EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS VOCATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN THE ERA OF ASEAN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY

Hermansyah
Universitas Ibnu Sina
Hermansyah@uis.ac.id

ABSTRACT

One of the strategic efforts in developing competitiveness in the era of Asian Economic Community (AEC) is a strategy to optimize vocational technology education at various levels because of professional education as one of the trusted suppliers of labor in the industrial world. In the business world and industry requires not only qualified workers who have strong technical skills, but also non-technical skills are balanced. These non-technical skills are commonly called employability skills that include communication skills, teamwork, problem-solving, initiative, activity management, self-cultivation, learning ability, technology use, health and safety management, and skills in individual quality improvement. The preparation of vocational students to have technical skills and employability skills stems from the implementation of learning in schools. Measurement of technical skills is usually done through formative and summative evaluation activities, whereas for employability skills measurement is only limited to the less comprehensive affective assessment.

Keywords: employability skills, skills, vocational high school students

INTRODUCTION

Facing a competitive world of work, we need to prepare adequate skills, both hard skills and soft skills. One of the skills needed in the world of work today is soft skill. With the provision of strong soft skills can support the success of work and career (Kussulanjari, 2015). The world of work not only chooses candidates who are skilled in academic skills (hard skills), but also very concerned about the value of other skills such as the value of honesty, responsibility, courtesy, discipline, commitment, confidence, ethics, cooperation, creativity, communication, and leadership. Having high skills but not accompanied by good soft skills, will produce human resources with skills that are not maximal.

Mastery of soft skills is essential for students to graduate when they have proper work preparation and can compete and face work challenges because soft skills have an indispensable role in determining one's success. Kusumastuti (2013) that there are eight qualified soft skills of vocational school students that are required by graduate users that is responsive to environmental needs, cooperative ability, communication ability, creativity, work spirit, honesty, discipline, and responsibility. Control and accountability become one of the soft skill forms. According Afriani and Setiyani (2015) that soft skill influences the readiness of work or employability. Soft skills needed in the world of work known as employability skill, with the employability skill is expected to build the character of the young generation and able to print the human resources of the nation to compete in the world of work. However, in fact, graduates of vocational high

schools who are expected to print reliable human resources only give priority to technical skills alone and ignore the intrapersonal and interpersonal skills of employability skills that cause the unemployment factor in Indonesia due to the absence of any expected soft skills industry.

This is reinforced by Data Center of the Central Bureau of Statistics in 2015 states that the number of unemployed in August 2015 reached 7.6 million people. The Open Unemployment rate increased from 5.81% in February 2015 to 6.18% in August 2015, with this detail Vocational High School education occupying the highest position of 12.65%, followed by Open Unemployment rate Senior High School 10,32%, while the lowest Open Unemployment rate at the level of primary education down by 2.74%. Other surveys show quite poor findings where Vocational high school graduates have the most significant percentage of unemployed, with a ratio of one in six vocational high school graduates in the jobless category (Widiati, 2013 and Jatmoko, 2013).

Though Vocational High School is one of the educational institutions that aims to produce graduates who are ready to work, entrepreneurial, intelligent, competitive, and have a national identity and able to develop local excellence and can compete in the global market. The vocational school education system is required to produce learning outcomes by the needs of the world of work (Wagiran, 2008). The objective is contained in the national education system law number 20 of 2003 article 15 which states the particular purpose of vocational high school is preparing students to be productive human beings, able to work independently, fill the vacancies in the business world and industry as labor levels intermediate in accordance with competence in the program of expertise chosen. Clarke & Winch (2007), stated that vocational education is an effort of social development of labor, maintenance, acceleration, and improvement of individual labor quality to increase community productivity.

Empirical facts indicate that the purpose of the implementation of vocational education has not been achieved. Not all professional high school graduates can fulfill job demands according to their specialty. This is due to the gap between skills possessed by professional high school graduates with the skills required in the industry, the provision of skills and knowledge gained in schools has not adequately addressed the needs of the world of work. Vocational education graduates do not absorb some of the factors identified as being the problem, among others: (1) the information obtained is not sufficient to support employment; (2) the industry generally looks for experienced workers; (3) industrial complaints that many graduate vocational school graduates do not have the appropriate skills, especially the employability to survive and survive in various work situations and conditions (Hanafi, 2012).

Education is an essential aspect of every human being's needs; education creates a change of attitude and ethics in a person. The change starts from the less good to the better, from the less understood to be more understanding, and so on. The issue of education is a matter of concern to everyone, not only concerning the investment and condition of the nation in the present, but the impact will be felt in the future (Kuncoro, 2009). Through educational programs, Indonesians can improve their competence in various fields and development sectors, especially in the education world whose graduates must be able to compete with other nations and ready to fill the existing jobs.

