

# Career Guidance Model using Experimental Learning Approach to Improve Students' Soft Skills

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# Career Guidance Model using Experimental Learning Approach to Improve Students' Soft Skills

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**Abstract**—This study aims to find out: firstly, the needs to develop the career guidance model using the experiential learning strategies for students and secondly the experiential learning approach that has been validated by experts to improve students' soft skills. The research was conducted in SMK Negeri 3 Makassar, using research and development (R&D) method with five development stages. Two results were obtained. (1) The results of the needs analysis show that the implementation of career guidance was still poor despite the fact the students demanded programs and activities focused on career planning, including higher education planning, tips, and strategies to enroll at a university, and preparation for jobs. Students hoped they could learn through practices or by doing it and be actively involved in the experience. (2) Based on the expert validation, the assessment of the experientially-focused career guidance, both by questionnaires and inputs, generally showed good results. This indicates that the experiential learning approach is appropriate and acceptable to help students improve their soft skills at school. In addition, there are three well-arranged indicators of the assessment could explain these results: the utility, feasibility, and accuracy. The expert validators gave a score for each indicator in the scale of 3 and 4 on average. Therefore, it can be concluded that the career guidance model using experiential learning strategies is acceptable to improve vocational students' soft skills at school.

**Keywords**—career guidance, experiential learning, soft skills

## I. INTRODUCTION

Career issues in students are very closely related to the choice of the type of education that they had before [1], [2]. The type of education will be taken into consideration in choosing a career path in the future, planning for a future career, making a decision about a future career, and gathering information about jobs with the requirements that must be possessed. Besides, skills and interests can also affect adolescents' decision. This issue shall be noticed due to the confusion that many adolescents experience in choosing their future career path [3]. Some students continue to be indecisive which will negatively affect their career maturity. In addition, career guidance services provided by teachers are still contextual, not varied, and not well-planned. As a result, the activities do not work in accordance with the existing programs.

To prepare adolescent students for career planning and career maturity, school counselors play an important role. They attempt to provide guidance and counseling about a career for the students in the hopes of facilitating the students' development, exploration, and aspiration, and

helping them make decisions about career throughout the life span of the students or counselees (Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture Number 111 of 2014). Career guidance services will strengthen career planning as an effort to improve students' career maturity and to ensure that they make the right decision about further study and future career. Therefore, career guidance services are crucial for students.

Soft skills deal with emotional skills [4], how to communicate, how to successfully deliver business presentations, how to work in a team, and how to manage time well [5]. Soft skills are competencies inherent in someone and are habits [6]. Additionally, soft skills cover language skills, personal habits, interpersonal skills, managing people, and leadership [7]. Soft skills can also refer to a variety of basic skills, knowledge, and life values [8], personal habits, friendliness, and high optimism [9], the ability to communicate, to work well, to influence others, and to get along with other people [10]. Figuring the skills possessed by students can be used to help them find their career and study paths and to understand what job competencies they should acquire to get a job they desire.

Equipping students with soft skills can be carried out without adding new subjects, but by giving value and meaning to the learning process. The essence of education is to humanize humans so that the learning process shall involve learning to know (knowing more), learning to do (doing best), learning to be (being better), and learning to live together (living in harmony). Of the many learning models, some of which are considered appropriate for training soft skills for students. Training is given by implementing learning models that focus more on the experience or practice. This program can be followed up through a counseling service program in schools.

One of the ways to provide guidance and career counseling services in order to improve students' soft skills is an experiential learning approach. Experiential learning is an approach of the teaching and learning process that encourages the students to actively build knowledge and skills through their experiences directly. By learning through experience, students are expected to have a good understanding of the soft skills they possess in achieving their future careers. This is because the experiential learning method will provide opportunities for students to decide what experiences they focus on, the skills they want to improve, and how they make concepts from their experiences [11]. Therefore, this article examines the

importance of improving soft skills through career guidance services using experiential learning approach. The research aims to describe (1) the students' soft skills that can be improved through career guidance services and (2) career guidance services that use experiential learning strategies in the hope of improving students' soft skills.

## II. RESEARCH METHODS

The current research used to research and development (R&D) approach by adapting the Borg and Gall (2003) model. This approach was chosen because it consists of a series of feasible steps. The development method systemically consists of developing the product, testing it in the field, revising it, retesting it, and revising it again until the product meets the defined objectives. Borg and Gall's model starts with (1) need analysis and information collection, followed by (2) careful planning, (3) development of a preliminary form of product, (4) expert validation testing, and lastly (5) main product revision. These strategies are referred to as the research and development cycles. To collect various types of information from various sources, several methods and data collection tools were used as follows: need analysis questionnaires and expert validation questionnaires for the preliminary product to be developed.

