



## The Impact of Vocational Education on Youth Employment in South Sulawesi

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### Abstract

*This research aims at analyzing the effects of vocational training on young employee in the South Sulawesi province concerning curriculum comprehensiveness, teachers' performance, economic constraints and interaction with organizations. This study employs a qualitative cross-sectional survey in which a group of students, employers and educators were interviewed to get an understanding of the efficiency of the vocational training and its impact on employment opportunities. The study evidences a clear disconnect in the vocational curricula to meet the market and career requirements; the existing courses neglect to prepare the students for many skills and competencies that are expected of them in the job market. Similarly, socio economic barriers including financial difficulties as well as the fact that some students have to work in order to take care of their families were revealed to be significant barriers to vocational education. The study also acknowledges extensive cooperation with the industries and undertaking of apprentice programs to improve on the practical skills and employability. Solutions include modifications in curricula to reflect the current market demand, the incorporation of soft skills and computer literacy as whistle Gowons, extending the network of company relations, and the change of policies that hinder the learners' chances and boost the development of the region. It is important to note that these findings will enhance the understanding of vocational education in the context of the study area that is South Sulawesi and could be relevant for enhancing the quality of vocational education and employment chances.*

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### Introduction

The major focal socio-economic concern is that of global youth unemployment many nations including South Sulawesi are faced with the adverse implication that arise from having a large population of youths who are unable to secure employment. The unemployment rate of the youths has been consistently high in the country despite the government of Indonesia pushing for education and economic growth (Serifat, 2020). The problems of youth unemployment are complex and involve factors like quality of education, parity of skills to the labour market and the socio-economic barriers that hinders the youth from accessing employment opportunities (De Lannoy et al., 2020). Vocational education has also been underscored as a key method in dealing with young people unemployment since it is prepared to provide the specific knowledge and skills that are required for job market various sectors. As distinct from general education, more often based on formal acquisition of knowledge, vocational education is more

centred on practical skills and skills aimed at people who are to work in certain professions (Lombardi et al., 2021). Perhaps the most specific of these trends is a focus on the development of practical skills that are so essential in the context of the local industry in regions like South Sulawesi where the needs of the labor market are typically closely aligned to sectors such as agriculture, manufacturing, and tourism (Marr, 2022).

The importance of Vocational Education in increasing the employment opportunities has been apprehending in both the developed and the developing Nations. According to Kornelakis & Petrakaki (2020), it is equally important that VE can greatly contribute to reducing the unemployment rate especially for youths by ensuring that youths acquire the relevant skills and qualifications in order to be employed by employers in certain sectors or industries. For example, through the analysis of three trials by Acevedo et al. (2020) revealed that vocational education in Latin American enhanced employment prospects of the recipients especially in places where proficiency reigns supreme. Similarly, in SSA region vocational education has been established to enhance chances of acquiring a job by the youths especially when the traditional system of education fails to provide the youths with employable workplace attachments (Okolie et al., 2020).

In Indonesia vocational education has been advocated by the government to counter unemployment among the youths. Ministry of Education and Culture in Indonesia has taken several measures for development of vocational education and training to ensure that the qualifying awarded address the labour market needs (Misbah et al., 2020). Such measures include curriculum changes; the formation of company links; and growth in technical and vocational schools nationwide and in South Sulawesi. However, it is evident that there are still issues in promoting vocationally oriented learning that will enhance employment opportunities outcome among the youth.

An important category of the findings is related to the mismatch between the vocational education and the labor market demands. However, ineffectiveness of vocational education is found in the fact that students who attend these schools are not rewarded with the relevant skills that employers require (Pambudi & Harjanto, 2020). Such an imbalance may lead to a situation where for instance, graduates from vocational education institutions cannot secure a job, despite having graduated from training programs that are meant to prepare them for the job market. These factors in South Sulawesi are aggravated by the region's structure in terms of economy, especially incorporating the traditional and the modern sectors as well differing in terms of the demand for skillful employees (Mindell & Reynolds, 2023).

