



Vocational Guidance Education and Streaming High School Students Based on Labor Market Orientation

Bui Van Hung^a, ^aHo Chi Minh City College of Technology II, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, Email: hungbuiivan@hvct.edu.vn

Vocational guidance education and demand-based streaming high school students are attracting increasing attention from educational experts and the public. However, the two fields have not been adequately studied in Vietnam. There is also no structured training program for experts to be implemented in high schools and vocational education and training (VET) system in order to assist students in selecting suitable careers and satisfying requirements of the labour market. Therefore, studies involving vocational guidance education and streaming of high school students need to identify measures that are appropriate in the Vietnamese context. At the same time, this is a highly interdisciplinary field that requires professionally trained experts to implement vocational guidance education and streaming high school students to meet the requirements of educational innovation in Vietnam. The following article aims to introduce a "sub-field" in vocational guidance education and streaming with specific objects, measures and tools, which are applied in VET in Vietnam to organise vocational guidance education programs for students in VET institutions.

Key words: *Vocational guidance education, educational stream, high school, vocational education.*

Introduction

In a world with diverse careers, learners will have to choose a career that best suits their abilities. However, difficulties faces by high school students have called for vocational guidance education and career orienting measures that are appropriate to students' competence, strengths and personal backgrounds as well as meeting the requirements of the labour market. In the context of economic transformation, vocational education must be overhauled in terms

of the structure of training fields and quality in accordance with the requirements of economic development (Middleton, 1993). Career selection has been highlighted as the superior side of humans compared to other beings of the world. At the same time, wrong choice may lead to catastrophic consequences in later life (Dang, 2002). A career which is not suitable for labourers' aptitude and competence results in ineffective, demotivated, boring and low-income careers whereas a career that is suitable for labourers' competence and strength often encourages them to work well to fulfil job requirements (Dang, 2010). Therefore, this choice needs to be carefully considered and is the primary responsibility of young people in adulthood (Middleton, 1993).

Vocational guidance education has been described in various ways. For instance, under labour economic point of view, policymakers in vocational education should take into account the dynamics of a market economy (Prot, 2009a). Meanwhile, labour sociologists proposed that there is no common purpose for labour and the model of vocational guidance education must be based on the purpose of labour which matches types of labour in accordance with its cultural and technological context (Prot, 2009b). In the the context of market economy and the trends of globalisation and international integration in Vietnam, technical labour only amounts to a very small amount of the total labour force, posing great risk to the economy (Sakellariou, 2000). In addition, the majority of students face youth unemployment after being trained or have to face a mismatch between their professional qualifications and work fields, detrimentally affecting the effectiveness of training and causing brain drain as well as a waste of society and learners' money (Nguyen Minh Duong & Phan Van Kha, 2006). This has been evidenced by the dialectical relationship between vocational orientation and the labour market (Nguyen Huu Dung, 2005) and concerned by continuous orientation efforts made by the Institute of Vocational Science and the General Department of Vocational Training of Vietnam between 1979 and 1981 (Middleton, 1993; Dang, 2002).

From the above-mentioned views, vocational guidance education and stream are mentioned in many different aspects. However, vocational guidance education and student streaming need to have specific theoretical orientations to create synchronisation in application for easy and effective application to Vietnamese VET institutions.

Vocations and Principles of Choosing a Vocation

Vocations

The definition of vocation varies broadly in the literature. Old definitions articulated that "vocation" means an area of work that requires workers to have any educational level or skill. However, newer perspectives about vocational guidance have split vocations into two separate definitions. First, in a broad sense, career means a group of specialities which are closely

