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Political Roles of Actors in Indonesian Vocational Education: A Case Study in South Sulawesi Province

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The purpose of this research was to explore the key roles of each actor who is actively involved in vocational education. A case study research design is applied to this research. Data were collected by using in-depth interviews from 15 actors in vocational education. The 15 participants represent key actors in vocational education including legislative members, executive members, business and industry, educational agents, and teachers' associations in vocational education. The findings of the study reveal that the actors have been grouped into four categories based on their roles. The four categories of actors play different roles in facilitating the development of vocational education sectors. More importantly, the four actors agree that facilitating the key budgetary and policy for vocational education can foster the development of the vocational education sector to meet the demands of local, regional and national industries. The implication of this study is that the executive and legislative actors should establish mutual partnerships to mediate the flow of collaboration among interested parties and stakeholders in vocational education. The different roles found in this study can be a model and reference for actors in establishing reciprocal partnerships in vocational education. This study can contribute to the debate of vocational education nationally and internationally.

Key words: *Politics, vocational education, actors, roles, Indonesia.*



Introduction

The issue of vocational education has become the central debate among actors and stakeholders nationally and internationally. Globally, the debate on vocational identity and the outcome of Technical, Vocational Education and Training (TVET) have been raised by many scholars (Grollman and Rauner, 2007; Klotz, Billet, and Winther, 2014; Winter and Klotz, 2013; McGrath, 2012). This is due to TVET playing a central role in shaping the country's development politically. The political dimension relates to the issue of policy (Porter and Hicks, 1997; Kingdon, 2003), public interest (Richardson, 2008), educational policy (Zajda and Jaja, 2010; Ante 2016), and supporting programs for vocational education (Winter and Klotz, 2013, McGrath, 2012).

Politically, one of the significant changes of vocational education is that the accessibility and availability of vocational education for public interests. Specifically, Farley (1995) comments that the policy of vocational education should cater all the probability interests among stakeholders including companies and industries. The business industry as stakeholders also has a vital role in the development of vocational education especially in the implementation of internship programs, competency test and students' skills programs. The vocational education programs are directed to bolster knowledge, abilities, attitudes, and assign value to work on specific jobs (Anaele, 2014). For this reason, schools and industries are partners in developing vocational education that benefit each other reciprocally.

One of the critical themes in the political spectrum is the role of local parliaments. It is assumed that local parliament as legislative bodies and political institutions with members of political parties have different perspectives and interests in relation to vocational education. They tend to have different arguments that may create any potential conflicts and different interests. However, accommodating all these interests requires a political process. It takes a political process that involves executives, business/industry and society, and other related stakeholders who have different interests in the politics of vocational education. Such interests are accommodated by the legislature as a political institution that represents all interests. The role of legislature is needed in the politics of vocational education because without its role; the legislation seems difficult to realise all the interests of the existing stakeholders. Politics of vocational education exists to accommodate all interests.

Research on vocational issues in Indonesia have been done in limited areas. For example, Rosmaladewi and Abduh (2017) investigated the collaborative culture in vocational education and; Dollah, Abduh, & Talib (2017) explore intercultural sensitivity in educational contexts. From the above research, there is still limited research focusing on the politics of vocational education. This research aims to address the lack of research on the vocational education issues. Specifically, this research aims to uncover different political roles of actors



who are strongly involved in TVET. This research is significant to decipher political profile of vocational education, interests, and strategies of political education to improve TVET sectors.

Research Method

This is a qualitative research design (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008) that aims to describe the conditions of phenomena of reality that occur among the actors of TVET. This study was conducted for seven months. This research was conducted in South Sulawesi Province, as one of the most active influential provinces in Indonesia in promoting TVET sectors. In addition, South Sulawesi province places TVET as one of the priority sectors for the regional development. The participants of this study are recruited from different vocational stakeholders. They participated in the research voluntarily. The total number of participants in this study is 15 different stakeholders (detail in Table 1 below).

