

## **Student Career Development Center Program: Preparing Qualified Vocational High School Students Towards World of Work Qualification**

**Ulani Yunus<sup>1</sup>, Yossie Trenanto<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Marketing Communication Program, Department of Communication, Faculty of Economics and Communication, Bina Nusantara University, Jakarta-Indonesia

<sup>2</sup>Research Interest Group Cross Cultural Communication, Bina Nusantara University, Jakarta- Indonesia

### **Abstract**

Concerns about a surge in unemployment due to the quality of vocational school students who do not meet the World of Work standards are of grave concern to the Indonesian government. Through the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Indonesian government continues to support existing departments at vocational high schools with the ultimate goal of reducing unemployment. In realizing the goal and integrating with the school curriculum and collaborates with industry, business, and the world of work (IDUKA), the Indonesian government facilitates the Student Career Development Center (PPKS) in all vocational high schools. However, the Student Career Development Center's performance has not been published toward students' increased interest to work after graduation. This article focuses on applying industrial culture to academic activities based on the number of graduates employed in the industrial sector. This study was designed with a qualitative approach, namely extracting as much data as possible from the research object and supported by data on graduates who were employed and student parents' expectations. The program is carried out according to the schedule made by the principal and his team. In cooperating with industry, business, and work (IDUKA) and monitored by MITRASDUDI and the Research Interest Group - Cross-Cultural Communication, Binus University, this program runs well in a certain period.

**Keywords:** Vocational High School, Student Career Development, Unemployment

### **Introduction**

Central Statistics Agency (Badan Pusat Statistik - BPS) has released Indonesia's workforce condition in 2020. Most of the workforce with low education levels of 58.77 percent or 72.8 million are dominated by this condition. On another side, the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Childs' Protection (KemenPPPA) in 2018 also released since Indonesia is entering a new era of demographic bonuses marked by a decrease in the ratio between nonproductive populations the number of productive populations aged 15-64 years. Demographic bonuses in Indonesia dominated by an average high school education level significantly affect national productivity. This situation is proven by Indonesian labor productivity, which is relatively lower compared to other neighboring countries. Referring to the Asian Productivity Organization (APC), in 2018 released that Indonesia's productivity level is only 1.37%, or almost four times lower than Thailand's productivity, which reached 5.28%. Compared to production value in three countries, Indonesia's production value is lower than Vietnam (4.39%) and

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<sup>1</sup>Assoc. Prof., Faculty of Economics and Communication, Bina Nusantara University, Jakarta, [uyunus@binus.edu](mailto:uyunus@binus.edu)

<sup>2</sup>Leader of Research Interest Groups (RIG)-CrossCultural Communication, Banten, Indonesia, [uyunus@binus.edu](mailto:uyunus@binus.edu)

<sup>3</sup>Member of Research Interest Groups (RIG)-Cross Cultural Communication, Indonesia, [yossietren2012@gmail.com](mailto:yossietren2012@gmail.com)

Malaysia (2.16%). The Indonesian government overcame this condition to immediately prepare a qualified and skilled workforce to increase productivity and competitiveness through education. One of the government's strategies to prepare a quality and skilled workforce is through increasing access, quality, and relevance of education, including developing Vocational High School since the current vocational education tends to produce many semi-skilled graduates. At the same time, the job market has limited capacity to absorb these graduates. Not being absorbed by job seekers due to insufficient availability of the number of jobs causes a gap, which is then called unemployment. Unemployment is often a problem in the economy since unemployment, productivity, and the community's income will decrease to cause poverty and other social issues. A large number of unemployed is in line with the increase in population and is not supported by the availability of new jobs or the lack of awareness to create minimal employment opportunities. *The Central Statistics Agency (BPS)* released the *Open Unemployment Rate (TPT)* in August 2019. Based on the education level, TPT rate of primary school (SD) graduates is the lowest, which is 2.41%. While TPT rate of vocational high school (SMK) graduates is the highest, which is 10.42%. This figure illustrates the still-high unemployment and poverty in Indonesia. Unemployment and poverty are caused by the number of jobs that are not proportional to the availability of new workers; in this case, graduates from all education levels (Saiman, 2009). This problem is a challenge for the Indonesian nation in the future, especially for vocational schools, to prepare the next generation who master science and technology and transform science into action to apply knowledge. Implementation of good education encourages improvement in the quality of education. One of the factors driving teaching performance and management success is excellent and competent human resources in education.