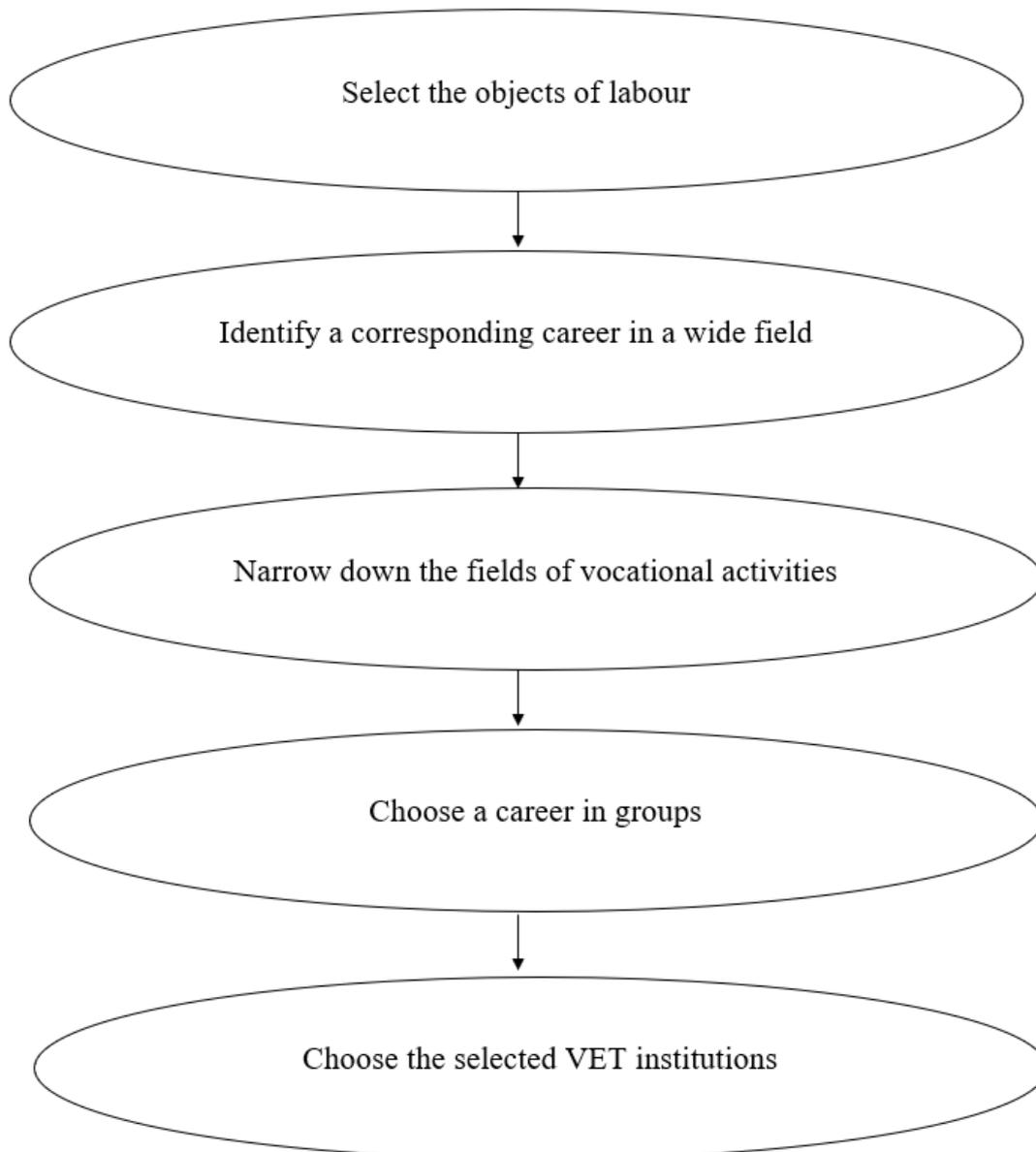
related to each other. Meanwhile, speciality is a kind of activity where people use mental and physical strengths to create needful means for the existence and development of society. Second, a career is a certain job that is defined by social division of labour (Gregg, 2005).

From the aforementioned definitions, it is understood that vocation is a specification of working activities in the social division of labour; it summarises knowledge and working skills which have been acquired by humans as a result of accumulation of specialised training and experience. A vocation establishes individuals' jobs to satisfy individual and social demands. As a result, a person who has a vocation but not a job is considered as unemployed. In addition, it is necessary to distinguish specialised vocation from vocation (Wilms, 1984). To be specific, specialised vocation is a narrow aspect of labour productivity in which people create physical products and moral values with their mental and physical strengths. From the above definitions we can conclude the concept of "vocation" as follows. Vocation is an aspect of labour productivity that requires participants to have the essential knowledge, skills and attitudes to make a physical and mental product to meet social demands (Pratzner & Russell, 1983).

