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## **Empowering Non-Formal Education Policy on Life Skills and Its Implications on People Welfare**

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### **Abstract**

The non-formal education policy in responding to the life skills needs of learners has been anticipated by the issuance of some products of legal regulations concerning the non-formal education. Life skills education was explicitly mentioned in the legislation, but its implementation has not been in line with the expectations. In practice, many training institutions were only responsible for the output without even trying to channel or hire the students after graduation. The developed curriculum referred to the national standard curriculum by adding local content. Welfare could be easily obtained because the alumni got jobs after completing their skill training. Thus, the life skills education which has been developed was able to give positive implications, especially for the welfare of its alumni and their families.

**Keywords:** *Non-formal education, Curriculum.*

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## Introduction

A policy is a manner to act deliberately set, a maneuver intended to mislead others; a consistent set of actions whether intended or not, an umbrella designating the areas of actions, and a way of looking at the world (Scott & Davis, 2015). Meanwhile, Schermerhorn et al., (2005) defined a policy is a guideline to act outlining the important target and widely demonstrating how an activity can be done. Meanwhile, Rollinson (2008) stated that a policy can be described as a guideline or principle that may guide future decision-making if and when certain elements appear. In addition, the policy may also indicate an intended standard of behavior, which would lead people to take an action in a certain way. For example, some banks adopt a policy not to invest in any inappropriate or violating morally projects.

Correspondingly, a policy provides guidelines for the taking and diversion of decisions, for example, specific decisions regarding Human Resources Management (HRM), policy may include giving priority to the promotion of organization, applying the retirement age; at any time, only hiring a bachelor degree or professionally qualified accountant, and allowing front-line managers in consultation with HRM managers to appoint staff under a certain level of salary (Mullins, 2016). A policy could be described as a projected program of goals values and practices and a course of action that has some purpose specified by an actor or actors in addressing an issue or problem. From such definition, it can be summarized that a policy reflects a guideline to act outlining important goals and widely demonstrating how an activity can be done and indicating standards of behavior that lead people to take an action in a certain way. In the public context, a public policy is formulated by Dye (2016) as 'whatever government chooses to do or not to do.' Meanwhile, Edwards and Sharkansky (1978) pointed out that a public policy as 'what government say and do or do not do, it is a goal or purpose of government programs, important ingredients of the program, and the implementation of intention and rules.'

A policy will be useless without implementation. According to Daft (2012), implementation is 'the step in the decision-making process that involves using managerial, administrative, and persuasive abilities to translate the chosen alternative into action.' Especially in public administration, Shafritz et al. (2015) defines implementation as 'the process of putting a government program into effect; it is the total process of translating a legal mandate, whether an executive order or an enacted statute, into appropriate program directives and structures that provide services or create goods.' Implementation is a process of interaction between the setting of goals and actions geared to achieving them as well as an ability to forge subsequent links in the causal chain so as to obtain the desired results. The similar definition is expressed by Stewart et al. (2007) that implementation is a process as well as an outcome. The success of a policy implementation can be measured or seen from the process and the outcome achievement, which is whether or not the expected objectives are achieved. Van Meter and Van Horn (1975) clarified that the policy implementation is an "action by the public and individuals (or groups) that aims to achieve the goals set in previous policy decision. In a broader perspective, the meaning of policy implementation is understanding what actually happens after a program is declared valid or formulated is the focus of attention of policy implementation.

Jones (1984) proposed three activities to operate the program for the policy implementation, namely: organization, interpretation, and application. Organization means "the establishment or rearrangement of resources, units, and methods for putting a program into effect." Interpretation refers to the translation of program language (often contained in a statute) into acceptable and feasible plan and directives. Application is defined as the routine provision of services, payments, or other agreed upon program objectives or instrument. To examine the effectiveness of policy implementation, an evaluation is required. In this case, the evaluation of policy is intended to determine four aspects, namely: policy-making process, implementation process, consequences of policy, and) effectiveness of policy impact (Dunn, 2015).