The validity emphasized in the current study was the content validity, which refers to the validity that shows the extent to which a measure represents all content of a given construct. Meanwhile, reliability is defined as the extent to which measurement results can be trusted. In essence, reliability shows the extent to which a measurement can provide results that will not change if a measurement is carried out on the same subject [12]. The data of this study were analyzed using qualitative and quantitative descriptive approach. The analysis encompassed the continuous reflective analysis (revision process) during the model development process.

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Before Career guidance model using experiential learning, a method is developed through need analysis which aims to obtain the overview of career guidance model that is implemented at and needed by the school. There are some steps passed in developing this career guidance model.

### A. Need Assessment

In compiling the guidelines for the implementation of the career guidance model for students based on experiential learning. The needs assessment is initially conducted to get an overview of the implementation and the formulation of career guidance model for students at the school. In addition, this assessment can assist the students to discover their study, career paths and to prepare them for their career.

Based on the results of the discussions with the school counselors, the interactions with the students, and the examination on various programs at the research location, the researcher obtained an overview of the problems faced by the students in planning for their career and of the programs needed by the students. Based on the discussions with the school counselors, it is found that many students shared their study plans with them, that many students chose to study something that they were not really passionate about only because they were accepted in that department, and that there

had not yet been specific and appropriate models to be implemented in order to overcome the career planning-related problems. Some students chose to study what they were passionate about, but they did not show any relevant attitudes or skills in accordance with the standard competencies of a certain major. The results of the simple questionnaires distributed to the students of SMK Negeri 3 Makassar are illustrated in the pie chart (Fig. 1).

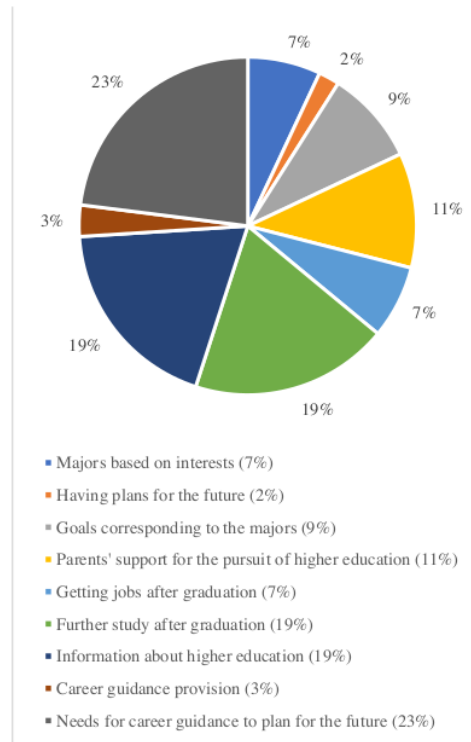


Fig. 1. Results of Need Assessment about the Model Development

The chart above explains that there were 7% of students who chose majors according to interests and 2% who had career planning which is very low. Moreover, only 3% of career guidance activities had been given. Students who gained further study information and who wanted to work immediately were 19% each. However, the need for career guidance programs was very high in which 23% of the students expected the programs to be implemented at the school. The results of the needs assessment analysis illustrate that career guidance activities for students are still low. On the other hand, students really need the career guidance programs and activities that put great emphasis on career planning, such as further study plans, university information, tips and strategies for choosing and entering college, as well as preparation for the world of work. Students expect the activities carried out by practice or do it directly so they can learn from the experience.

### B. Model Development

Based on the results of the need assessment on the model development, the researcher obtained a general picture of the various problems at the school related to the career and the

students' soft skills. These data were used to take the initial step in the arrangement of the guidelines to develop the career guidance model using experiential learning strategies. Moreover, the researcher conducted a literature review to examine the problems and the approaches implemented as the solutions to face the problems, which was the literature review about experiential learning-based career guidance to enhance students' soft skills. The career guidance model based on experiential learning refers to the guidance given to students to improve their soft skills. The guidance was applied and given to students in the form of classical activities and groups consisting of explanations and practices conducted in groups. As a result, the students were actively involved in and able to learn through experience. After the guidance was arranged, expert validation was carried out.

Expert validation aims to provide an assessment of the accessibility of forms and contents of the guidebook "Career Guidance Using Experiential Learning Approach" to improve the students' soft skills. The expert testing was carried out to the school counselors and counseling practitioners at the school. Expert validators were chosen based on their expertise and experience as practitioners who will use this guidebook. The subject of the validator focused on the utility, feasibility, and accuracy. The questionnaires for the assessment used scales (1-2-3-4). Every number has a meaning explained as follows: (1) scale 1 for useless / inaccurate / inappropriate / unnecessary / unclear, (2) scale 2 for less useful / less accurate / less appropriate / less necessary / less clear, (3) scale 3 for useful / accurate / appropriate / necessary / clear, and (4) scale 4 for very useful / very accurate / very appropriate / very necessary / very clear. The following are the results of the acceptability figures given by each expert test.