The quality of vocational education is also one of the important predictors of how this type of education can affect employment among young people. Mounting evidence indicates that strategies applied in VET provision including instructional quality, resource availability, and industry participation while the nature of VET programs have been aligned to vocationally relevant intermediate outcomes. One of the common issues affecting vocational schools in South Sulawesi is insufficient funding, the obsolescence of learning contents and equipment, as well as the lack of experienced teachers and trainers to help the institutions to reach higher levels of training delivery. In addition, the influence of the industry in organizing and delivering vocational education is negligible, which results in a kind of mismatch in the type of skills that are taught in the schools, and the type of skills that are needed in the various business organizations. However, apart from these challenges, the socio-economic factors were found to equally have profound impact on vocational education for the youth in South Sulawesi. The problems of young people from low-income families include; They are

economically challenged to finance their vocational education; There is limited information about the vocational education programs; Their families and communities do not place emphasis on vocational education (Adegboye et al., 2021). These barriers may result in the failure of the youths to enroll in vocational education and training programmes or lack the ability to complete them hence resulting to limited employment chances (Haasler, 2020). Furthermore, even when youth attain vocational training, they may still find it hard to gain employment because they are discriminated due to their background, ethnicity, or disability among other factors (Bolli et al., 2021).

Nevertheless, vocational education is one of the essential means of solving the problem of youth employment in South Sulawesi. The development plan of the region highlights a demanding and well-trained human capital as an important ingredient in pursuing the economic growth of the region in sectors like agriculture, manufacturing as well as tourism (Mohamed et al., 2021). Thus, the vocational education programs if well planned and executed can equip youths with necessary skills for working in these sectors, improve their employment opportunities and leave the unemployment rates (Pambudi & Harjanto, 2020).

Based on the above analysis, it is concretely seen that there is a large potential for enhancing youth employment in South Sulawesi through expanding vocational education though efforts should be made to overcome the obstacles elaborated above. This includes better linking of vocational education to the demand of the labour market, increasing the quality of vocational training as well as responding to the social-economic barriers of youth for access and utilisation of vocational education. In this respect, through considering these areas, the policymakers and educators as well as industry stakeholders shall be able to effectively transform the vocational education so that young people will be enabled with relevant and requisite skills in order to meet the market demands fully.

## **Method**

The study used a qualitative research approach to examine the role of vocational education towards youths' employment in South Sulawesi. A qualitative research design was adopted because it enabled the eventual study to get deeper insights of the experiences, perceptions and difficulties encountered by vocational education graduates and other related stakeholders. The research envisaged to understand the politically operational aspects of vocationality with regards to employment, and the kind of constraints and possibilities that may have shaped employment. Lastly, data was collected through purposive sampling in which semi-structured interviews were used with the participants. These were vocational education graduates, different employers who recruited employee from vocational schools, and policy makers in vocational education of South Sulawesi. Interviews were semi-structured based on a protocol given to the interviewer containing some questions which were open-ended and whose answers would provide rich detail on the participants' experiences of vocational education and its relation to employment.

Graduates were asked about their activities during vocational training, barriers they encountered in job searching and their analysis of the effectiveness of their education in preparing them for job market. By a series of questions, the employers were requested to describe their contacts with vocational education graduates, what talents they valued most, and whether or not there are deficiencies in training of the graduates. Discussed in such interviews were vocational education programs, with regard to their design and implementation, as well as the methods applied to match training with the current demand for employees on the job market. Besides one-to-one interviews, focus group interviews were conducted on groups of

Vocational Education graduates. These discussions gave the participants an opportunity to present their experiences together thus creating some pooled themes and ideas. In order to have the most varied results possible, focus groups were formed with participants of different vocational programs and fields of work.

These techniques working hand in hand with Interviews and Focus group discussions were supplemented by document analysis. Curriculum of vocational education, employment data, policy, and analysis of vocational education in South Sulawesi were collected from related documents. This analysis supported supplement the information built up from the interviews and focus groups and thus the results were triangulated. The target population under the study was purposively sampled in the following manner. Sampling was purposive in order to identify participants that could give elaborate information on the research questions under investigation. The sample included: It focuses on people who have done vocational education for not more than five years from the time of the survey. Members from various industries for which vocationally trained graduates are mostly employed like agriculture, manufacturing and the tourism industries. This study will target Stakeholders who participated in the vocational education program in South Sulawesi including the policymakers, curriculum developers, teachers, parents, and students. The number of participants was defined based on the data saturation criteria in which data collection was conducted until no new themes and ideas were introduced from interviews and focus groups.