The main purpose of vocational education is to produce individuals with expertise according to their talents and interests in specific fields, technology, administration, agro-industry. Many organizations or companies continue to develop their resources and even make it a form of investment, both short-term and long-term, because it is believed to be the determinant of an organization's success. Many organizations or companies continue to develop their resources and even make it a form of investment, both short-term and long-term, because it is believed to be the determinant of an organization's success. Therefore, quality education is needed to create human resources with intellectual, spiritual, and emotional intelligence. Vocational education with the latest curriculum is designed to develop academic, emotional, spiritual, and vocational school systems inseparable from the education system. However, in the current conditions, these skills do not match the learning support facilities. There are still very few teachers who are experts in the field of vocational skills. The risk of becoming unemployed is higher for those who are poorly educated or have no education at all. Vocational education plays a significant role in reducing unemployment (Blinova, 2015). It is reinforced by Hambali (2019), who stated that vocational education could produce successful students in the world of work. However, previous research has a limitation in terms of exploring the career-guidance with a limited focus on its program. The school does not have specific staff associated with IDUKA in building cooperation partners or cannot even prepare professionals who can become instructors for students.

This study will review how vocational schools can produce graduates ready to work through a Student Career Development Center program through collaboration with IDUKA. This paper summarizes and offers a conception of the relationship between the partnership between the Student Career Development Center and IDUKA to build and develop students' interest in work after graduation. This paper aims to help readers, especially parents, to know in detail about vocational high schools as a whole.

## **Conceptual Framework**

### **Career Guidance**

In 1908 Frank Parsons founded the Vocational Bureau in Boston, promoting the concept of career guidance. Frank Parsons first created career guidance to be known as the father of the vocational guidance movement. Career guidance is primarily necessary to help a clear understanding of an individual's skills, interests, and limitations. For Parsons, the requirements and conditions for different work types are essential, and successful guidance is required to accommodate the characteristics (Gothard, Mignot, Offer & Ruff, 2001). In school, the guide refers to learning experiences provided in self-management skills, student development that will lead to effective choices and decisions about their lives. It consists of three areas: personal and social development, educational guidance, and career guidance. In addition to counseling aims to achieve student empowerment to make decisions, solve problems, overcome behavioral problems, develop coping strategies, and resolve difficulties that they may experience. Counseling in school can include personal counseling, educational counseling, career counseling, or a combination of these (St Fergal's College, 2018). Career guidance is defined as a process to help individuals understand themselves and their potential for future career development. Through guidance, individuals help explore their complex needs, "to understand their current situation and build confidence in their ability to complete the review process and move forward from the point where they seek help" (Ali & Graham, 1996). Career counseling can explore students' interests and guide them to choose their professional careers. Students need professional career counselors to guide them in developing self-interest skills, knowledge, potentials, weaknesses, and assessing employment opportunities such as employment trends, competencies in the field, job requirements, and job descriptions (Kok & Low, 2017). They also need to prepare career plans related to career search, goal setting, ways to realize goals and grow job search skills. The role of career counseling and vocational guidance services is invaluable in empowering students to choose the one that best suits their abilities, interests, personalities, and in the long run, a satisfying life (Santilli et al., 2017). Career counseling and vocational guidance are associated with fainting workability. To gain a competitive advantage, entrepreneurs join hands with universities and training institutions in developed countries. These developed countries organize seminars, workshops, and industry tours to gain awareness about the workplace (Seung, 2014).

