained to face the challenges that exist. This service is very important to create graduates who are not only ready to work, but also able to compete and contribute effectively in the industry.[7].

Implementing career guidance from the early stages of education is a must because high interest and motivation from students are key factors in maintaining tight competitiveness among the younger generation. This approach not only aims to produce graduates who are qualified and competent in their fields, but also ensures that the knowledge and skills acquired during the education process can become a strong foundation for their career development. The strategic role of guidance teachers is vital in this process; they must be able to design effective and attractive service methods so that students can actively participate in facing and resolving various challenges related to their professional future. Through comprehensive career guidance, students are directed to understand their potential in more depth, recognize various professions, as well as relevant sources of income that can support career quality improvement. Thus, the implementation of early career guidance not only helps students build a realistic and focused vision of their future, but also strengthens their readiness to respond to competitive challenges in the world of work in a healthy, safe, and confident manner.[8].

In an effort to assess the effectiveness of the role of career guidance services in vocational high schools (SMK) in supporting the process of determining students' careers, researchers conducted a qualitative study involving a number of SMK graduates from 3 schools in the Pandaan District. Data collection was carried out through interviews using an instrument in the form of nine short questions submitted

online to 21 respondents who were SMK graduates in the Pandaan District. The main objective of this study was to evaluate the extent to which the career guidance services provided were able to facilitate students in obtaining information, getting clear directions, and helping them in designing career paths that were in accordance with their potential and desires after they graduated from SMK. The results of this study are expected to provide an overview of the effectiveness of these services in supporting the success of students' career determination, so that they can be the basis for developing more optimal and relevant career guidance strategies.

3 Research Methods

This study involved 21 respondents who were vocational school graduates from 3 schools in the Pandaan District area, with initial data collection through interviews and then selected into 6 main respondents for further analysis. The instrument used in the study was a questionnaire sent online via online messages, aiming to assess the extent to which career guidance services in vocational schools play a role in helping students plan their future. The questionnaire consisted of 9 descriptive questions, asking respondents to tell their experiences and assessments regarding the effectiveness of career guidance services during their education at vocational schools. This approach allows researchers to deeply understand graduates' perceptions of the benefits and obstacles they feel related to these services during their studies.

This research uses a qualitative approach, as stated by [5], which defines that qualitative methodology is a research process that produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from people and observable behavior. According to [5], this method is based on the philosophy of postpositivism and is used to research natural objects, where the researcher functions as the main instrument, and data collection techniques are carried out through triangulation or combination. Data analysis in this approach is inductive and emphasizes meaning rather than generalization. Based on the theories of these experts, it can be concluded that the qualitative approach places the researcher as the main center in the research process, where the results are described in the form of words. With this approach, the study aims to obtain an accurate and real picture of the sample's experience through observation, interviews, and documentation in the field. In this study, data collection techniques were carried out through three main approaches, namely observation, interviews, and documentation studies.

The researcher used purposive sampling technique to determine informants or respondents who fit certain needs and criteria. This technique involves the deliberate selection of informants based on characteristics relevant to the research objectives. In this study, the researcher only used sampling of statements from 6 respondents out of 21 respondents who had been interviewed previously. Sampling of 5 interview respondents was taken representing several vocational school graduates from several cities in Indonesia, those selected for sampling were informants who fit the criteria. The criteria were made based on 2 aspects, the first criterion is the respondents come from vocational schools that provide career guidance services. The second criterion is that respondents come from vocational schools that do not provide career guidance services.

4 Result and Discussion

In the study, the distribution of interview questions was carried out randomly to 21 respondents who were graduates of 3 vocational schools spread across the Pandaan District. The interview instrument consisted of 9 questions designed to explore the experiences of the informants regarding the effectiveness of career guidance services in vocational schools in helping them plan their future careers. The results of the interviews showed that perceptions of the effectiveness of these services varied, depending on the experience of each respondent. Some respondents provided supportive statements, while others may have different views, reflecting variations in experience and assessment of the service.

A. Respondent 1

Who came from SMK A said that his previous SMK implemented career guidance services. Here is the interview result.

"In my vocational school, there is a career guidance service, the implementation starts from grade XI before the PKL (Field Work Practice) is carried out individually and in groups, the system is in the form of

discussions with the career guidance service. In my opinion, the career guidance service is quite helpful in calculating my decision to continue my education to a higher level according to the Concentration of Expertise that I am currently interested in, namely Medical Laboratory Engineering."