Principles of Choosing a Vocation

Selection of a career that suits students' ability and meets the requirements of the labour market plays a key role in determining vocational appropriateness (Oksanen-Ylikoski & Ylikoski, 2015), which is the mutually compatible relationship between vocational requirements and human psychophysiological qualities. The appropriateness of a particular person for a particular vocation can be determined based on these qualities. However, vocational appropriateness is not innate but primarily formed, nurtured and developed in the process of apprenticeship and work (Dang, 2002). Three principles can be proposed in selecting a particular vocation (Dang, 2007). First, it is imperative not to select a vocation that fails to assist with further career advancement and capture the learner's interest. . Second, learners should select a vocation that meets their own psychological, physiological and social conditions. Lastly, the selected vocation should be consistent with local and national socio-economic development plans. On the basis of vocational appropriateness and the principles of career choice, the following career selection process can be proposed (Dang, 2010) (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Career choice process



Results from the Labour Market

The labour market concept has been defined differently. While the International Labour Organisation (ILO) maintains that “The Labor market is a market in which labour services are bought and sold through a process to determine the level of employment as well as the level of wages” (Brandolini et. al., 2006), Vietnamese economic scientists claimed that the labour market is all about labour relations established in the field of hiring, including the most basic labour relations such as hiring and firing, wages and salary, in which there is exchange and

agreement between employers and employees (Dang Canh Khanh, 2006). However, despite different interpretations and nuances, the above mentioned concepts share a similarity in the sense that the labour market essentially refers to the relationship between labour supply and demand, rather than the place where labour supply and demand take place. As a result, the labour market can be defined as the place where "labour supply" meets "labour demand," in which the needs and interests of vocationally trained employees meet the needs and interests of employers and follows the common laws of market, pricing, value, supply and demand and competition.

In order to discover the essentials required by the labour market, a small-scale survey has been conducted on enterprises and statistical evaluation criterions were performed to produce criteria that are desirable by the labour market as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Evaluation criterions meet the requirements of the labour market (Bui Van Hung, 2014)

No.	Criteria
1	- Criterion 1: Meet type of job requirements: Part-time, full-time, shifts.
2	- Criterion 2: Meet requirements of communication skills.
3	- Criterion 3: Meet requirements of teamwork skills.
4	- Criterion 4: Meet requirements of management skills, work organisation.
5	- Criterion 5: Meet requirements of working attitude.
6	- Criterion 6: Meet requirements of appearance.
7	- Criterion 7: Meet gender requirements.
8	- Criterion 8: Meet age requirements.
9	- Criterion 9: Meet requirements of experience.
10	- Criterion 10: Meet requirements of qualifications.
11	- Criterion 11: Meet requirements of specialised skills.
12	+ Analytical and evaluation skills
13	+ Problem-solving skills
14	+ Substitute-using skills
15	+ Skills of adapting to science and technology development and career change
16	+ Skills of operating machinery and equipment
17	+ Skills of using tools including physical and mental tools

Vocational Guidance Education and Streaming High School Students as Labour Market Orientation

The Current Labour Market Situation in Vietnam

The Vietnamese national orientation in education affirmed that “learning and practice must go together, education must be associated with productive labour and schools are connected to



society,” as reflected in the Congress document. In addition, the document also stated that vocational guidance education and streaming high school students should also be prioritised to fully equip youth and teenagers with vocational training that is suitable for local and national economic transformation. However, in reality, there are still shortcomings in which different operational discrepancies can be found amongst educational institutions and a lack of admission of motivation of high school students is still prevalent.

According to HCM City Centre for Forecasting Manpower Needs and Labour Market Information, about 80% of graduate students were employed (Van & Anh, 2019). The remaining 20% either encountered difficulties in seeking an appropriate career, thus switched to another career or accepted the skill mismatch in their concurrent occupation. Amongst employed graduates, only 50% obtained a career which matched their competence and has good promotion. The other 50% had to complete jobs that did not match their training levels and had low and unstable salaries resulting in wanting to switch careers. This is a particularly pressing issue as human resources have been emphasised by the Communist Party of Vietnam in today’s revolutionary era. The Resolution of the 7th National Congress emphasised that: "humans are not only the targets, but also the incentives for overall growth.” When it comes to the following national congress, this statement has been stressed anew: “The improvement in human resources is positively correlated with national sustainable developments.” Hence, vocational guidance is the fundamental element in national workforce development.