### **Vocational Education and Training**

Vocational education is a form of education or training that provides specialized professional knowledge and skills to individuals enrolled in it and prepares graduates to work in various commerce and arts fields. Kotsikis (2007) states that vocational training is an activity or series of activities specifically designed to transmit theoretical knowledge or professional skills necessary for a particular work type. It is also affirmed that Ojimba (2012) defines vocational education as a kind of targeted education to prepare individuals for work in recognized work. Iheanacho (2006) argued that vocational education is an essential aspect of education related to business education, agriculture, bookkeeping, and bricklaying, among others, to acquire skills in these fields. Today, vocational education training is an attractive training option for individuals who want to find work in relatively short periods,

better working conditions, and promising job prospects. For entrepreneurs, vocational education training is like the right means to find skilled and productive prospective workers who can adapt to the labor market and technological transformation (Soenarto, et al., 2017). Various challenges and obstacles faced by education in almost all the world. Even in many countries, Vocational Training Education (VET) suffers from lower-status and negative social value attribution than higher education (Billett, 2014; Virolainen & Stenstrom, 2014).

Nevertheless, instead, a variety of positive signals came for VET, who received more positive perceptions among young people and adults who voluntarily chose to engage in it (Cournoyer et al., 2016; Asr, 2018). An interesting thing to consider is that VET offers very attractive conditions and perspectives for people who want to quickly gain qualification training to enter a new career (Masdonati, Fournier & Pineault, 2015). VET's various positives can become a magnet for young people to make regulators compete to prepare various regulations and supporting facilities. Some experts point out that vocational education can occur in secondary schools, post-secondary schools, diploma programs, and higher education. Technology colleges and universities have played a leading role in restructuring the curriculum at the secondary school level and assisting in developing vocational high school students' careers, academic skills, and the subjects they need to enter higher education institutions. Higher education institutions and government institutions alike respond to the need to sculpt high school graduates with the ability to adapt to the needs of livelihoods and future career development (Hsiao et al., 2008). Today, this makes many VET, especially in Indonesia that offers education in various professions that can produce professional engineering, accounting, nursing, medicine, architecture, law, Sharia banking, and the arts.

### **The curriculum of Indonesian Vocational High Schools**

To improve the quality of human resources and the nation's competitiveness supported by the development of knowledge, technology, and the arts, the Government of Indonesia implemented a new curriculum for the education process in elementary schools, junior high schools, and high schools and a new curriculum called Curriculum 2013. This curriculum has been implemented and valid in Indonesia since July 2013. This curriculum is expected to produce productive, creative, innovative, and effective human resources by strengthening competencies in attitudes (spiritual and social), knowledge, and skills (Puskurbuk, 2012). In this curriculum, education emphasizes only knowledge and skills and is also expected to change teaching and the assessment system. The new curriculum objectives will be achieved by consistently paying attention to educational content, shifting the learning paradigm from a teacher-centered approach to a student-centered approach, and using competency-based assessments, replacing test-based assessments with authentic-based assessments to measure attitudes, knowledge, and skills based on learning processes and learning outcomes. In the implementation of education, assessment is a very important aspect. Assessment becomes a reference for teachers to direct students into specific groups, improve teaching methods, measure student readiness (attitude, mental and material readiness), provide guidance and selection to determine vocational and classroom improvement (Gronlund & Linn, 1990). The assessment also provides information that will help educators for better education (Reynold, Livingstone, & Wilson, 2010) and make decisions about the sustainability of study and program evaluations (Johnson Penny, & Gordon, 2009). The assessment should be conducted in order to measure the students' learning achievement, and such assessment has been known as an authentic assessment.

Various changes that occur today, especially in terms of technology, make Indonesia's Government need to make changes in guideline guidelines with developments. So that at the beginning of 2020 came the Regulation of the Director-General of Vocational Education No. 3 of 2020 on Guidelines for Government Technical Assistance Facilitating the Establishment of a Special Vocational Student Career Development Center / Job Fair 2020. The purpose of the regulation is: (a) to carry out student career guidance in accordance with the demands of the world of work; (b) organize and strengthen unique job fairs; (c) connecting and enhancing cooperation between SMK and job providers; (d) provide job information services; (e) develop projected job requirements for vocational school graduates which include: competency level, type, number, location and time; (f) recommendations, distribution and placement of workers; (g) provide consulting services for students who are still studying and/or graduates. The regulatory changes are expected to attract young people and parents to make choices at vocational school.