Evaluation has a number of characteristics that distinguish it from other methods of analysis of policy, namely: (1) Focus on value. Evaluation is focused on an assessment regarding the need or value of a policy and program. Evaluation is primarily an attempt to determine the social benefits or usefulness of a policy or program, and not merely an attempt to collect information about the results of anticipated and unanticipated policy actions, (2) Interdependence of fact and value. Evaluation demand

depends on both facts and values. To declare that a particular policy or program has achieved the highest (or lowest) performance level, it is required not only that the policy outcomes are valuable to some individuals, groups or whole communities. To do so, it must be supported by evidence that the outcomes of the policy are actually the consequences of actions taken to solve specific problems, (3) Orientation of the present and past. Evaluative demand differs from advocate demand, directed at the present and past outcomes, rather than the future outcomes. Evaluation is retrospective and ex post (after actions being carried out). Recommendation, also covering value premises, is prospective and ex ante (made before actions being undertaken), (4) Duality of value. The value underlying an evaluation demand has double qualities, because they are seen as objective as well as way. Evaluation equals to recommendation to the extent that the existing value can be considered as intrinsic (necessary for it) or extrinsic (necessary because affecting the achievement of other goals). Value is often arranged in a hierarchy that reflects the relative importance and interdependence between the goals and objectives (Dunn, 2015).

According to Dunn (2015) that there are at least six types of policy evaluation criteria, namely: (1) effectiveness, with respect to whether an alternative can achieve the expected outcome (impact), or achieve the objectives of taking an action. Effectiveness, which is closely associated with technical rationality, is always measured by unit of product or service or its monetary value; (2) efficiency, regarding the amount of effort required to produce a certain level of effectiveness. Efficiency, which is synonymous with economic rationality, is the relationship between effectiveness and effort, the latter is generally measured by monetary costs; (3) adequacy, with respect to how far a level of effectiveness satisfies the needs, values, or opportunities that fosters a problem. Adequacy criteria emphasize the strong relationship between policy alternatives and expected results; (4) equity, which is closely associated with legal and social rationality and refers to the distribution of impacts and efforts amongst different groups in society. Distribution-oriented policy is a policy which the result (for example, service unit or monetary benefits) or effort (such as monetary costs) is equitably distributed; (5) responsiveness, with respect to how far a policy can satisfy the needs, preferences, or values of certain social groups, and (6) appropriateness, closely associated with substantive rationality, because the question of appropriateness is not related to the individual criteria units, but two or more criteria together. Appropriateness refers to the value or price of program objectives and to the strong assumptions underlying those objectives.

Empowering the policy on life skills required good understanding on what life skills are. According to Brolin (1997) that life skills refer to a continuum of knowledge and skills needed by a person to function independently in his life. Furthermore, the Broad-Based Education Team (National Education Ministry of the Republic of Indonesia) defined life skills as skills a person has to be willing and dare to face life's problems and live naturally without pressure, and be proactive and creative to find solutions to overcome them. Life Skills also refer to the ability of adaptive and positive behaviour that makes a person able to control effectively the needs and challenges of everyday life. Although there are differences of opinion in defining life skills, they are essentially the same that life skills are the ability, skills and capability a person need in the face of and run a real life (Brolin, 1997).

Life Skills refer to a wide range of capabilities a person need to live one's life successfully, happily and in dignity in society. Life Skills are the ability to communicate effectively, the ability to develop partnerships, take a role as a responsible citizen, have readiness and capability to work, and has characters and ethics to come into the world of work. Therefore, the coverage of life skills is very broad, such as communication skills, decision-making skills, resource and time-management skills, and planning skills (Hodge et al, 2016). Life Skills can be grouped into five aspects, namely (1) skill to know oneself or personal ability, (2) social skills or interpersonal skills, (3) rational thinking skills, (4) academic skills, and (5) vocational skills, made on the education and extramural lines with different emphasis on each level. In basic education, the emphasis is given to collaborative skills, while vocational skills are provided in secondary education and higher and adult population groups.

Characteristics of life skills learning include: (1) a process identification of learning needs, (2) an awareness process of shared learning, (3) harmony in learning activities to develop oneself, learn, have independent business or joint venture, (4) a mastery process of personal, social, vocational,

academic, managerial and entrepreneurial skills (5) an experience-granting process of conducting job properly and producing top quality products, (6) an interaction process to share and learn from the experts, (7) a competence assessment process, and (8) a technical assistance to work or form a joint venture. When associated with a particular job, life skills within the scope of non-formal education are aimed at the mastery of vocational skills, which essentially lies in the mastery of a specific occupational job. If understood properly, it can be said that life skills in the context of specific occupational skills are actually needed by everyone. This means that a life skills program in the elucidation of a non-formal education program is expected to help people to have self-esteem and confidence to make a living in the context of opportunities available within their environment (Hodge et al, 2016).

Basically, life skills help learners to develop learning abilities (learning how to learn), eliminate inappropriate habits and mindsets (learning how to unlearn), recognize and celebrate self-potential to be developed and practiced, courage to face life problems, and solve them creatively (Hodge et al, 2016). Life skills education in its implementation refers to four pillars of education which include: learning to know, learning to do, learning to be, and learning to live together. In brief, life skills education is a conscious and deliberate effort to create learning that produces learners who have the ability to solve their problems independently.