This is in accordance with the curriculum of vocational education specifically designed to facilitate learners in order to master a field of expertise both in the aspects of soft skills and hard skills in the hope of becoming a human resource ready to enter the workforce and plunge in community life, and have a right attitude and according to the norms prevailing in the community. It is clear that the vocational secondary school curriculum aims to: (1) prepare learners to advance to a higher level or expand primary education; (2) improving the ability of learners as members of the community in reciprocal relationships with the social and cultural environment and the natural surroundings; (3) improve the ability of learners to be able to develop themselves in line with the development of science, technology, and art; (4) prepare learners to enter the work field and develop a professional attitude.

Some surveys show that employment recruitment by firms prioritizes employability skills / soft skills rather than hard skills (Sutabri, 2007). It also discloses some of the social media education (fastcompany.com), which reveals the essential skills that vocational high school students must have to compete in the era of Asian economic society, namely (1) Professionalism: competent and have passion in the field, (2) foreign language skills are absolute. In addition to the media also revealed some soft skills that need to be possessed by vocational high school graduates, namely (a) public speaking, (b) negotiation skills, (c) critical picker patterns, (d) openness and open-minded attitude, (e) problem solver, (f) ability to build relationships / networks, (g) leadership, (h) excellent interpersonal skills, (i) mastery of information and technology.

This is also in line with what Bennett (2006) describes as the most significant challenge in the world of vocational education is to produce graduates who have academic ability, skills on specific skills mastery, and a balanced ability of employability. Graduates of professional high schools can become skilled and qualified workers if they master the hard skills and soft skills (Sudana, 2014). Hard skills aspect is technical skills, while soft skills are behavioral skills. Hard skills and soft skills are formed through the learning process by the competence of expertise, both at the time of the lesson and outside the experience. The formation of attitudes that support the employability aspect of the skills / soft skills of learners requires a periodical and continuous process extensively and comprehensively so that graduates of vocational high schools can meet the required standards of the world of work and industry and become a professional workforce.

Implementation of Asian economic community that has been taking place has abroad impact both nationally and internationally. One of the unavoidable effects is the competition of human resources, especially graduates of vocational high schools. Without proper preparation, it is difficult to win in a race. Therefore, look at what needs to be done in the face of competition within the Asian economic community. From there it can be prepared immediately what can be started, from equipping yourself with skills that are important to master.

From the exposure that has been reviewed, it can be concluded that qualified vocational education graduates, especially professional high schools, by the demands of the industrial world in the era of ASEAN economic community are graduates who have employability skills, but also have soft capabilities by ASEAN Economic Community. Therefore, this study describes the level of employability skills of vocational high school students to enter the world of work in the era of Asian economic society.

METHODS

This research uses survey data collection technique. Surveys are used to describe and describe data on employability skills of vocational high school students consisting of communication skills, team-building skills, problem-solving skills, initiative and effort skills, planning and organizing skills, self-processing skills, learning skills, and skills using technology.

By data collection techniques, the instrument used in this study is a questionnaire. The device was developed based on research variables with the principle of tuning fork by studying the constructs of research variables, translating in grid form, and studying the conditions in the field. Before being used to retrieve data, the instrument first validated the contents by the expert and carried out the empirical construct validation in the area. Expert validation results are included in very high criteria, while the construct validation test results indicate that the entire item enters invalidrules. The next analysis is the instrument reliability test, with the results of reliability fall into the category very reliable. The employability skills questionnaire uses aLikert scale with four alternative answers, which are incompetent (1), less competent (2), qualified (3), and highly qualified (4).

By research objectives and existing data types, data analysis techniques used are quantitative descriptive analysis techniques. Descriptive analysis provides a thorough overview of factual and accurate data about facts about aspects of employability skills presented in the form of tables, graphs, or diagrams. Measures for analyzing quantitative data are: scoring on each indicator; determine the average value; determine the value of mode; and interpret meaning. Based on the data obtained from the questionnaire, the analysis and interpretation were conducted on two indicators. Descriptive analysis technique used is to use the frequency table, the average percentage of each calculation formula:

$$P = \frac{F}{N} \times 100\%$$

Information:

P = percentage sought;

F = the score of each indicator;

N = ideal score (Sudjana, 2005).

The results of percentage calculations are then consulted on the category of interpretation of scores in the descriptive analysis of data as Table 1.

Table 1. Category Interpretation of Score in Descriptive Analysis

No	Interval	Kategori
1	3,25 – 4,00	Very high
2	2,50 – 3,25	High
3	1,75 - < 2,50	Low

4	1,00 - < 1,75	Very Low
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RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The primary purpose of vocational education is to prepare learners to work in a particular field. The logical consequence for the achievement of the primary objective is the provision of education in the vocational high schools, in addition to being able to provide technical skills to the learners, must also be able to offer various soft skills, including employability skills, which enable the graduates to become professional, advanced and prosperous workers in his work. Commonwealth of Australia (2006) suggests the employability skills provided on competencies and non-technical skills that can make a person efficient and successful in the workplace.