Table 1: Participant Details

Participant (Pseudonyms)	Age ranges	Educational background	Current positions
Kesra	50s	Bachelor Degree	Head of Social Services Agency
Bepda	50s	Masters Degree	Head of Regional Planning
Bekade	40s	Masters Degree	Head of Human Resources Planning Agency
Dipadi	50s	Masters Degree	Head of Vocational Education Section
Dikerja	40s	Bachelor Degree	Head of Planning for Labour placement
Diperda	40s	Bachelor Degree	Head of Small Medium Enterprises Agency
Namayor	50s	Doctorate	Mayor
Mejas	50s	Masters	School Principal
Ecldeper	40s	Bachelor	Member of Legislative Assembly
Asc dewapen	50s	Doctorate	Head of Educational Council
Pegeriwt	60s	Doctorate	President of Teacher Association
Aklsm	40s	Bachelor	Head of Community Association
Aamas	40s	Bachelor	Education Reporter Department
Zakada	50s	Master	Head of Industry Council
Maper	50s	Bachelor	Executive Officers



From Table 1 above, it indicates that the participants in this study are recruited from different actors or stakeholders. The aim of this is to uncover several distinctive ranges of issues faced by vocational educational actors.

Data collection instruments

The data collection instrument in this research use semi-structured interview questions. The semi-structured interview questions deal with questions on the issues of roles of vocational education and challenges faced by each actor in supporting the development of sustainable vocational education in Indonesia.

Data Analysis

The data analysis approach is the systematic analysis model (Creswell, 2014). This type of analysis model begins with reading the whole transcripts of interview documents, following the established coding system, and then the coding results are placed in systematic matrix to see the most common themes among the coded results. Once the common theme is established, the researchers decide on the major category of the data.

Findings and Discussion

From the findings of this study, it reveals that the political roles of each stakeholder are described in Figure 1 below.