### **Vocational High Schools Managerial**

The principal is an important part of the school committee structure within a school, both from primary to secondary education, from elementary to high school /vocational school. The principal is a leader who runs all forms of school activities, operational activities, and non-operational activities related to the school and its structure. The principal is the highest leader in the school. As a school leader, the principal has an important role and responsibility in managing available resources to improve education quality at the education unit level (Stanley, 2016). Act as the school leader, the school principal is the person who will decide some factors that can encourage schools stakeholder to realize their vision, mission, goals, and targets through a variety of programs well-implemented based on the learning plan. Therefore, school principals must have active management and

leadership skills since they have to decide quickly and have a highly positive attitude in improving their education quality (Subekhi & Jauhar, 2012). For this purpose, the principal should be able to mobilize or empower all the potential resources for various programs, processes, evaluations, curriculum development, learning activities at schools, teacher's administration, infrastructure, services to students, relations with the community, and the creation of a conducive school climate. These elements will be well implemented when the principal can influence all parties involved in educational activities to realize their goals. School principals should have the ability to move the teachers and administrative staff to carry out the supervision function (Uci Pranita, Nina Kurniah, 2018). The pattern of leadership will be very influential and even determine the progress of the school. Therefore in modern education, the leadership of the principal is a strategic position in achieving educational goals.

Furthermore, school improvement's success depends on developing professionalism at schools, especially teacher professional development (DuFour & Barkey, 2005). In other words, the principals should devote their efforts to improve the quality of learning by continuously developing teacher professionalism. The teacher factor is one of the input components that influence the quality of the learning achievement. The learning process will achieve high quality if supported by all the input's readiness, including the maximum teacher performance in teaching and learning activities. The teacher is a very influential factor, as seen from the teacher's ability and eligibility to teach. Doherty (2008) explains that the teacher quality factor has a significant correlation to student learning achievement. Likewise, Schacter (2006) explains that teacher performance is an essential input variable for improving students' learning achievement. These studies confirm that the teacher factor is an important variable to enhance the learning process quality. The teacher should have the ability to encourage students to be disciplined to enhance each student's employability (Tentama et al., 2019). Discipline is defined as socially and morally responsible behavior motivated by intrinsic factors, not solely by anticipating external rewards or fear of punishment (Bear, 2010). And, employability skills are essential for every individual in educational institutions, companies, and organizations. Educational institutions must prepare their students to have employability as a provision to get a job in the future (Fugate & Kinicki, 2008)

## **Method**

### **Design and setting**

This study was designed with a qualitative approach, namely extracting as much data as possible from the object of research. This approach and method are used to provide an overview of relevance, facilities, training, and conformity of competencies taught in Vocational High School SMK Muhammadiyah 2 Metro, Lampung City, Indonesia, with industrial needs. By conducting an in-depth examination of the Student Career Development Center's management and conducting observations to students, teachers, and related stakeholders. The driving factor, inhibition, and financing of Student Career Development Center is evaluated to get the right solution so that graduates of SMK Muhammadiyah 2 can be accepted in the world of work.

### **Data Collection**

Some of the data collection techniques used were interviews, direct observation, and document review. The interview information is focused on supporting studies based on opinions and facts in the field. Interviews were directed by interview guidelines that have been provided to school stakeholders and school management executives, including school principals, deputy principals, classroom teachers, and students. Observation data collection is carried out by observing physical conditions, coordination meetings with stakeholders, and learning activities, which are part of the Student Career Development Center's management. Also, document checks were carried out to support the results of interviews and observations. The data collection instruments were data source grids, interview guidelines, observation guidelines, document inspection guidelines, cameras, and recording devices.