Based on the interview results above, it can be concluded that Respondent 1 is quite helped by the career guidance service at his vocational school. This is because Respondent 1 admitted that the career guidance service recommended or directed his career according to what he liked and was interested in. Different from other informants.

B. Respondent 2

Who came from Vocational School B, said that he was very helped by the career guidance service at his vocational school.

"Yes, that's right, in my vocational school there is a career guidance service that is carried out individually and is carried out periodically at least once a month or depending on our needs. The implementation system of the career guidance service helps recommend to students about career information, both state universities and job vacancies after graduating from school and provides direction and support to students about the potential that the student has. In my opinion, this career guidance service is very helpful because after consulting."

In addition to the statement from Respondent 2, another informant from one of the SMK C apparently had the same opinion.

C. Respondent 3

Also said that he was also greatly helped by the career guidance service at his SMK. The following is his full statement.

"Career guidance services at SMK are carried out in groups, I was guided and given information about jobs in general, such as the differences in job characteristics in one industry with another. In my opinion, this career guidance service is very helpful and very influential for me in deciding my choice after graduating from SMK, because this career guidance service can help speed up finding a job that suits the interests and talents of each student."

D. Respondent 4

Continued by the statement of respondent 4 from one of the SMK D who said that he was very helped by the existence of career guidance services. This activity aims to provide provisions to prospective graduates so that they must be ready according to their respective choices of interest, as in the following interview excerpt.

"We are in grade XII, divided into 4 interest classes to then conduct career guidance based on each student's choice of interest. The interest classes include working, continuing, entrepreneurship and working in Japan. We are very helped by this service so that we really know the direction we will take in the future and what we have to prepare."

E. Respondent 5

From one of SMK E felt less helped by the career guidance service. Here is the statement of the interview results.

"In my vocational school, there is indeed a career guidance service, especially for grade XII students who are still undecided in determining their next career between continuing their education or working. This career guidance service is carried out individually and guided by their respective homeroom teachers. The implementation system is by asking students individually whether they want to continue their education or work. "

In the interview results above, the researcher saw that the role of career guidance services was lacking in terms of attracting students to ask about their career planning, whereas as we know, teachers who act as career guidance services should embrace all students without exception, regardless of the different and diverse natures and personalities of students. Then, what about vocational schools that do not have career guidance services?

F. Respondent 6

Is a graduate of SMK F who did not feel the existence of career guidance services in his vocational school. Here is his complete statement from the interview results.

"In my vocational school, I actually don't know whether there is career guidance or not, but I personally did not experience such services. In my opinion, if I had known about career guidance services at that time, maybe my career planning would have been more focused and the decisions taken would not have stopped in the middle of the road, and maybe I would not have been confused."

Researchers saw the diversity of statements conveyed by 6 sample respondents, from 21 respondents who had been interviewed. 15 of them stated that there were career guidance services at their former vocational schools, their statements were represented by 5 sample respondents who stated their statements above, they generally stated that with the existence of career guidance services they were quite helped by the information provided, and direction to design their future careers. Students whose vocational schools have career guidance services, have been proven to be helped to design their future, and their future career plans if they graduate from vocational school are more structured, and they also understand more about the systematics when entering the world of work that they may not have understood before, or about the world of college that is in accordance with the field they like and are interested in. Meanwhile, 6 other informants stated that there were no career guidance services at their former vocational schools. This resulted in them not being directed when designing their future careers when they were in school.

5 Conclusion

Career guidance is an educational service that functions to help students recognize and understand themselves, including their abilities, strengths, and weaknesses, so that they can be responsible in determining their future career choices. This service is very important so that students get direction according to their interests and talents, and understand the work environment they will be in after graduating from vocational school, so that they can adjust well and feel comfortable in continuing their career journey.

The results of the study showed that career guidance services in vocational schools were categorized as effective, because out of 21 respondents interviewed, 15 stated that this service was very helpful in determining a career. This guidance can be a guide for students who are still confused in choosing their career path. However, some respondents also considered that the influence of guidance on the success of career determination was not optimal, possibly due to internal and external factors that require routine evaluation and improvement of service quality, including improving teacher competence as direct companions for students.

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