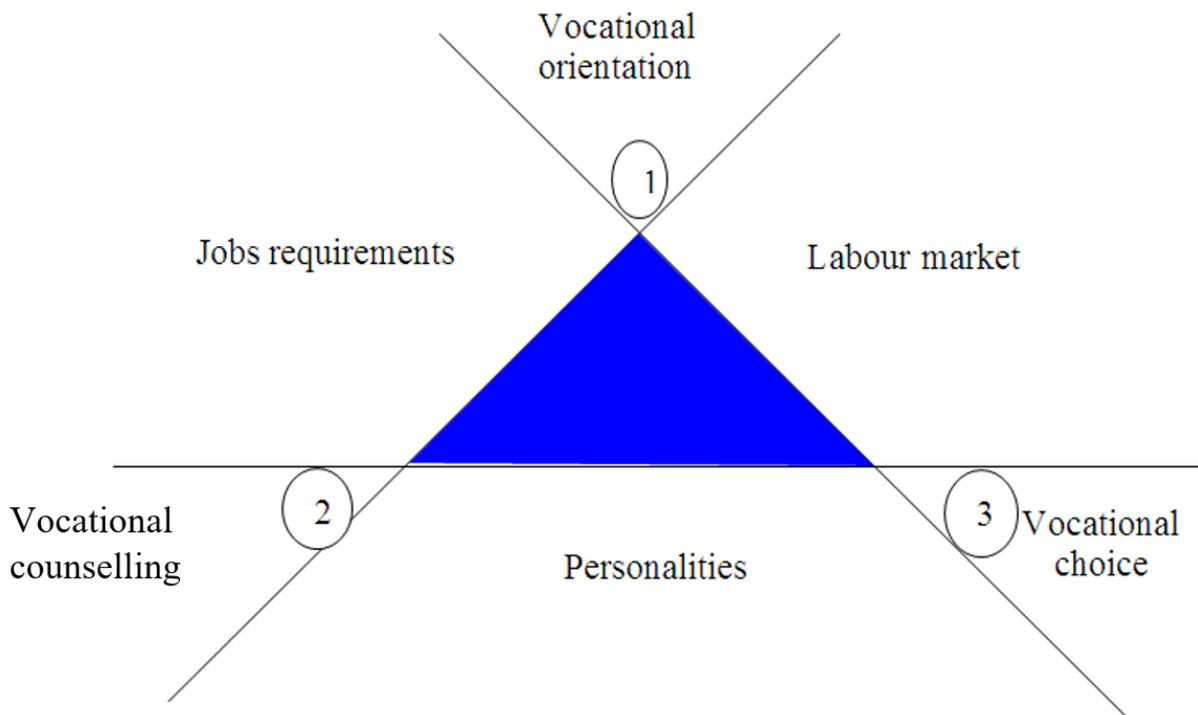
Constant innovations in teaching methods are one of the lines and policies of the Party (Tran et. al., 2016). There have been plenty of resolutions passed in this regard and put into practice, such as Resolution 4 (session VII), Resolution 2 (session VII) and Notice of conclusion no. 242 of the Politburo (session X) on September 15, 2019. The Party believes that Education and Training is an overriding priority; since educational investment is directly linked to overall enhancement. Education aims to raise people’s intellectual standard, train and develop the workforce and nurture the prodigiously gifted. In order to accomplish these objectives, three educational reforms have been implemented. The first took place in 1950 which aimed to build a new educational platform for the public. The second reform was implemented in 1956, and geared towards training and fostering young generations, becoming law-abiding citizens, excellent personnel and productive workers to contribute to the communist regimes, which is implicitly a political objective involving reunifying the nation in a liberal and resident-centred manner. The third one began in 1979, focusing on three aspects: system, content and methods in education. Despite partial fulfilment of those aforementioned objectives, over the last three decades of educational reforms, Education and Training have not been an overriding priority in developmental policies and have not yet added necessary impetus to the economy. Education quality is generally low, not living up to socio-economic demands and not keeping pace with the ever-changing environment during global integration. Reports at the 11th National Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam also disclosed that developing human

resources, especially of a high-quality, is a groundbreaking strategy. Therefore, some features needed to be figured out to generate a labour force that meets the requirements of industrialisation and modernisation. In October 2013, the 8th Plenum of the Central Committee passed a resolution regarding the basic and comprehensive renovation of Education and Training, aiming to fulfil labour requirements of industrialisation and modernisation in the context of a socialist-oriented market economy and international integration (Ho & Reich, 2014).