Data gathered from the interviews, focus group discussion, informatics documents went through thematic analysis. Thematic analysis involved several steps: All the interviews and focus group discussions were tapes recorded and later transcribed and reading it over and over again to get a good feel of the content. Content analysis was done using both inductive and deductive procedures on the participants' transcripts. Inductive coding made it possible to come up with themes arising from patterns derived from the data gathered while deductive coding was conducted based on themes introduced by the research objectives. These codes were grouped into larger dumb categories into which important patterns and features detected during analysis were classified. These themes were then discussed and modified with the end being to make sure that they corresponded with the data. The issues that were derived from the interview data and focus group discussions were cross checked with the findings from the documents. Consequently, the final themes were analysed in light of the research objectives with regards to connecting the research to the existing literature on vocational education and youth employment.

## **Result and Discussion**

Inter-view, focus group discussion as well as document analysis helped in getting more detail information about consequence of vocational education to youth employment in South Sulawesi. This section then brings out the findings of the study based on the interview conducted among the VE graduates, employers and policymakers involved in vocational education.

### **Youth Experiences with Vocational Education**

In South Sulawesi, the vocational education completers' experiences meant a mixed-bag of vocational training programs' advantages and disadvantages. From the interviews and focus group discussions it was clear that despite the fact that vocational education imparted practical skills, there are challenges which affect the efficiency of such programs especially in the placement of the students/graduates. When asked about the vocational education, the

respondents identified a number of strengths of this type of education, with a focus on the fact that during vocational education, they are taught practical skills. These skills were often cumulative to the job market with emphasis on areas like Agriculture, manufacturing and tourism.

*“The practical session that we had was quite beneficial to me. In this real life, instead of spending time learning how to operate certain machinery and being trained on certain equipment we had a chance to be trained on similar equipment and that was very useful to me when I was attending this company.”*

Nonetheless, several graduates explained that the fact that the skills applied in the course were sometimes inadequate to the new demands of the market. This situation led to divergence and gap between the training offered on the job and actual market demand.

*“Done I said, I acquired many helpful skills but when I was out there finding a job, I saw that many employers wanted something more technical that we were not trained on.”*

The findings are in support of literature that underscore the need for routine updating of vocational education curriculum in view of dynamism in the labor market. Lack of such updates may pose a challenge to graduates hence they are likely to have practical training but this alone may not be enough.

It therefore became apparent that the qualities of education and the level of resource provisions bore a direct nexus to the successful delivery of vocationally oriented courses. Graduates in general were satisfied with commitment of their instructors but at the same time identified strong differences in the quality of the education passed. There were also significant differences between schools regarding available equipment: some schools presented tools and materials that were presented in industry and were ‘up-to-date’ whereas other schools did not have practically any equipment.

*“I had good exercises with modern machines at my school that is why I was comfortable using them, though I know friends who had poor schools and they had to use old machines which makes them difficult when they begin to work.”*

The distribution of resources and inequality in instruction impacted not only the graduates’ confidence and ability to teach but also his/her marketability. This issue is in line with earlier revealed literature that was and is supportive of the general argument that the quality of vocational education has a strong relationship with the resource available and trainers’ training. Poor infrastructural facilities and trainers or lecturers who may not be well qualified have negative impacts on the overall learning noted that this results into poor performances or low yields of the graduates and employment returns in the market place.

Socio-economic factors were also a great influence to the circumstances that youths faced regarding vocational education. The struggle of a number of the participants relating to finance was evident from the discussion in relation to both access and completion of vocational education. Some of the trainees cited issues to do with financial constraints especially in areas like fees, materials and transport among others as major barriers.

*“I had to take up a part time job to pay for my classes, this was even tough for me to juggle between work and class and sometimes I had to drop out because I could not afford to purchase some material that were required for some of the classes I was taking.”*

These financial demands were especially aggravating to low-income students many of whom dropped out of school to fend for their families. This is supported by the current literature that points to the effect of socio-economic status on educational achievement with special regard to poverty-stricken areas. A lack of funds to carry out vocational training or failure to finish the training due to financial problems reduces the chances of these youths to access the training which is provided hence leading to more cycles of poverty and unemployment among the youths.

Nevertheless, graduates comprised of 52% women and 48% men and men’s felt that vocational education equipped them adequately to seek employment in the market especially the junior positions. But they were divided along the lines of the type of job they sought as well as the quality of education they were able to get. For instance, graduates who entered industries that are competitive in employment demand of skilled labor for example agriculture had higher employment prospects.

