



Preparation for Facing the World of Work for Fresh Graduates at SMK N 9 Jakarta, Indonesia

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Abstrak

Indonesia memiliki tingkat pengangguran tertinggi kedua di Asia Tenggara, mencapai 5,45% pada Februari 2023. Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan (SMK) bertujuan untuk menyiapkan lulusan yang siap bekerja sesuai dengan regulasi pemerintah. Namun, SMK menghadapi beberapa masalah, seperti ketidaksesuaian kurikulum dengan kebutuhan dunia kerja, kurangnya kesiapan mental siswa, dan minimnya kerjasama dengan industri. Tim Pengabdian Masyarakat dari Universitas Mercu Buana mengadakan kegiatan untuk meningkatkan literasi kompetensi, kepemimpinan, dan kesiapan mental siswa SMK N 9 Jakarta Barat, agar mereka siap menghadapi dunia kerja. Program ini bertujuan untuk meningkatkan literasi kompetensi, karakter kepemimpinan, dan kesiapan mental siswa dalam menghadapi tantangan dunia kerja.

Kata kunci: Pengangguran; SMK; Kompetensi; Dunia Kerja

Abstract

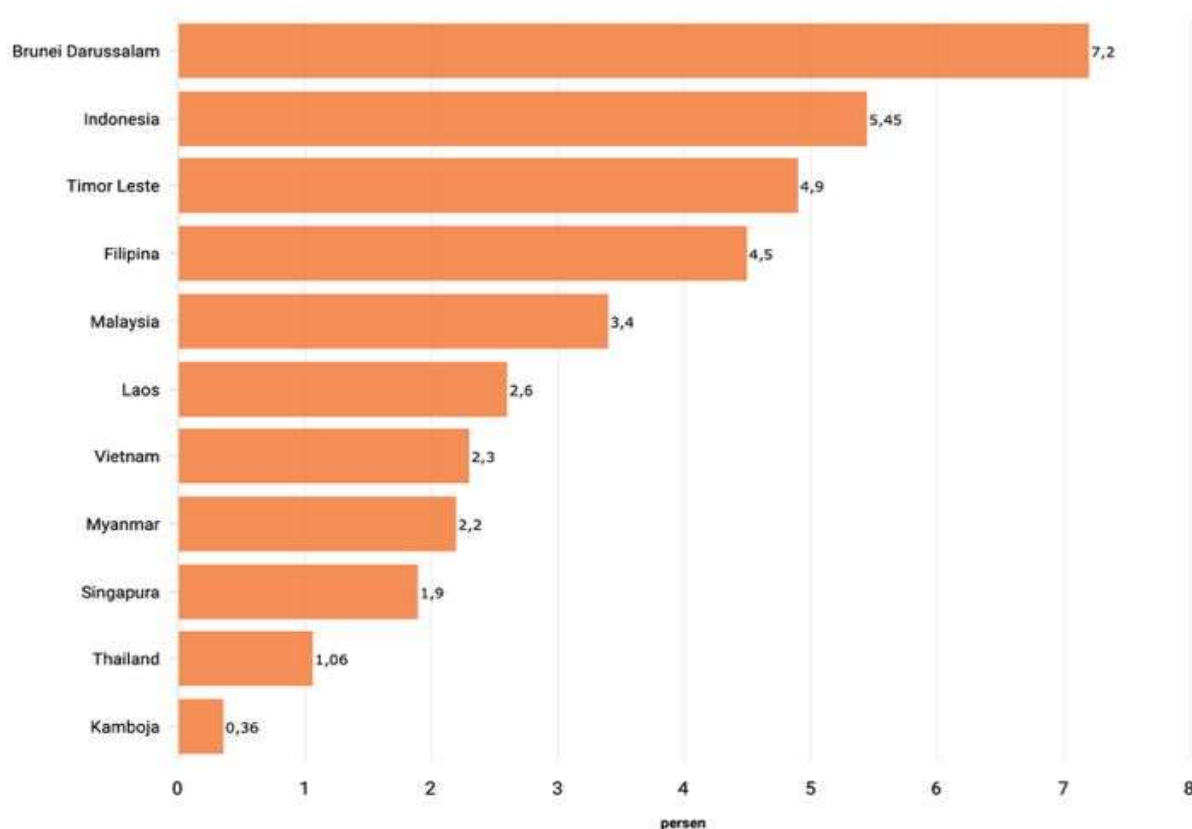
Indonesia has the second-highest unemployment rate in Southeast Asia, reaching 5.45% in February 2023. Vocational High Schools (SMK) are designed to prepare graduates to be job-ready in accordance with government regulations. However, SMKs face several issues, such as misalignment between the curriculum and labor market needs, lack of mental preparedness among students, and limited collaboration with industry. The Community Service team from Universitas Mercu Buana is conducting an initiative to improve competency literacy, leadership skills, and mental readiness among students of SMK N 9 Jakarta Barat, preparing them for the workforce. This program aims to enhance competency literacy, leadership character, and mental preparedness in students to face the challenges of the job market.