TABLE I. RESULTS OF UTILITY, FEASIBILITY AND ACCURACY TEST ON EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING APPROACH-BASED CAREER GUIDANCE

Aspect	Scale			
	1	2	3	4
Utility			45%	55%
Feasibility			29%	71%
Accuracy		8%	34%	58%

Table 1 shows the results of the utility test consisting of 7 statements of acceptability. The test aims to assess the utility of the guidelines of experiential learning approach-based career guidance model. The expert validators generally gave scores for the utility aspect of the guidelines at the scale of 4 (55%) and of 3 (45%). The data suggest that the experiential learning approach-based career guidance model is beneficial to improve the soft skills possessed by the students at SMK Negeri 3 Makassar. Another data from the table is about the feasibility test. The expert validators gave scores in general at the scale of 4 (71%) and of 3 (29%). Based on the data, this career guidance model is very feasible to improve the students' soft skills. The last data is about the accuracy test conducted on the guidelines of the experiential learning approach-based career guidance model and indicate that the expert validators gave scores at the scale of 4 (58%), of 3 (34%), and of 2 (8%). Since the expert validators gave higher scores at the scale of 4, the guidelines are considered well-arranged and shall be implemented to enhance the students' soft skills.

The results of the expert validation using questionnaires and inputs suggest that the guidelines of experiential learning approach-based career guidance model are useful, feasible, and acceptable to be carried out to hone the students' soft skills. The three indicators of the assessment, the utility, feasibility, and accuracy, are well arranged; therefore, the expert validators gave average scores at the scale of 4 and 3. It can be summarized that the guidelines of the experiential learning approach-based career guidance model are acceptable to improve the vocational students. The soft skills that are necessary to be developed by the students, as stated by Baskara (2002), consist of three aspects. The first aspect is the individual's abilities to recognize oneself which are called self-awareness or personal skills. Personal skills consist of: (1) the appreciation of oneself as a creature of God Almighty, a member of society and a citizen and (2) the awareness of and the gratitude for the strengths and weaknesses possessed by using them as assets in improving themselves as individuals who benefit themselves and their environment. The second aspect is thinking skill which consists of: (1) information searching skill, (2) information processing and decision making skills, and (3) creative problem-solving skills. Finally, the third aspect is the social skills consisting of (1) communication skill, (2) collaboration skill, and (3) leadership and influence. All the guidelines refer to the development of those soft skills.

### C. Revision

From the results of the validation, the revision was undertaken based on various suggestions and input from the validators in the form of data and comments for the improvement of the examined guidelines. In general, the expert validators concluded that the guidelines were feasible and appropriate to use, but there were several improvements that needed to be made, namely: the pictures should be added, the sentences should be simpler, and the quotations of several sentences and paragraphs should be corrected. In addition, the validators suggested that the content of the soft skill guidelines should emphasize the characteristics that affect a person's personalities at work as explained that soft skills are characteristics that can affect individual or personal, as well as professional relationships and jobs related to career prospects [13]. From the perspective of sociology, soft skills can be defined as Emotional Intelligence Quotient [14]. With this component, students will have emotional maturity at work, and the guidelines will be more appropriate to use. It was also explained that in teaching vocational students, skills and knowledge or hard skills should be accentuated [15].

Career guidance model based on the experiential learning approach to improve soft skills can be developed with four stages, namely the real experience stage, reflection observation stage, conceptualization stage and implementation stage ([16]. More interesting and fun learning models will become an important point for creating student learning experiences through career guidance. [17] said that several affective learning models could be used to implement the experiential learning, namely: the consideration model, the rational formation model of value classification, the development of cognitive models and non-selective models. In addition, the career guidance model using experiential learning approach encourages students to get involved in existing extracurricular activities and to carry out field works or practices in locations that are in

accordance with their respective majors. Besides, the guidance component emphasizes the existence of an integrative method. The results of other studies show that the integrative approach through active learning can foster the soft skills needed in job performance [18].

#### 7 IV. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the analysis, two conclusions can be drawn. First, the results of the need analysis show that the activities focused on career guidance for students were still low even though career guidance is very necessary for the students to help them plan their career in the future, including further study, university information, tips and strategies to choose and enroll at a university, as well as self-preparation for jobs in the future. The students prefer to do practices so that they can directly learn from the experience. Second, good results were obtained after the assessment of the guidelines of the career guidance model using experiential learning approach was conducted by the expert validators, both by questionnaires and by inputs. The results indicate that the model in question is very feasible and acceptable to be used as the guidelines on the improvement of the students' soft skills. The results can be seen from three well-arranged indicators which are the utility, feasibility, and accuracy indicators. The average scores given by the expert validators were at the scale of 4 and 3. In other words, the experiential learning approach-based career guidance model is acceptable to develop the soft skills of the vocational students.

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