Career Guidance Education

Career guidance has been previously generalised by the “Vocational Guidance Triangle” (VGT), including three main components:

Figure 2. Elements of Vocational Guidance Triangle



The VGT, proposed by Platonov, has been the scientific basis for career selection (Dang, 2002; Dang, 2010). The principles of VGT are comprised of three edges and three corners that learners have to consider when selecting a vocation. The first edge of VGT is the requirement for each person’s vocation (the psychophysiological requirements and prohibition of the vocation). The second edge is the labour market, which means demand for human resources at all levels that businesses, production facilities, and labour supply organisations are in need



of. The third edge consists of the personality which is, first of all, those students' ability who need guidance and career counselling.

In the corner adjacent to the requirements of the job and labour market is vocational orientation. We must help students recognise social, state and business needs. The second corner is vocational counselling, which is the system of impact measures to detect and assess students' abilities. The last corner is a vocational choice to determine the vocation appropriateness of a person who is recruited or working in a certain career.

Vocational guidance is a long-term process, divided into four stages: vocational orientation, vocational counselling, vocational choice and vocational adaptability. These periods are inextricably linked, successively creating a unified process that impacts on periods of human career development as follows (Dang, 2002). The first stage consisting of vocational orientations, refers to the school's action in guiding students to select suitable careers based on the requirements of the labour market and employee jobs. Therefore, vocational orientation needs to identify suitable careers that students may choose regarding their interests, and strengths which creates long-term success. To find the right direction, those who choose a career must be informed about career requirements as well as the labour market. Without one of the two above factors, orientation will deviate; thus, students would be unable to select an appropriate job. When providing vocational guidance, career officers should introduce jobs needed by their local area including human resources and instructions about requirements from the labour market. Identifying a suitable career plays an important part in their employment based on the needs of the labour market. As a result, decision makers should consider the quantity and quality of the particular vocation in the labour market as well as have a clear understanding about workers' personalities and characteristics.

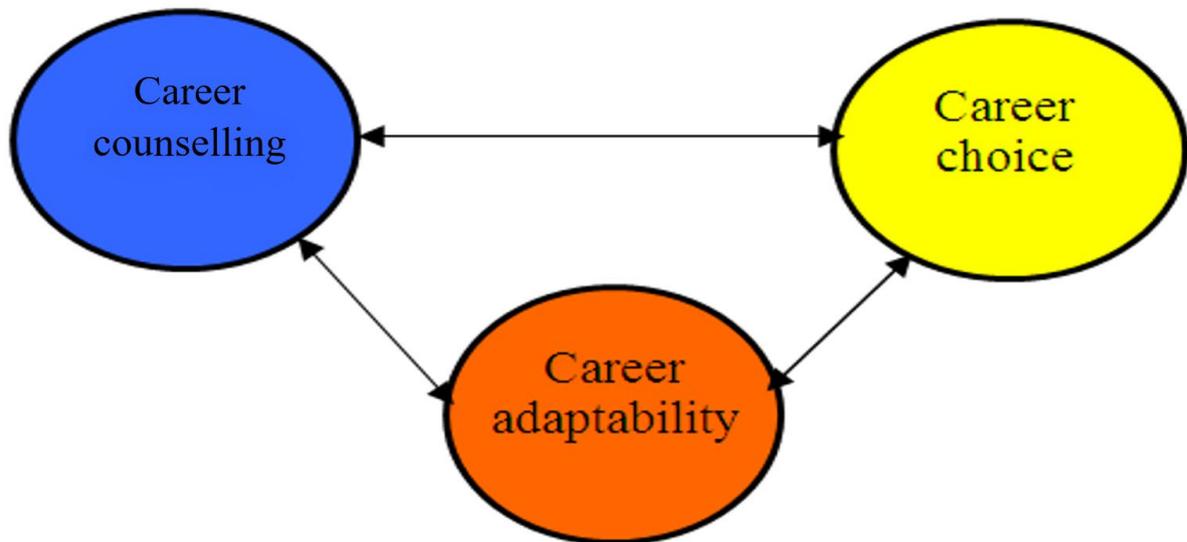
The second stage is vocational counseling, which is the intermediate stage between two stages of vocational orientation and vocational choice (Johnson, 1953). Due to the influence of family, friends and public opinion or a lack of realistic view of the labour market, learners may make uninformed decisions regarding career selection. As a result, they may get bored easily, eventually leading to career switching. Job counselling helps students have more self-orientation or better prepare for career placement in the labour market. The essence of career counseling is based on vocational measures, giving students advice on making a suitable choice on a scientific basis, which helps them to choose an appropriate career, making vocational progress and achieving job sustainability. Responsibility and freedom in choosing a career are important factors that career officers need to bear in mind. Meanwhile, individual principles of free vocational selection must be respected. In particular, choosing a career that is not based on scientific elements can have a negative impact on workers and society.