*“I found a job right after I graduated and my employer was satisfied with the competencies that I had gained through the training that I received to show how relevant I was for the job market, to the industry.”*

In contrast, those who are practising in more contentious areas namely technology or business said that their training was inadequate.

*“I was confident when I completed my course, but when I joined the workplace, I discovered that there were many things I had not been told. I was wast a time before I could understand them.”*

These mixed experiences emphasize the necessity for a parallel match between students’ vocational education curriculum and the industry and develop sufficient technical competencies as well as interpersonal skills for job market. The study also underscores the importance of follow-up support services for the graduates via the provision of ‘supply-side’ professional development programmes for vocational education.

### **Employer Perceptions**

The impressions that employers from South Sulawesi have on vocation education graduates their insight assists in determining the success of vocational programs in readiness of youths for the labor market. Employers reported a certain level of satisfaction as well as concern in the results of the interviews focusing on the correspondence between the vocational training provided and the truly existent demands in the job market.

Some of the employers told us they were happy with the competencies possessed by the graduates from vocational education institutions. These skills were valued most in fields like agriculture, manufacturing, and tourism since theoretical and practical knowledge alone were important.

*“The diploma holders from vocation schools have a basic knowledge about the functioning of a machine, they are safety conscious, and are able to fit into the work culture of our factory without any problem.”*

This positive feedback can be attributed to the fact that vocational education exposes the students to real life work situations through the acquisition of practical skills that are necessary in the field. As it has been noted in the literature on vocational education, one of the main advantages of the described model is its applicational orientation, which prepares graduates to successfully solve the tasks of certain sectors that require specialized knowledge and skills as soon as possible.

However, although these skills are important for satisfying the employers, there are other even more critical aspects that have to do with the graduates' ability to go on learning and solving new problems in their positions. While most employers seem to be happy with the acquirement of technical competences, many complained about the lack of soft skills and employability amongst graduates of VET. These concerns were more so expressed in the competitive and changing business or technology or service courses that heavily involve communication, problem solving, and teamwork.

*“The technical skills they have but when it comes to communication and team work, that’s where we see most of the graduates lacking so much on the soft skills aspect, which are as essential as the technical skills of handling the equipment.”*

This is in concurrence with other scholars, who argue that though technical skills are crucial, it is important that graduates are well-equipped with soft skills in order to obtain employment and be productive in the work place. As mentioned earlier, skills such as communication skills, problem-solving skills, teamwork and other interpersonal skills are widely regarded as important facets of employability skills. In the following is a summary of what seemed to have been noted by the employers in South Sulawesi on vocational education programs where they may have recommended enhancement on these areas to suit the recent job market.

A major issue therefore raised by employers was about the relevance between the training offered in vocational schools and the real-world needs. A number of employers opined that although, vocational education programs provide a good grounding, the courses tend to fall short when it comes to updating the knowledge with the current developments in practice and technologies. This misalignment sometimes led to existence of skills gap whereby the graduates were not prepared to meet the challenges of the job.

*“We have also had to spend extra time and resources to train the fresh talent they bring in because a lot of what they learn in school is not sufficient for the job... the content is quite archaic compared to the current market reality.”*

This problem of misalignment is endemic in vocational education systems across countries wherein the rate of advancement of technologies and industries that the learning makers seek to equip their learners with often surpasses the rates at which the institution can respond to those changes. A shift in the approach to establish a stronger link between the educational institutions and businesses has been recommended as a potential solution to this issue so as to make vocational training more relevant and sensitive to the current market trends. Employers also pointed out that internships and, on the job, training were equally necessary in vocational trainings. These experiences were considered as the priceless tools that helped students to transfer from classroom to the working environment and to gain better understanding of the chosen subject areas.

*“Internships are important indeed they ensure that a student gets a feel of the real world and the bigger picture ahead It is evident that employers have observed that*

*graduates with prior internships are better prepared and're confident when joining employers”.*

This rationale coincides with other research that also points out that as a result of internships, the employability of the students is promoted through the acquisition of field-based skills and experience, and the product of competencies aligned to the specific industry. Internships also help the employers to evaluate potential candidates and give an adequate preparation relevant to the gap observed by employer in the educational background of the candidate. This success of integrating internships into the vocational education programs can therefore help reduce the employability skills gap of the graduates as well as their ability to meet the requirements of their employers.

