

Analysis of Work Readiness of Vocational High School Students to Support the Success of Sustainability Development Goals (SDG's)

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Abstract. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set by the United Nations (UN) in 2015 have a target to achieve 17 global goals, including poverty alleviation, hunger, and climate change. Vocational education and training play an important role in achieving this SDGs by equipping students with the skills and knowledge needed to enter the workforce and contribute to sustainable development. The purpose of this study is to deeply understand the work readiness of vocational high schools. This study is used to analyze the work readiness of vocational high school students to support the success of sustainable development goals. The research method used is literature review. The work readiness of vocational school students is an important factor in supporting the achievement of the SDGs. The level of work readiness of vocational school students varies, but in general it is still not optimal. One of the impacts of work readiness is unemployment. Factors that affect the job readiness of vocational school students include educational curriculum, training and skill development, work experience, soft skills, competition and access to information about job opportunities. Improving the job readiness of vocational school students can be done through various strategies, including updating the educational curriculum, improving training and skill development, and providing opportunities for students to gain work experience.

Keywords: work readiness, vocational high school, sustainable development goals

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is one of the countries with the largest population in the world. The level of the labor force (including the working population and open unemployment) in Indonesia is also increasing every year. Based on data released by Badan Pusat Statistik (BPS) in November 2023, it is known that the labor force participation rate was 147.71 million people, an increase of 0.85% compared to August 2022. Unemployment is an open tool to measure unemployment at the labor force level, is the part of the labor force that is looking for a job or preparing for a suitable business (Muslim, 2014). Education plays an important role in promoting decent work by encouraging sustainable development, influencing attitudes and empowering individuals with the necessary knowledge and skills (Ngambi & Nthoesane, 2023). Schools are educational institutions designed to educate the nation's children towards a better life to improve economic capabilities by working (Ardiasih & Setiyani, 2017).

Vocational High Schools are a form of formal school at the secondary school level (Sari & Zamroni, 2019). In accordance with Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, article 15 defines vocational schools as a form of formal education at the secondary level that focuses on preparing students to work in

certain fields. The striking difference between Senior High School and Vocational High School is the proportion of theoretical and practical learning (Aisah et al., 2024). Learning at vocational schools is more dominated by practical learning (by getting closer to DUDI) than theoretical learning, the opposite of learning carried out at the high school level. Especially with the presence of the Center of Excellence Vocational High School or SMK PK program as the development of an independent learning curriculum and the revitalization of vocational education which aims to prepare qualified graduates who are more ready to work. However, in reality, not all vocational school graduates are absorbed in the workforce, even very few are still working in accordance with their field of expertise. The phenomenon that occurs today is that there is still a gap between the qualifications of vocational school graduates and the minimum competencies they have to enter the world of work (Prianto et al., 2021) and limited job opportunities (Hidayatulloh, 2021). Although the unemployment open rate of vocational school graduates is decreasing every year, it still contributes the highest compared to other levels of education (Hermawan et al., 2023).

Open Unemployment Rate (TPT) based on the highest education completed There are many

factors that affect the high TPT, one of which is education (Muslim, 2014). This indicates that education needs to be improved so that the human resources (HR) produced are more qualified, superior and competitive, including vocational schools. To answer these challenges, the President gave instructions to several ministers to revitalize vocational schools in order to improve the quality and competitiveness of Indonesian human resources, as stated in the work through Presidential Instruction Number 9 of 2016. One of the instructions given by the President to the Minister of Education and Culture is to improve and harmonize the vocational school curriculum with competencies according to the needs of the business world/industrial world (DU/DI) (Wahjusaputri & Bunyamin, 2022). In addition, the limited job opportunities in the field of expertise of vocational school graduates are also due to the lack of job availability according to the field of expertise and the lack of collaboration with the business world/industrial world (DU/DI) (Larosa & Munadi, 2019). To overcome this problem, Vocational High Schools (SMK) need to improve the implementation of the curriculum to meet the demands of DU/DI which focuses on developing practical skills and is in line with job requirements (Komala & Febriansyah, 2021).