The final aspect in vocational guidance involves adaptability. This is the process that trainees will adapt to their career, including students and skilful workers.

Elements of Vocational Guidance

In order to perform the mission of vocational guidance well, there is need for a close combination of three elements: career counselling, career choice and career adaptability. These three elements are shown in the diagram (Dang, 2002):

Figure 3. Elements of career orientation



Career counseling can be understood as a system of psychological-educational-medical measures to discover and comprehensively assess students' and employees' self-competence with the purpose of helping students scientifically choose a career (Dang, 2002; Dang, 2010). The results of career counselling means providing suggestions for that students and employees regarding which career suits their aspiration, self-competence and labour market demands.

Career choice, is defined as the suitability of students' and employees' career aspiration for specific areas. It has been previously shown that career counseling and career choice are distinguishable. . For career choice, people are selected to train for a career or a job which is required by the workforce. Specialised staff need to answer questions at enrolment: Does that candidate suit the career he or she likes? Meanwhile, career counselling involves studying a candidate's psychological characteristics to recommend an appropriate career.

Lastly, career adaptability refers to the process of gradually taking students into a career. It often undergoes 5 stages of forming and development as follows (Koen et. al., 2012). In the first stage, the learner becomes acquainted with the new environment – vocational school. This



stage marks the period of turning high school students into apprentices. The second stage involves mastering of the career thanks to learning at school, learning specialised subjects and production practices at VET institutions. This is a long-term and crucial period because it has a great impact on learners' achievements or failures as part of an in-depth career (Zacher, 2014). If this stage is successful, learners will be motivated to dig deeper in the career. However, if this stage fails or is ineffective, learners will feel disappointed or even give up their career. In the third stage, students are often sent to factories, enterprises, the labour market, marking the period of turning vocational students into workers. This stage begins from the time students work as interns in enterprises or factories.

Conclusion and Implications

In Vietnam, career education has recently attracted a great deal of interest. However, investment in career orientation service and educational stream is still limited whereas the need for career orientation and stream has become increasingly urgent, complicated and challenging. Although career orientation requires public contribution, the implementation of further career orientation and streaming in TVET institutions is necessary to meet the need of human resource development in Vietnam in the current period. Based on our previous discussion, we propose several insights into career orientation and streaming in Vietnamese TVET institutions.

Implementing career orientation and stream in TVET institutions has to be established on a scientific bases. In addition, career officers need to flexibly adopt suitable measures and processes to master their own roles, functions, and missions in career orientation. Furthermore, the role of a careers officer should be distinguishable from the role of vocational teachers in conducting vocational guidance for students in TVET institutions. The importance of implementing vocational orientation and student streaming based on labour-market orientation in TVET institutions is highlighted by the fact that career adaptability has become an important element in determining career persistence in the labour market.

Given the current context in which high school students do not have proper awareness of VET institutions so that they choose vocational guidance education in VET institutions should confirm the results of career orientation. If students do not know why they chose a VET institution, then it is difficult for them to reach the necessary level of career adaptability.

Training quality of VET institutions depends on their teaching, training and educating. When students can not adapt themselves to their vocations, it is the responsibility of vocational educational managers to reevaluate the students. If there is no positive signal in students' career adaptability, vocational guidance has to be implemented. In this stage, vocational guidance is the assessors' task.



Other than career adaptability, which is often formed in the last stage of vocational training process, psychological preparation for vocational training should also be highlighted, as labourers also require workers to perform other duties which have similar working purposes, tools and working conditions. In addition, labour contracts can be terminated for certain reasons. In this situation, the ability to seek jobs and self-employment helps labourers avoid unemployment.

Labourers need to possess the necessary vocational knowledge, skills and attitude to properly assess workers' career adaptability. In addition, labourers' vocational morality and conscience at work are needed to be considered and emphasised. Clearly, the quality of human resources greatly depends on career-oriented education. This quality is a significant step to attain goals in vocational training in TVET institutions. In other words, career-oriented education contributes to achieving training goals. Hence, the internal logic of VET is solved: TVET institutions can only gain training goals perfectly when career-oriented education is affirmed as an indispensable part of training programs in TVET institutions.



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