Last but not the least, some of the employers also complained about the limited employment potential and career ladder for the graduands of vocational education. Although vocational training offered a good starting point in the market, some employers stated that some of the graduates encountered some difficulties in the labor market especially in the promotion to other higher levels of jobs. This was attributed to the type of vocational training carried out in this county as it trains individual in technical skills without concentrating on other cover all abilities need for organizations leadership and management.

*“Employers believe vocational graduates to be competent doing their job and the government sees potential, but there seems to be a limit to the growth of these graduates owing to lack of other skills which could come as a result of positive promotions.”*

This view is supported by literature which argues that while vocational education successfully prepares learners for employment, other training and education are sometimes required for the advancement of the learners' careers. It is for this reason that mapping ways for the vocational graduates to pursue further schooling, or have a professional enhancement, might assist them to overcome these hurdles and hence, acquire better career opportunities.

### **Barriers to Employment**

It can therefore be said that the barriers to employment which vocational education graduates in South Sulawesi encounter are complex in nature involving both structural and personal factors. Many important factors were identified by the graduates interviewed and through focus group discussion sessions; these excluded graduates from gaining meaningful employment after completing vocational education. Some of these barriers include the availability of few job opportunities, technical skills mismatch, socio economic factors and nonsupport networks. Thus, the main constraint highlighted by vocationally educated graduates as evidenced by our findings was poor employment opportunities within the region. Even though many of them was equipped with relevant qualifications, many a graduate failed to find employment in areas that was commensurate with their training because there was a general shortage of vacancies in the sectors they trained in.

*“I finished my vocational training well with good results and proficiency but it has proven to be difficult for me to secure a job in South Sulawesi because the demand for jobs in my field is incredibly low”.*

The availability of job vacancies is steep especially in many areas and can be attributed to the general economic factors and growth of industries as perceived. This is due to the fact that South Sulawesi regional economy possibly lacks the absorptive capacity of the graduates from the vocationally oriented programs especially the specialized programs in which the demand is

relatively small in comparison to other general programs. This kind of disparity between the number of graduates and available vacancies leads to high unemployment and under employment thereby rendering the vocational education less effective. The fourth key area of concern mentioned by both graduates and employers was that of the skills gained from vocational educational equipment and the skills that employers demanded in their organizations. Students complained that they were not well equipped for the market or the different challenges posed depending on the opportunities available or the type of employer they are a candidate for and or sector they are in; this is especially so for the sectors that changing rapidly or those that demand higher level of technology.

*“That is common to find young graduates who are trained to do the fundamentals of computer science but can hardly perform complex or even specialized tasks for our sector.”*

Such a skills gap is a major concern for vocational education systems and could be attributed to the dynamics in the employment market which require the training programs to be updated frequently. Such misalignment between the curriculum and the realities of the work arena leads to the outcomes wherein the learners are not fully ready to meet the employers’ expectations regarding their skills, thus restricting their employment opportunities and promotion, as noted. This was followed by socio-economic constraints which were seen to be the major factors hindering the vocational education graduates from getting employment. Other issues such as financial problems or the cost of training and the need to put food on the table were some of the issues that graduate faced in their search for employment.

*“I did lots of part-time jobs while studying my vocation because there was no other way of surviving, so it interfered with my learning. Despite having been trained and certified, it was challenging to get a good paying job to better my livelihood.”*

Socio-economic barriers include high costs of books fees and other related expenses and creates other barriers to the graduate when accessing vocational education. This problem is discussed in the literature, and it shows that financial difficulties may affect the results of schooling and people’s employment. On the graduated employment prospects low-income students have the same barriers to get stable employment and they have lower capacity to purchasing human capital investments in terms of training or searching for jobs. This was another negative discovery given that a conducive professional network is equally a requirement for job seekers. It is on record that most of the graduates felt that they had no contacts within their line of specialisation, and as such had no clue regarding available job openings and trends in the market.

*“It might be close to impossible to learn about a job opportunity, or even get letters of recommendation without connections. Some jobs are missed because people don’t know anybody.”*

That professional contacts are useful in seeking employment and in making career progression is well documented in the literature. Networking offers information of available jobs, moral support, motivation, and access to jobs that are not advertised. Lack of these networks can then work against the graduates, especially in instances where referrals are the key to landing the job especially in competitive areas. Regional inequalities are also another factor that plays a role in limiting chances of employment among the vocational education graduates. It is also possible that the opportunities can be less to compare to the areas with high number of economic developments since South Sulawesi has different level of development. Such

geographical distribution may mean that some regions will be proffering many jobs in certain areas while graduates from institutions of higher learning in such regions will find it difficult to search for employment in their area of specialization.