### **Data Analysis**

FGD results and interviews were recorded. Data analysis is done in several parts: macro and micro environmental analysis, SWOT analysis, and Boston Consulting Group analysis. Data from interviews, observations, and documentation are classified, directed, and organized into three components: planning, implementation, and evaluation. The results of such arrangements are then used as the basis for drawing conclusions that are still open, common in nature, and then converted into specific or detailed findings of the concept of the relationship between the Student Career Development Center and the interest of students in work after graduation.

## **Findings and Discussion**

By referring to the interview data and targeted group discussions, as well as the mission to be achieved by SMK Muhammadiyah 2 namely "Quick Solutions to The World of Work", there are several things that need to be evaluated.

### Strategic Implementation of Student Career Development Center (PPKS)

Indicators of success of a Student Career Development Center (PPKS) program are measured based on the increasing number of students working after graduation. If it is not met, then it is necessary to evaluate. This result is in line with previous research, which states that the successful absorption of SMK graduates in the world of work is due to high competency standards (Hambali, 2019). Therefore, careful and measurable planning is needed and accountable. The headmaster plays an important role as a creator who designs concepts and further oversees the PPKS strategy's implementation from planning to evaluation and has an individual obligation to conduct research, process data, and report

activities. In preparing SMK graduates for work, the vocational school must adjust to the industrial world's needs with the competencies that graduates must possess. By connecting the needs of the industrial and graduation competencies, a Student Career Development Center (PPKS) program was created by improving all areas, including improving human resources quality, school programs, school management, increasing cooperation, and improving facilitating infrastructure. Based on SWOT and Boston Consulting Group analysis, good collaboration between PPKS and industry and the world of work (IDUKA) is needed to bring an excellent educational environment to a sustainable curriculum to bring industrial culture to schools.

The Student Career Development Center (PPKS) program's success is also greatly influenced by the principal and the teaching staff's competence and motivation. The managerial ability of the principal of SMK is very decisive in empowering professionalism and motivating teachers to advance and improve the quality of teaching. The better the principal's managerial competence is in empowering teachers, the more professional teachers will be (Habibi & Article, 2015). Giving awards, tiered and sustainable promotion, and wise discipline supported by a conducive working atmosphere will positively affect teachers' loyalty to SMK.

In its implementation, to run the PPKS program and help the Principal of SMK Muhammadiyah 2 Metro, an organizational structure consisting of the person in charge, the chief executive, the secretary, the motorcyclist, and the teaching staff. Selection of personal PPKS managers through the selection process and competencies in managing administrative activities and school programs. And to create this program, the school has support programs: Professional Certification Bodies (LSP), Training Centers, and Teaching Factories. PPSK should carry out the strategy by opening as much cooperation with the World of Work (IDUKA). The school makes a list of companies that are under the competencies that the school has.

Moreover, to attract students who will graduate in determining the World of Work to be shot, or for prospective students who want to enter the internal SMK Muhammadiyah 2 Metro, some company names willing to cooperate with the school will be included on the website. The commitment in the form of official and sustainable cooperation with IDUKA became a factor that was able to increase the brand SMK Muhammadiyah 2 Metro in the process of socialization to school residents. Support from school residents is needed so that the PPKS program can run effectively. The next thing is to expand socialization with the help of social media and video recordings that can be seen through Youtube. It is expected to increase parents' confidence to put their children into SMK Muhammadiyah 2 Metro. The testimony of the alumni who have worked will further increase the students' confidence and indirectly improve the brand image of SMK Muhammadiyah 2 Metro.

### PPKS Curriculum

In determining the PPKS curriculum, good collaboration between IDUKA and SMK Muhammadiyah 2 Metro stakeholders becomes essential. The curriculum should develop a student's career and based on the student's thinking ability. So the material given to students will be very different at each level.