Welfare implies a well-being condition or state. This sense refers to a term of social welfare as a condition of the fulfilment of material and non-material needs. Social welfare is a condition or state of human well-being. In line with such definition, welfare of a state refers to an ideal model of development that is focused on improving welfare through the provision of a more important role to state in providing social services universally and comprehensively to its citizens (Midgley & Tang, 2001; Midgley, 1995, 2001, 2016).

In a development perspective, development in a broader sense refers to a process of continuous improvement of people or a social system as a whole toward a better or more humane life. A better or more humane life more or less means the more prosperous life. Furthermore, sustenance is defined as an increased availability and expansion of distribution of different kinds of life basic necessities – such as food, clothing, shelter, health, and safety protection. Self-esteem is associated with an increased standard of living not only in the form of increased revenue, but also includes the addition of employment (job opportunities), improvement of education quality, as well as increased attention to cultural values and humanity, all of which is not only to improve the material welfare, but also foster personal identity and the nation itself. Freedom is an expansion of options for economic and social development of each individual and the nation as a whole, namely by freeing people from the entanglement of reliance and dependence attitudes, not only to people or other countries, but also to any force that could potentially degrade the values of humanity (Todaro & Smith, 2009). Well-being is a result of an economic system of an independent, productive and efficient state that allows individual income kept in saving. A state of well-being, in essence, refers to “an active role of a state in managing and organizing the economy” which “includes the responsibility of the state to ensure the availability of basic welfare services within a particular level for its citizens.”

## **Methodology**

This study is conducted to evaluate the implementation of non-formal education policy at Handayani Education Foundation in South Sulawesi, Indonesia for improving life skills and their implications on the welfare of society, especially the alumni. The method used was policy evaluation (research evaluation). Policy evaluation aims to determine the implementation of a policy so as to obtain information on whether the implementation has been as expected. As noted by Dunn (2015), policy evaluation is intended to determine four aspects, namely: policy-making process, implementation process, policy consequences, and effectiveness of policy impact. Policy evaluation basically attempts to provide an explanation for the implementation of a program or policy.

## **Results**

In Indonesia, non-formal education has a sufficiently strong legal protection. There are three legal bases governing the non-formal education. First is the Government Regulation No. 73 of 1991 on Extramural Education. Second is the Law on National Education System No. 20 of 2003, particularly Article 26 paragraph (1) to paragraph (6). Third is the Regulation of Indonesian National Education Minister No. 49 of 2007 on Education Management Standards by Non-formal Education Unit. Fourth is

the strategic plan developed by the Directorate General of Extramural Education, Department of National Education 2005-2009.

However, when examining any regulation pertaining to non-formal education issues, a detailed explanation that specifically regulates life skills education is not found. This may happen because life skills education greatly varies, so in practice, it is left to each organizing institution. Implementation of life skills education is also growing, so if it tightly regulated, it will precisely the creativity of non-formal education organizers. In this case, the government's duty is only to monitor and evaluate the implementation of non-formal education by organizing institutions.

Life skills education is explicitly mentioned in the legislation, but not clearly outlined. This leads it to less attention in the implementation, so the result is less in line with the expectations. This condition implies an empirical fact that life skills education stipulated in the relevant regulations has not fully anticipated the needs of life skills developing in the community. Apart from the lack of the content factor, the implementation is also not maximized.

In general, the policies developed by Handayani Education Foundation (HEF) are intended to provide supplies for the individual learners with real skills needed in society. This is evident in the goals embodied by HEF, namely: (1) course plus, which provides sufficient knowledge of entrepreneurship in addition to the core materials, (2) one-year professional program, the program is called the 3 in 1 program, because in addition to the core materials (computer application, computer technology, automotive, mobile technology, etc.) it is also equipped with the knowledge of entrepreneurship and English, and (3) 6-month professional program, the program is intended for people who are busy in work or who want to work fast so that the concentration of the program is on the core materials and entrepreneurship.

In order to achieve these objectives, the general policy of HEF is trying to equip learners in the middle of the community with the needs of actual life proficiency and skills making it useful in achieving success and prosperity of life. Meanwhile, the specific policies developed are principally similar to those implemented by other non-formal educational institutions, namely to develop specific skills, such as sewing, computer courses, technician courses, automotive courses, language courses, and other special skills. In its implementation, it is still restricted by a number of factors such as local cultural problems inherent in society, like orientation to become civil servants.