Empirical condition of readiness employability skill student in vocational high school state 1 Batam to enter working world dividing into eight skills, that is : (1) communication skill, (2) teamwork skill, (3) problem solving skill (4) initiative and enterprise skill, (5) planning and organizing skill, (6) self management skill, (7) learning skill, (8) technology skill. Empirical condition analysis result of student employability skill, in outline, was presented in picture 1.

Figure 1 Average Aspects of Vocational Skills

Based on Figure 1 it can be seen that the average value of Employability Skills aspect is 3.00. This can be interpreted that the employability skills of students vocational high school state 1 Batam into the senior category. The average student's communication skills fall into the older group (mean = 3.00). This has the meaning that students can listen and understand the presentation submitted by others; writing skills to communicate thoughts, ideas, information, and messages; and the ability to convey verbal news is good.

The skill aspect of teamwork is one of the most needed skills in work. An ordinary worker is confronted with the work to be done on the team. Cooperation skills owned by students vocational high school State 1 Batam (mean = 3.25). This says that students can encourage team members to participate actively in work; ability to work with others and contribute to groups of ideas, suggestions, and endeavors; as well as the ability to help others in learning excellent knowledge and skills. It is implemented and honed in the learning activities at school.

The skills to solve the problems of vocational high school students state 1 Batam enter the top category (mean = 2.90). Problem-solving skills are people's skills, including high-level thinking skills, to solve problems using the knowledge, skills, and understanding they have. Firdaus (2009), also explained that problem-solving is an attempt to find a way out of a difficulty to achieve a goal that is not immediately achievable. In this study, an indicator of problem-solving skills is the ability to recognize problems in the job; ability to formulate priorities in resolving work issues, and decision-making skills in choosing alternative job-solving solutions.

Aspects of skills in taking the initiative and endeavor for students vocational high school state 1 Batam fall into the top category with an average of 2.95. This suggests that students can translate ideas into concrete actions, identify opportunities to work and develop sound business strategies. The skill of taking the initiative is necessary in the world of work, to decide and do the right thing without being told, to do what it's supposed to do and to keep moving on to do stuff though things get harder.

The skills of planning and managing the activities of students vocational high school state 1 Batam fall into the top category with an average of 2.96. This indicates that students' skills in managing time and priority activities, taking the initiative in organizing events, and making project goals clear and workable. Excellent time management and organizing make individual actions more clear and well-scheduled so that every one of them does have implications on the set targets.

Aspects of self-processing skills students vocational high school state 1 Batam enter the senior category (mean = 2.97). This indicates that the students' skills in managing knowledge and confidence in completing the work, making the work plan systematically, and implementing the work plan consistently well, the next skill aspect is the learning skill which consists of the ability to update knowledge and skills to accommodate change, and understand new information quickly, ability to learn new knowledge and skills.

Aspects of skills using technology students vocational high school state 1 Batam into a high category with an average of 3.20. It demonstrates the ability to select and apply task-related technologies, basic computer operations, and an understanding of right work functions. Also, the competence of students vocational high school state 1 Batam has also brought students closer to digital literacy so that in the aspect of the ability of the use of technology, the ability of students to have a good figure. In the future, students who do not know master Information and Communication Technology will be further behind. Students who can develop in the future are students who master ICT because many science and technology can be accessed through information and communication media or internet media.

Based on the exposure of previously elaborated data, employability skills are considered very important, since the current job characteristics require initiative, flexibility, resilience, and the ability of a person to handle different types of work. Today, the workplace needs a workforce that has not only technical skills but also employability skills. Employability skills are skills that can not be transferred into different areas of work, consisting of the ability to work independently, build themselves, work in teams, adapt to change, solve complex problems, and innovative (Yorke and Knight, 2006; Hager & Holland, 2006; and Tome, 2007). High level of employability skills, can help the graduates of the vocational high school to get a job and develop themselves by the areas of expertise they have any success in the era of the Asian economic community.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of research, can be underlined that in general employability skills students vocational high school state 1 Batam is with an average of 3.00. This indicates that the readiness of employability skills of students into the category both to be ready to work in the business world and industry. Development of employability skills of students is done through the process of learning in the classroom and outside the classroom. This means that to improve students' generic skills, teachers can incorporate aspects of employability skills in instructional instruction. This is because the importance of employability skills that must be possessed by students to be able to get a job, exist in the position it gained, and overgrowing to succeed on the job.

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