Keywords: *Unemployment, Vocational High School, The Job Market*



Introduction

The issues of unemployment and employment remain major concerns in every country, particularly in developing nations (Suriadi et al., 2023). These two problems are interconnected, creating a dualism that causes conflict between them. This dualism arises when the government fails to effectively utilize and mitigate the impacts of these two issues. However, if the government is able to harness the excess workforce, this dualism can be avoided and may even have a positive effect on accelerating development. Conversely, if the government fails to make use of this workforce, it can have a negative impact, disrupting economic growth. From a positive perspective, labor is a crucial resource for driving a country's economic growth and progress (Anggitaningsih et al., 2024). However, from another viewpoint, a growing labor force can often become an economic challenge that is difficult for the government to address (Sormin & Tarmidi, 2024).



Source: Trading economy. (2023).

Figure 1. Unemployment in Southeast Asia

Based on data from Trading Economics, Indonesia has the second-highest unemployment rate in Southeast Asia this year. The national unemployment rate was recorded at 5.45% in February 2023. According to the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), Indonesia's unemployment rate has decreased compared to February 2022, when it stood at 5.83%. BPS also reported that the number of unemployed individuals in Indonesia reached 7.99 million in February 2023, a decrease of approximately 410,000 people compared to February 2022. Meanwhile, Brunei Darussalam has the highest unemployment rate in Southeast Asia, at 7.2%. In third place is Timor Leste, with an unemployment rate of 4.9%, followed by the Philippines at 4.5%, and Malaysia at 3.4%. Laos, Vietnam, and Myanmar have unemployment rates of 2.6%, 2.3%, and 2.2%, respectively. Singapore has the lowest unemployment rate in the region at 1.9%, followed

by Thailand with an unemployment rate of 1.06%. The lowest unemployment rate in Southeast Asia is in Cambodia, at just 0.36%.

The presence of vocational schools, which aim to provide students with specialized skills for the workforce (Pernamasari et al, 2023), is often seen as contradictory, as many vocational school graduates struggle to find opportunities in the job market (Maulina & Yoenanto, 2022). SMK (Vocational High School) is an educational institution specifically designed to prepare students to enter the world of work directly (Sagirani, 2024). To address the ongoing increase in unemployment rates, Vocational High Schools (SMKs) are designed to prepare graduates with the competencies required by the regulations set by the government in Law No. 20/2013 concerning the National Education System. However, in reality, it could be said that this goal has not been fully achieved, as the unemployment rate continues to rise over time. The government has taken various measures to address this, one of which is the issuance of Presidential Instruction Number 9 of 2016 concerning the Revitalization of Vocational High Schools to Improve the Quality and Competitiveness of Human Resources in Indonesia. This Presidential Instruction, issued on September 9, 2016, in Jakarta, was addressed to 12 ministers of the Working Cabinet (the Minister of Education and Culture, Coordinating Minister for Human Development and Culture, Minister of Home Affairs, Minister of Finance, Minister of Research, Technology, and Higher Education, Minister of Industry, Minister of Manpower, Minister of Transportation, Minister of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, Minister of BUMN, Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources, and Minister of Health), 34 governors, and the Head of the National Professional Certification Agency (BSNP). The Instruction called for the following actions: (1) taking the necessary steps within their respective duties, functions, and authorities to revitalize vocational schools in order to improve the quality and competitiveness of human resources, (2) preparing a map of workforce needs for vocational school graduates according to their respective responsibilities, guided by the vocational school development roadmap, and (3) accelerating competency certification for vocational school graduates, educators, and teaching staff, as well as speeding up the granting of licenses for vocational schools to become first-party professional certification institutions.