*“There is no work opportunity in my capacity here in South Sulawesi and that is why I have to search my jobs in other regions, I feel like migrating myself away from my own region which is tiresome.”*

There is causal relationship between regional economic development and employment implication where the least developed regions have relatively high unemployment and fewer offer. This issue therefore calls for regional specific economic development policies that would foster employment and grow regional economies so that students from vocational education can get employment. This study points to an emerging urgent need for the vocational education programs to up, to meet the changing market demand. Although vocational education in South Sulawesi prepares students with practical knowledge and skills, they enable these skills do not address the technological and industry dynamism.

This is in line with the current literature that indicates that vocational training programmes often fail to incorporate new trends in industries and thus there is a gap between the skills provided by skills training and the market demand. identified that it is difficult for most vocational education systems to incorporate new technologies in their delivery hence creating a skills gap. This study reveals it in the South Sulawesi context suggesting that there is a need to embrace updated curricula based on the reception from the industry and changing technologies.

This corresponds with directions indicated in scholarly literature on need for strengthening the relationship between education providers and employers so as to ensure that vocational training is relevant and effective. Based on our observation, there was a discrimination on the instructional quality and resources as observed from various vocational education institutions across South Sulawesi. This issue resonates with other research done on the effect of resource volatility on learning achievements. Various works have as of late indicated that well – organized learning assets, and trained teachers shape the impact of individual vocation preparing.

Explain how an imbalance of resources can so greatly create disparities in educational standards so that students are impacted, and their employment opportunities limited. This research adds to such knowledge by showing that these gaps are present in vocational education in South Sulawesi: calling for better distribution of resources and efforts toward teacher training in order to establish educational parity across schools. In this study, the researchers identified that socio-economic barriers play a very big role in determining vocational education and employment prospect. Family obligations and financial difficulties as a result of having to support families become the other complexities for the students and graduates in conformity with contemporary literatures highlighting the socio-economic perspective of education. has also classified financial problems to be a leading factor that hinders education gains that we also affirmed by outlining their impact on students and their abilities to make the most out of vocational training.

Scholarships and financial aid are therefore a solution to these challenges apart from extending support to students who could otherwise not afford the cost of colleges and universities and hence have a low probability of success. The results of this study support call by other authors to enhance funding so as to eliminate socio-economic losses and expand access to education

for all learners. Responding employers in the study pointed at the lack of soft skills and work preparedness among the vocational education graduates citing poor competence in areas such as communication, teamwork and problem solving. This concern is supported by recent research that has placed a lot of emphasis in the talent workforce on soft skills, once the specific technical skills are purchased, soft skills are considered significant because they are important in cooperation and flexibility as is evident in most workplaces. Our study also advances this discussion by pointing out the incorporation of soft skills training into vocational education programs as a critical area since most vocational training tends to overemphasize technical skills while neglecting the broader competencies.

From our study, it is clear that whereas vocational education graduates obtain a starting job, they struggle to progress to other positions apart from the basic level. This observation involves a research limitation whereby vocational education systems are usually criticised for focusing on the skills that are in demand in the current job market without considering the long-term career goals. From the same source, Ozer & Perc (2020) notes that vocationally oriented education tends to emphasize short-term employment objectives, and these may, therefore, translate into few opportunities for advancement. For this reason, the results of our study underscore the importance of incorporating follow-on education and training in vocational programmes, in accordance to the suggestion that postsecondary education should incorporate career services and development to support individual's career progression.

Last but not the least, our study exploited the effects of economic disparity in line with vocational education graduates' employment opportunities less developed area such as South Sulawesi tend to have fewer prospects. This result is supported by other studies on regional inputs inequality in relation to labor market consequences (Palomino et al., 2023). This paper holds the premise that regional economic conditions are determinant in the emergence of jobs which, in turn, hinders vocational graduate employment possibilities. By presenting the case of our country we expand this knowledge and pinpoint the necessity for further targeted economic development policies to reduce spatial disparities and increase the employment rate for vocationally trained graduates (Hao et al., 2020).