One of the points of sustainable development goals 8 (SDG 8) focuses on decent work for all (Abrahamsson, 2021; Ioannides et al., 2021) for environmental and social sustainability (Blanco-Varela et al., 2021). One of the impacts of the minimum availability of decent jobs is the increase in the number of unemployed. Unemployment is directly contrary to this goal. Lack of decent work can hinder economic growth, exacerbate poverty, and widen inequality. Unemployment is a socioeconomic problem that impacts individuals and society globally, both physical and mental health (Kuznetsov et al., 2023). This can be marked by some individuals not having a job, ready to work and actively looking for work in a certain period (Brandolini et al., 2018). Or it can be interpreted as a workforce that has not yet obtained a job (Bagana et al., 2023). Unemployment generally experiences lower life satisfaction, especially in high-income countries where the difference between those who have jobs and the unemployed is felt (Elorhor, 2019). One type of unemployment in Indonesia, such as educated young unemployment (Ibn Abbas & Farida Rahmawati, 2020; Nurhalisa et al., 2023). Solow's growth theory, developed by Robert Solow in 1956, is one of the most well-known

macroeconomic theories explaining the determinants of long-term economic growth (Carmona & León, 2023). This theory explains how capital accumulation, population growth and technological advances affect the long-term economic growth of a country (Solow, 1956). One of the problems of population growth is unemployment. Factors that affect unemployment include economic growth, the Human Development Index (HDI), inflation, minimum wage, and the number of workers (Sitompul & Athoillah, 2023). The high unemployment rate in Indonesia has an impact on the economy and society due to the imbalance between job opportunities and labor growth. Improving the quality of education, increasing the competitiveness of the workforce, and implementing effective government policies are important steps to address and reduce the impact of unemployment. Based on the description above, this study aims to analyze how the work readiness of vocational high school students. It is interesting to be studied more deeply to understand problems, phenomena and a comprehensive understanding through various sources.

METHODS

The research method used is the library research method, which is research that uses literature research materials in the form of various scientific writings, literature and reports that are relevant to the topic to be researched. Not only that, this study uses a descriptive analysis procedure, where information starts from inferior information obtained from the Badan Pusat Statistik (BPS). The stages of the literature review are as follows:

- 1) Defining Research Topics and Questions: Select the topic you want to delve into further; Formulate clear and specific questions to guide the literature search.
- 2) Finding Sources: Use databases of scientific journals, books, articles, and other sources relevant to your topic; Choose relevant keywords to find suitable sources.
- 3) Reading and Evaluating Sources: Read the abstracts from each source to see if they are relevant to your topic.
- 4) Analyzing and Synthesizing Information: Make a brief note of each source read and find out which areas haven't been extensively researched or still need more research.
- 5) Writing a Literature Review

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Indonesia faces several problems in achieving the 8th Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target 8.6, namely substantially reducing the proportion of youth who are unemployed and out of school and do not attend training. Solow's theory of macroeconomics is a framework for understanding the factors that drive long-term economic growth. Decent work and unemployment are two sides of the same coin. Although Solow's theory does not explicitly address unemployment, the relationship between the two concepts can be analyzed through the following assumptions: Natural unemployment rate Solow's theory assumes the existence of a natural unemployment rate, which is a constant unemployment rate over the long term where the supply of labor cooperates with the demand for labor. This natural unemployment rate is determined by factors such as demographic structure, technology and labor market institutions. Influence of economic growth According to Solow's theory, long-term economic growth can create labor demand, which in turn can lower the unemployment rate. This is because increased output and productivity encourage the expansion of economic sectors, creating more job opportunities. Impact of population growth However, Solow's theory also suggests that high population growth can offset the positive effects of economic growth on unemployment. If population growth exceeds output growth, labor supply will increase faster than labor demand, thus increasing the unemployment rate.

Policy implications Based on this link, policies that promote long-term economic growth, such as investments in education, infrastructure, and technology, can help reduce unemployment. In addition, policies that increase labor productivity and encourage labor market flexibility can also help lower the unemployment rate. Job readiness is an important factor in reducing unemployment and increasing a country's competitiveness. Governments around the world, including Indonesia, are participating in tackling unemployment through policies and regulations. This needs to be done to reduce the impact of unemployment on economic growth and stability (Elorhor, 2019; ÖzçeliçK & Erdem, 2020). There are several policies and regulations that have been launched by the Indonesian government to achieve the 8th SDGs target 8.6, including:

1) Law Number 13 of 2003 concerning Manpower

- 2) This law regulates various matters related to employment in Indonesia, including the rights and obligations of workers and employers, as well as the requirements for establishing a business.
- 3) Government Regulation Number 37 of 2021 concerning the Implementation of Vocational Training
- 4) This regulation regulates the implementation of vocational training in Indonesia, including training standards, certification, and financing.
- 5) Presidential Regulation (Perpres) Number 65 of 2021 concerning the National Youth Policy.
- 6) This policy aims to realize Indonesian youth who are advanced, independent, and have character, and are able to contribute to national development.
- 7) Regulation of the Minister of Manpower Number 15 of 2020 concerning Labor Placement
- 8) This regulation regulates the placement of workers in Indonesia, including the placement of young workers.
- 9) Regulation of the Minister of Manpower Number 16 of 2020 concerning the National Strategy for Skills Development and Workforce Productivity.
- 10) This strategy aims to improve the skills and productivity of the Indonesian workforce, including youth.
- 11) Presidential Instruction Number 9 of 2016 concerning the revitalization of Vocational High Schools.