Figure 1. The political roles of key actors in TVET

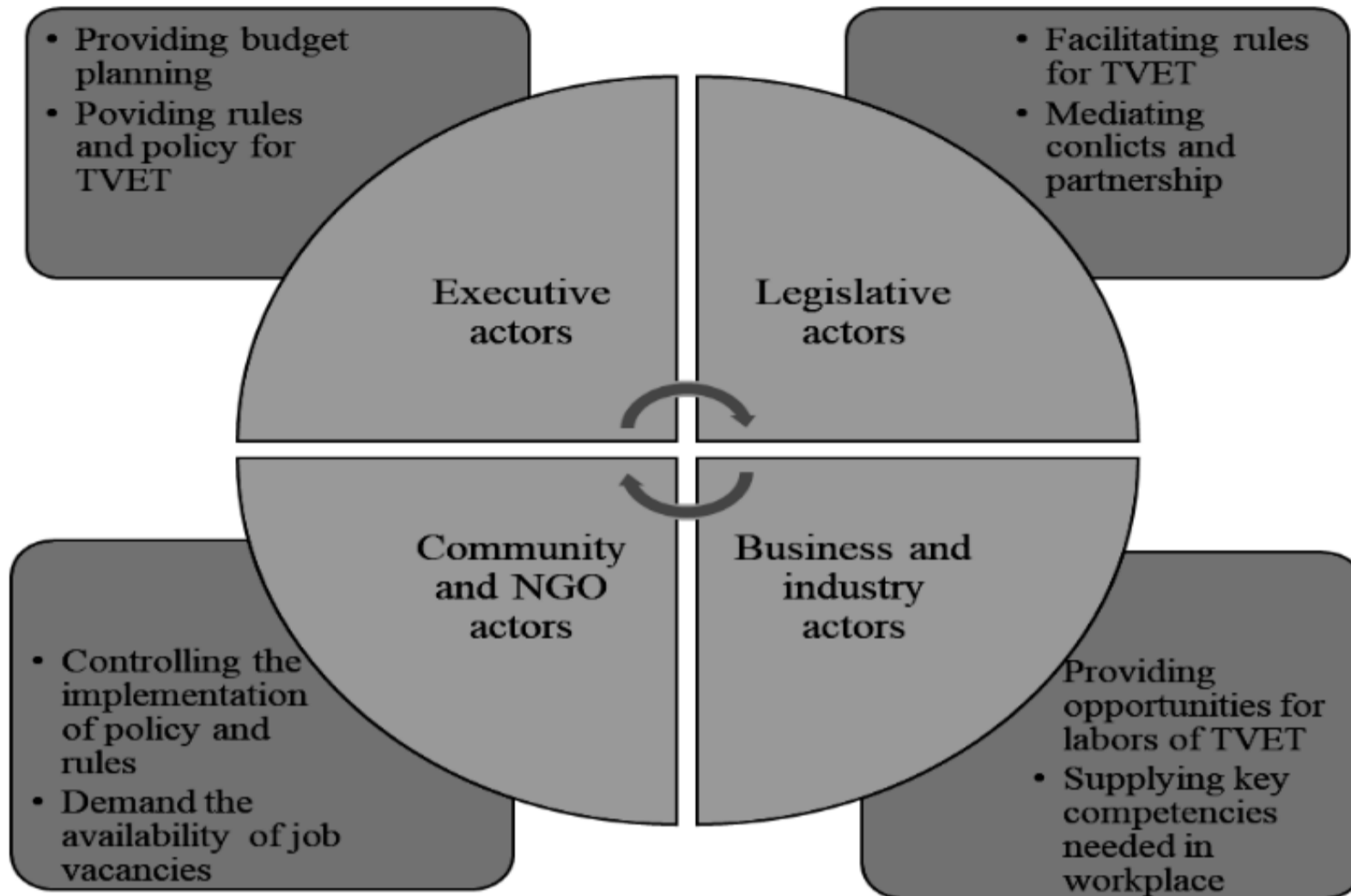


Figure 1 above indicates that there are four main categories of actors in vocational education and training: executive, legislative, business and industries, and communities and non-government organisations including mass media.

Firstly, the executive roles include the establishment of strategic plans for vocational education policies of South Sulawesi, development of needs analysis for vocational schools, policy initiation of link and match between schools and industry, development of the best local products from vocational contexts such as aquaculture, food crop agribusiness and horticulture, and plantation agribusiness and budget planning for vocational education.

Participants described the executive roles in vocational education below:

We have to establish a number of policies for vocational education and facilitate the implementation of that policy. The policy and rules for the link and the match create the best local product (Bepda, 2018).



We have to focus on creating opportunities for vocational graduates to gain their skills prior to graduation. We also need to conduct a needs analysis for the vocational context (Kesra, 2018).

The important roles for the executive are to develop a plan and program for human resources. The human resources development can focus on skills, products, and initiation of partnerships between schools and industry (Bekade, 2018).

We need to focus on providing budgets that are available for vocational education. Currently, it is the priority policy and action for budgets including school establishment, technology and a lab for vocational students (Dipadi, 2018).

From the interview extracts above, it is interesting to note that the political profile of vocational education is based on interests and a point of view. The government group represented by the executive has improved TVET in recent years.

Secondly, the legislative actors reinforce executive views on approval rules, legislation and policy. The legislative actors mediate the partnership between industry and vocational education. In addition, the legislative actors approve the budget for vocational education sectors. From the interviews, it reveals that the budget allocation for South Sulawesi Province for vocational education is relatively small. It means that South Sulawesi Province has not been able to fulfil the national mandate for a budget of 20% from the total expenditure. The following interviews supports the earlier statement:

The legislative actors support the allocation of budget for vocational education despite it is not expected as high as other sector. It is our job to ensure that vocational education becomes an important component for budget (Eldeper, 2018).

I think the legislative actors need to consider to the amount of budget for improvement human resources development. I think it is important to provide budget allocation for skilled labour and employment (Dikerja, 2018).

I believe that South Sulawesi's vocational education budget for the last seven years is allocated through the fee free education regulation. It's just that the funds are shared, 40% charged to the province and 60% of it in the area (Namayor, 2018).

We are confident with the existing education budget of vocational education South Sulawesi, it can accommodate the demand of many stakeholders (Diperda, 2018).



From the excerpt of the interviews above, the role of legislative actors mainly focusing on providing rules and regulations, and negotiating budget allocation for vocational education including the partnership within business and industry sectors.

Thirdly, the business and industrial sectors expect skilled workers from vocational education graduates contribute the improvement of industry and business sectors. The industry actors support the facilities and infrastructure that have an impact on the learning process. Consequently, there is a desire from industry to gain skilled labour particularly from vocational education. In addition, the industry and business actors can support to provide facilities and infrastructure of vocational education to develop the learning process to achieve the desired standard of graduate competency. Consequently, the competence of vocational graduates meets the demand of business and industry users. The opinion from the interviews is below:

I think there is a need of political will from many stakeholders to make availability of facilities and infrastructure for vocational education students. This is one of the main issues that should be addressed by all related actors (Ascdewapen, 2018).