The results of observations conducted at vocational schools, particularly at SMK N 9 West Jakarta, revealed several issues, including: (1) The curriculum used in vocational schools does not align with the competencies required by graduate employers (link and match), meaning it fails to meet the demands of the workforce, the industrial sector, and the business world; (2) A mismatch between the competencies taught in vocational schools and the needs of companies, the industrial sector, and the business world, along with a lack of mental readiness for work among vocational school graduates; and (3) A lack of cooperation between companies, government institutions, the business sector, and the industrial world in implementing dual-system education, which involves the synergy between vocational schools and industry. This is evident in the implementation of Industrial Work Practices (Prakerin), where many employees and company staff show indifference toward students, and several large companies even reject internship students, citing that they are a hassle. Given these issues, if changes and improvements are not made for female students, it will undoubtedly contribute to an increase in unemployment in Indonesia.

Based on the background above, we, the community service team from the Accounting Department of the Faculty of Economics and Business at Mercu Buana University, are motivated to carry out community service activities for the students of SMK N 9 West Jakarta. Our goal is to provide prospective graduates of SMK N 9 West Jakarta with the necessary skills and knowledge to face the world of work, both from an academic perspective in the field of accounting and in terms of mental readiness for work.

Implementation Method

The community service activities are divided into three stages: preparation, implementation, and monitoring. The details of each stage are as follows:

1. **Preparation Stage:** The FEB UMB community service team coordinates activities with partners, namely SMK N 9 West Jakarta. This stage includes field surveys involving the

students of SMK N 9 West Jakarta to ensure the smooth execution of the PKM event. The preparation covers aspects such as scheduling, venue selection, and confirming the number of participants in the PKM activities.

2. **Implementation Stage:** This stage involves providing students with an understanding of the competencies required by the world of work. Additionally, we offer education on leadership skills (character education) to prepare them for the workforce, as well as guidance to enhance their mental readiness for entering the job market.
3. **Monitoring Stage:** Following the PKM event (approximately three months later), the FEB UMB community monitoring team will conduct follow-up activities via online media to assess the progress of SMK N 9 West Jakarta students in preparing for entry into the workforce.

Result and Discussion

The PKM activities begin at 13:00 WIB, where the implementation team, together with partners, will open the event. This will be followed by a session providing material to the Accounting Department student participants at SMK N 9 West Jakarta. The session will focus on understanding the current landscape of the financial profession and exploring future opportunities in the field. The Community Service Team will carry out the following stages of the activity:

1. Together with the partner team, prepare the community service area that will be used for the event.
2. Introduce the PKM team members to the partners and gather information regarding the environmental conditions of SMK N 9 West Jakarta.
3. Prepare the necessary infrastructure and facilities, such as banners, questionnaires, training materials, and refreshments, before the event starts.
4. Participants will first register on the registration form, and the materials (PDF files) will be distributed to all PKM participants.
5. Once all participants have arrived at the designated classroom, the implementation team will open the event, moderated by one of the lecturers from the UMB PKM team. This will be followed by opening remarks from the representative of SMK N 9 West Jakarta, as well as from Mrs. Masta Regina Simanjuntak, M.Pd, the Team Leader. Mrs. Simanjuntak will also introduce the PKM team members one by one to the participants, followed by the commencement of the socialization and training session.



Figure 2. community service implementation team



Figure 3. Presentation of material

The service team presented the PPM material and provided participants with the opportunity to ask questions or share their opinions about the material that had been delivered. This session was coordinated directly by the event moderator, with the aim of gauging the participants' understanding of the material presented.

Conclusion

The implementation of PPM activities was conducted face-to-face on Tuesday, February 6, 2024. The event was attended by PKM participants, namely students from the Accounting Department of SMK N 9 West Jakarta, along with several accounting teachers, school officials, partners, and representatives from Mercu Buana University. The development of the business world in the current era has led to increased competition in the job market. This presents a challenge for both the government and job seekers, as they must better prepare human resources in terms of the necessary competencies and knowledge. To adequately prepare the workforce, it is essential to start gaining vocational understanding and knowledge at the secondary school (SMA/SMK) level. One such institution is SMK N 9 West Jakarta, which plays a key role in helping students understand the preparations needed to enter the workforce. The student participants recognized the importance of gaining early knowledge of the financial profession, which in turn increased their enthusiasm and motivation to enter the job market. Overall, the students were highly engaged, actively listening, and asking insightful questions about the processes and stages they need to go through in order to enter the workforce.

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