The other important research outcome is the need to incorporate use of technology in Vocational Education Training programs. Some of our participants pointed out that although vocationally acquired practical knowledge is vital, teaching with and about technology and personal computers didn't receive enough focus. This gap corresponds to current literature predicated on the fact that the job market is currently becoming digitalised hence demanding employees with necessary digital competencies to survive (Petrongolo & Ronchi, 2020). Inability to provide digital skills training in vocational programmes can also lock the graduates out from the opportunities with organizations that use IT enabled and related technologies.

Further, some of the recent works have been stressing upon the need to introduce elements of information and communication technologies into the curricula of vocational educational and training in order to provide students with adequate qualification for work (Phillips & Adya, 2020). For instance, pointed at the revolutions which digital technologies brought to the workforce and the need for educational programs to respond to such changes appropriately. Incorporation of digital skills as part of training in Colleges and Vocational education has a potential of improving the marketability of the graduates as they need skills for job markets of today. Thus, the results of the study provide the rationale for integrating information and communication technologies and technological competencies as the fundamental elements in vocational education curriculum.

Taking into consideration of results also emphasize the importance of intensive cooperation between the industry and the practice in vocational education supported by the use of apprenticeship schemes. Investors stated that the connection with apprenticeships and industries boosted the employability, and overall skills, of the participants prominently. This result echoes with literature that suggests external relations and prior practical experience in occupational training (Kakouris & Morselli, 2020).

The engagement of industries is important as it gives student exposure as to what is happening in the real world and ensures that knowledge is applied in practice. The literature suggests that most effective vocational education frameworks tend to require substantial collaboration between the centres of learning and the workplaces. disclosed that the apprenticeships and on-the job training enhance the employment efficiency and effectiveness of students since it exposes them to practical working environment of a given company and thus is able to identify the specific demands of a certain job. The results of our study suggest that the apprenticeship programmes and industry connections should be further developed in order to increase the quality of vocational education and employability of graduates.

The study also emphasizes the need for the fundamental shift in policies and practices of the vocations education systems. In general, participants worrying about problematic situation connected with bureaucratic legislation and ineffective educational legislation. This issue is also in line with observation made on vocation learning and vocational education systems where education systems are normally surrounded by problems that hamper their efficiency due to bureaucracy and policies constraints (Pambudi & Harjanto, 2020).

In practicing vocational education, it had a policy that foster innovation, flexibility and sustainability of the courses offered in order to respond to the dynamics of the market place. The studies of the last year indicate that policy changes oriented at the system inequalities and the alignment of VET with the labor market demands (Lomborg, 2020). The European Commission (2019) has posited the effectiveness of VET policy that requires improvement of VET quality and relevance hence the need to strength good VET systems. They suggest the requirements for the policy change on the bureaucratic level with the target on the development of the vocationally oriented education system.

Last but not least, they draw readers' attention to the fact that it is crucial to assess the effectiveness of vocational education programs concerning their outcomes and modify them in the process of their implementation if necessary. Interviews: Participants observed that as much as implementation of various programs and interventions is done, most of them do not have proper methods of assessing the results of such programs and if they have, do not systematically employ it to review the results and make corresponding changes. This is in support of literature suggesting that there is a need for constant assessment and feedback mechanisms so as to ensure sustainable efficiency of vocational education programmes (Pitt et al., 2020).

Studies show that constant assessment makes it possible to determine the effectiveness or the lack of effectiveness of VE programs and make relevant changes where applicable, feedback mechanisms and evaluation processes must be in place and occur in order to sustain programmes relevancy and quality (Cloutier et al., 2020). Therefore, the results of the study agree with the necessity of the extensive assessment of vocational education programs and the constant work towards the improvement of the results in the interest of the students and employers.

## Conclusion

These findings suggest that there are shortcomings and possibilities of vocationally related learning in South Sulawesi while determining the difficulties and recommendations for curriculum convergence, improvements in the Quality of training, implementation of soft skills, competencies in ICT. There is the need to tackle socio-economic issues that hinder the achievement of efficiency in vocationally related training and preparation of graduates for the job market as well as increase partnerships with the industry. Impropering vocational education therefore requires the formulation and eventual enactment of policies that respond and provide solutions to systems hitches also the lack of economic regionalism. Through these areas these stakeholders will be able to improve youth employment rate, contribute to economy growth and strengthen the vocational training system in South Sulawesi.

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