I believe that industry and business sectors require skilled workers on one hand, and the vocational schools produce the quality output on the other. This can be facilitated by both parties to meet the desired need and demand of skill workforce (Zakada, 2018).

To meet the demand of the industry, I think it is important to pay the teachers from vocational education [especially non-permanent teachers] similar to the standard in business and industry. Therefore, they can commit and dedicate their time and energy to produce quality graduates that suite the demand of industry and business sector (Pegeriwt, 2018).

From the extracts above, it indicates that there is mutual collaboration between industry and vocational schools to provide highly skilled labour. One of the significant examples from the findings above is that the attention and initiative to provide partnership in providing the required infrastructure and facilities for students prior to graduation. This in turn will reduce the burden and problems faced by vocational schools, community and NGO sectors.

Finally, the community and NGO has an essential contribution for the development of vocational education sectors. NGOs and communities focus on the development of human resources as a means to achieve the goals of vocational education. Another problem found in the vocational education politics of South Sulawesi was the low level of government attention from the budget aspect. The community and NGOs participation play control role for the budget and policy implementation. Participants in this study indicate:



Training and socialisation of competency development should be made available for learners. In addition, the availability of training should be available in the community and the roles of community can facilitate the needs and the demand of workforce (Aklsn, 2018).

The empowerment of local-based vocational NGOs and community activist can help to control the budget implementation for vocational education. Does it go to the right person? How does it implement? Is it transparent? All sort of questions are part of the roles of communities and NGOs (Aamas, 2018).

The vocational education can actually meet and fulfil the demand of workforce. Communities and NGOs expect that the government to play critical role in providing the availability of work opportunities so that the graduates from vocational schools are recruited (Maper, 2018).

From the extract above, communities and NGOs should contribute in controlling the budget implementation, rules and policy realisation particularly in the vocational education sectors. The optimal implementation of policy eventually can contribute to the advancement of vocational education.

It appears that the community support and control the implementation of policy, rules, and budget for vocational education. Community expect that vocational education sectors can facilitate the acquisition of skills for future needs, work, study and self-employment. To support this acquisition, the engagement and partnership with business and industry should be established to provide suggestions and comments for the development of the expected competencies and skills. The community can contribute to providing input to strengthen vocational education. With these supports, the government and the legislature assembly can work optimally on providing basic rules and policies. In addition, the coordination between interest groups can contribute to the advancement of vocational education. The coordination between interest groups such as individuals, institutions, and entrepreneurs is needed to create coordinative policies to form a strong vocational education system (Finlay, Niven, and Young, 1998). In this case, the politics of coordination enables organising individuals, entities, entrepreneurs, and governments to play a significant role in each section of the vocational education sectors.

It is also important for the actors to establish good direct communication to facilitate the flow of demands among them. Communication is required as a form of strong identity politics of the actors (Szkudlarek, 2011). Communication can reduce the conflict between interest groups. The conflicts of interest occur tend to be closed. As a result, information needs become weak. Finally, there are no policies, budget plans, and special policies generated by the government.



Qualified and knowledgeable actors should support political will of the local parliament members. Such knowledgeable actors can be a means for educational reform (Ball, 2010) particularly in vocational education. Thus, the partnership among interested actors and stakeholders can facilitate the increase of legislative roles, budgetary, and policy supervisory mechanism of the vocational education locally, regionally and nationally.

Conclusions

From the findings of this study, it can be concluded that the political roles of vocational education actors have committed to providing key roles in facilitating different stakeholders to achieve optimal benefits for the government, industry, community and schools. Despite facing some challenges, the roles of each actor can enhance the partnership and cooperation among local, regional and national interested stakeholders, donors and business and industry partners. One of the key roles that appears in the findings is that the facilitating or creating positive rules and policies that can create the establishment of partnerships among interested actors.

The following suggestions for further future research include: (i) the strategies of each political actors to support vocational education, (ii) the required facilities and infrastructure for vocational education, and (iii) a model for mutual partnership and collaboration among stakeholders and actors in vocational education sectors. In addition, it is important to study the perceptions of industry and business sectors on the types of skills and competencies that have for the 21st century, and the perceptions of community on the current condition of vocational education teaching processes and alumni conditions.

Authors' contribution

2 All authors contributed to each stage of the research process. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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