HEF uses the principle of broad autonomy to the managers, especially the Directors of HEF throughout Indonesia, in managing education. It aims to encourage the creativity of managers, which is expected to succeed the achievement of the foundation vision and mission. Operationally, it is done by setting up facilities and infrastructure, preparing instructors, conducting training in a disciplined manner and attempting to channel the alumni in the world of work. One obstacle faced by this foundation is the local community view of life, which is a very great orientation to become civil servants, thus the urge reduces their interest and seriousness to take advantage of the non-formal education.

In each Handayani course institution in local areas, the number of instructors is approximately 10 people from every profession in accordance with the quality of education and skills possessed. In general, the instructors' condition has been adequate, regarding both the number and competence. However, those requiring a review are regarding the promotion system and career development. Learners on HEF course institutions are relatively numerous and come from upper to middle classes, with a varied age range with the eldest up to 40 years old. The curriculum developed by HEF is considered by students and alumni weighty and relevant to the demands of work.

The supporting facilities owned by HEF are still considered lacking, especially libraries and other supporting facilities such as some non-air-conditioned rooms. The learning methods developed by HEF follow the general principles of non-formal education giving more priority to practice than theory, with the learning proportion of 70% practice and 30% theory. This is in line with the main objective to achieve in non-formal education, which is emphasized more on the mastery of practical skills to be ready to work after graduation. Budget used for each HEF course institution is at an average of 150 million per month which is entirely derived from the contributions of learners. The funds are used to finance daily operations and also to compensate the employees.

The non-formal education organized by HEF is able to develop the life skills of learners. The indications include: the level of graduate absorption has reached 95%. This shows that HEF graduates can meet the demands of skills needed in industrial world. The life skills program developed by HEF managed to increase the welfare of living of its alumni. Welfare can be easily obtained because the alumni get jobs after completing their skill training at HEF. It makes sense because based on data owned by the foundation the absorption rate of graduates reaches 95%. Some graduates work in private sectors, become civil servants, and also become entrepreneurs. Learners who have not worked when registering in the program are mostly successful after completing their skill education at HEF, since

almost 95% of its alumni are properly channelled to work and become entrepreneurs. So, there are only 5% of its alumni who have graduated but not worked.

### **Discussion**

Based on these results the number of graduates produced by Handayani Education Foundation can create their own employment especially in the field of entrepreneurship. This is in line with the opinions proposed by Triwibowo and Bahagijo (2006) in which they claim that welfare is the result of an independent, productive and efficient state economic system with individual income that allows for savings.

In addition to work as an entrepreneur, some graduates of Handayani are absorbed in several jobs because basically life skills help the learners in several ways. They can develop learning skills (learning how to learn). They can eliminate the bad habit and mindset (learning how to unlearn). They can realize and be grateful for their potential to be developed and practiced. They are also dare to face life's problems, and to solve those problems creatively (Anwar, 2005).

According to Hamzah (2007) the welfare of the state refers to an ideal model of development that is focused on improving welfare by providing a more important role to the state in providing universal and comprehensive social services to its citizens. This is in accordance with the expected results of the realization of non-formal education system in Handayani.

### **Conclusions**

Firstly, in Indonesia, the non-formal education policy in responding to the life skills needs of learners has been anticipated by the issuance of some products of legal regulations concerning the non-formal education, namely: Law No. 20 of 2003 on National Education System, Government Regulation No. 73 of 1991 on Extramural Education, Regulation of Minister of National Education No. 49 of 2007 on Education Management Standards by Non-formal Education Unit, and Strategic Plan of the Directorate General of Extramural Education in 2005-2009. Life skills education is explicitly mentioned in legislation, but its implementation has not been in line with the expectations. In practice, many training institutions are only responsible to the output, without even trying to channel or hire the students after graduation.

Secondly, HEF has well implemented legislation relating to the non-formal education, especially regarding the life skills education. It is among others embodied in the form of HEF general policy that attempts to equip learners with the needs of actual life proficiency and skills making it useful in achieving success and prosperity of life. The curriculum developed refers to the national standard curriculum by adding local content. The concept of non-formal education developed by HEF is in line with the legislation relating to non-formal education, especially Law Number 20 of 2003 on National Education System.

Thirdly, the life skills program developed by HEF managed to increase the welfare of living of its alumni. Welfare can be easily obtained because the alumni get jobs after completing their skill training at HEF. Absorption rate of graduates in the workforce reaches 95%, distributed in various employment sectors, such as private sectors, civil servants, and entrepreneurs. Income earned varies depending on company or institution where they work or business in which they are engaged. Income earned is generally not only to meet their own needs, but also managed to contribute to meet the needs of their families and even their brothers or sisters. Thus, the life skills education developed by HEF is able to give positive implications, especially for the welfare of its alumni and their families.

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