One of the instructions given by the President to the Minister of Education and Culture is to improve and harmonize the vocational school curriculum with competencies according to the needs of the business world/industrial world (DU/DI) (Wahjusaputri & Bunyamin, 2022). One of the components of the curriculum that must be adjusted is the implementation of the learning model used in vocational schools.

SMK is included in vocational/vocational education which is one of the important strategies in the world of Indonesian education. It's graduates face challenges in job absorption, such as job availability (Larosa & Munadi, 2019), job mismatch (Hidayatulloh & Ashoumi, 2022), lack of equipment and industry awareness (Aisah et al., 2024) and learning management (Lispiyatmini & Hermanto, 2022; Sariwulan et al., 2020). Vocational education focuses on developing practical skills, special knowledge and skills that

are tailored (link and match) to the needs of DU/DI (Wahjusaputri & Bunyamin, 2022). One form of innovation that must be carried out is to evaluate the learning model used, namely DU/DI-based learning innovations (Wahyuni & Ahyani, 2022). This learning process is designed, developed and managed jointly between vocational education units and the world of work creatively. Of course, by applying various approaches in a better direction according to the needs of competencies in the world of work. So that there is collaboration between the education unit and DU/DI in the implementation process, starting from the planning, implementation, evaluation and follow-up stages.

Schools also play an important role in driving economic growth by empowering students and encouraging entrepreneurial initiatives (Aerni et al., 2024). One of the components of SDG 8 is to support entrepreneurship, creativity, innovation, and encourage the formalization and growth of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) (Jayasooria & Yi, 2023). Entrepreneurship is one of the solutions to prepare graduates to get decent jobs and overcome unemployment. Some of the reasons why it is important to equip vocational school graduates with entrepreneurship are as follows: Economic independence Entrepreneurship teaches independence and the ability to create one's own job opportunities. Namely by starting a business or business that generates income so as to reduce the need for formal work. Innovation and creativity Entrepreneurship encourages innovation and creativity. So that someone who has an entrepreneurial spirit will be able to develop new ideas, products or services that are creative and innovative and relevant to market needs. Upskilling Entrepreneurship requires a variety of complex skills and graduates involved in entrepreneurship will hone those skills. Reduction of unemployment with more graduates choosing the entrepreneurial path, of course, the pressure on formal employment can be reduced and will automatically reduce the unemployment rate. Social impact Entrepreneurship will have a positive impact on society. If an entrepreneur's business is successful, of course, it will be able to create jobs for others.

Education plays a crucial role in preparing graduates to have the provision of entrepreneurship in the future. It is proven by the integration of entrepreneurship materials in the vocational school learning curriculum that is relevant to their field of expertise, ranging from

business planning, management, innovation and evaluation to business development. And in the latest vocational school curriculum, entrepreneurship stands as its own subject, namely entrepreneurial creative products that are given at the XI and XII grade levels. In the implementation of the subject learning practice, students will be trained, guided, facilitated and accompanied by teachers and an expert in their field. Hopely that students will not only learn theories about entrepreneurship, but also practices that are in accordance with their fields in real life. In the practice of entrepreneurship carried out in this school, it will indirectly shape the character and ethics of students, such as integrity, sense of responsibility, cooperation, respect and appreciation of opinions and differences between each other. This entrepreneurship is a continuing education which means that the practice of entrepreneurship will continue to help students develop themselves and prepare for future careers. The students will be able to build business networks, increase insights, hone soft skills (communication, cooperation, leadership, critical thinking, utilization of science and technology, and so on) from the experience gained.

CONCLUSION

The Indonesian government, the private sector, and civil society need to continue to work together to improve access to education, develop internship and training programs, and address existing challenges in order to achieve the 8th SDG target of 8.6 and create a brighter future for its youth. One of the efforts that can be made as a solution to the above problems is that by integrating education for sustainable development into the context of learning, institutions can maintain a culture of sustainability, critical thinking, and social engagement that will later contribute to the promotion of decent work in society. Decent work is essential for economic development and worker welfare. These needs to be the main concern because it is related to the work readiness of vocational high school students. For this reason, cooperation between schools, local governments, and DU/DI is needed to ensure that graduates have been well prepared as a workforce. In addition, it can also secure job opportunities that are in accordance with their talents, interests and expertise. With a good education, vocational school graduates are expected to be able to acquire the knowledge, skills, and insights necessary to achieve success in getting a decent job, both

formal and informal jobs.

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