**Table 1**

No	Level	Material
1	X	1.1 Occupational Safety and Health 1.2 Work Culture 1.3 New Field of Work 1.4 Determining the Workplace 1.5 Physical Formation and appearance
2	XI	2.1 Psychotic 2.2 Creating a Job Application 2.3 Interview Techniques 2.4 Personal Branding and Social Media Management
3	XII	3.1 Competency Strengthening

	<p>3.2 Competency/Licensing Test          3.3 Mastery of Foreign Languages          Sending cv/student profile to the company</p>
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It was coupled with guidance carried out regularly for 2 hours each week and arranged in class order. To facilitate access to information on PPKS activities, the school has built an official website that can be accessed on <https://ppks.smkmuh2metro.sch.id>. In addition to websites, students are trained and directed to promote their branding through social media such as Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn. On the other hand, obtaining a memorandum of cooperation with IDUKA is a form of success of the PPSK program. Before cooperating with IDUKA, the list of companies that have been adjusted to the school's competencies are required. The scope of cooperation with IDUKA includes (1) development and alignment of the vocational education curriculum; (2) regulation of the implementation of industrial work practices for vocational school students; (3) arrangements for the implementation of teacher and student internships; (4) teacher and student training arrangements; (5) utilization as guest teacher/resource person; (6) utilization of practical facilities and infrastructure; (7) promotional activities for the common good; (8) marketing and absorption of vocational graduates; (9) teaching factory development activities; (10) student licensing/certification activities.

**Factors Inhibiting and Supporting the Implementation of PPKS**

Socialization conducted through online media experienced significant obstacles, especially due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Only 50% of parents can participate in socialization even though various online media such as zoom and youtube have been used. To pursue the target of information delivery, the content on youtube has been shared via WhatsApp to each student. The same thing happened with IDUKA cooperation, which only reached an agreement with 55 companies out of 500 companies. However, on the contrary, this activity can be carried out exceeding expectations due to several driving factors: 1) Human resources, school personnel can carry out school activities related to the planning process 2) The technology used, at the planning stage, does not require sophisticated technology. 3) Financially, the planning program's implementation does not require much money, and 4) Material does not require many materials. Meanwhile, in the formation stage, it reaches 100% and follows the logbook that has been determined. Furthermore, this program can answer the demands and needs of society related to job opportunities after graduation. The results of the mapping carried out by the parents showed that 89.9% of parents wanted their children to work after graduating from school. Moreover, that data is almost similar to students who want to work after graduation who reach the figure of 90%. This program will be evaluated every year and will be improved so that schools are always up to date in implementing industrial culture to support students with knowledge, skills, and attitudes towards a work environment that requires a competitive and robust character, both locally and globally.

**Conclusion**

The number of vocational school graduates who are not absorbed by IDUKA becomes a serious problem that needs to be sought out. The Student Career Formation Center (PPKS) program is one-way SMK Muhammadiyah 2 Metro is carried out to bridge IDUKA needs with the interests and abilities owned by students of SMK Muhammadiyah 2 Metro. The establishment of this program is an innovation made to increase students' interest in establishing the ultimate goal to work at IDUKA. The effectiveness of PPKS depends on the support of the school residents and intense cooperation with IDUKA in the preparation of curriculum and material assistance. The parents' enthusiasm is one of the important driving factors and motivates SMK Muhammadiyah 2 stakeholders in managing PPKS. This program is designed to be able to place students in IDUKA before graduation.

**Limitation and Future Studies**

Research can be done annually to measure the program output year to check if there are improvements. The wider scope of research, involving more vocational schools, will make research more reliable. Action research will be needed to evaluate and make the necessary changes to support students in subsequent years on an ongoing basis. The government is also advised to develop minimum criteria in the statutory umbrella on how schools manage aspects of cooperation with IDUKA and continue after students graduate and conduct graduate search studies.

**Acknowledgement**

The research was funded by *MITRASDUDI* and monitored by lecturers from Research Interest Group – Cross-Cultural Communication, Binus University, in Industrial Based Capacity Building and Managerial Program for SMK's Principals, the year 2020, with the agreement contract no. 1377/D4/KS/2020 and 23/BIDC/PM/IX/2020.

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