

Personal Development Plan as a Guidance and Counseling Strategy in Higher Education

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Abstract—The process of learning activities in higher education differs from those in primary and secondary schools, which is causing problems for students that can affect the way they learn and have an impact on their learning outcomes and future careers. To overcome this problem, the college counselor needs to develop a Personal Development Plan as an alternative strategy to provide assistance to students. The implementation of Personal Development Plan in higher education provides opportunities for students to develop themselves, to improve academic achievements, and to prepare to achieve their careers in the future. To ensure the success of the Personal Development Plan process, the implementation of the strategy must be in accordance with the curriculum, all parties involved are ready and each environmental factor is of concern. In addition, students must have a commitment to be actively involved and get used to reflecting, making plans, and implementing plans on an on going basis.

Keywords—*personal development plan, guidance and counseling, higher education*

I. INTRODUCTION

Higher education as an institution has a different teaching and learning process than in primary and secondary schools. The process of learning in tertiary institutions is student centered [1]. Students do the learning process to get satisfying achievements and are facilitated by lecturers in order to achieve their learning goals. Students who carry out activities in tertiary institutions are very susceptible to problems either in the fields of learning, personal, social or career. This happens as a result of various demands for college assignments on campus, as well as demands for life outside campus. Such conditions create feelings of pressure on students because of their inability to meet these standards [2]. These problems can make their achievements not optimally reached, which can be seen from the achievement of student achievement index (IP) which is low, or below average.

To help students in tertiary institutions, the participation of supervisors or academic advisers (PA) are required [3] and the Guidance and Counseling Unit (UBK) available in tertiary institutions should be utilized optimally. The student support service program implemented by the Undiksha Guidance and Counseling Unit (UBK) found several problems, which are (1) the implemented 3S program has not been able to help all Undiksha students due to the limited number of staff; (2) academic guiding by academic supervisors (PA) is very

limited because the frequency is only twice for each semester; and (3) lack of readiness and trust of students to express their problems to the UBK team and PA lecturers so that the problems experienced by these students cannot be addressed properly [4]. Therefore the right strategy is needed to help students independently.

Personal development planning (PDP) is the most appropriate strategy to help students solve their problems independently. The effectiveness of PDP in improving student learning achievement is proven by [5] in his research which states that PDP is proven to have a positive effect on improving student learning outcomes. Similar research was conducted by [6], that PDP can help students take responsibility for their own learning processes and facilitate their progress more effectively. The PDP process allows students to always reflect and evaluate themselves. Through self-evaluation, students will be able to plan their studies well.

PDP needs to be applied and developed at the tertiary level because as far as the author's knowledge, specifically there is no research on PDP at tertiary institutions in Indonesia. The application of PDP in higher education provides an alternative strategy of providing assistance to students by counselors so that guidance and counseling services in higher education are not only limited to responsive services but also basic services are highly likely to be done.

II. DISCUSSION

A. *Guidance and Counseling in Higher Education*

Students having complex problems need the help of someone professional to solve these problems. Counselors in higher education play an important role in helping students overcome various problems and avoid the wrong adjustment. The existence of guidance and counseling services in tertiary institutions is highly needed in order to support the personal, social, academic and career development of students. Although, structurally, the position of the college counselor has not been listed in the education system in Indonesia [7]. Nevertheless, the efforts to develop and to improve the existence of guidance and counseling in universities continue to be done. One of them is by building a guidance and counseling service unit determined by the head of the relevant university.

College counselors are no different from counselors at the level of kindergarten, elementary school, and secondary school. They must also develop and implement a guidance and counseling curriculum, individual student planning, responsive services, and support systems. However, more time is spent on providing assistance in individual student career planning and conducting responsive services [7].

Counselors in tertiary institutions have the task of facilitating counselees to grow their character, mastering hard skills and soft skills with a service focus on strengthening career in accordance with their track record of education and the need to actualize themselves [7]. In addition, counselors in higher education must be able to answer the challenges that arise as a result of increasingly complex student problems. The challenges of college counselors include: (1) academic motivation; (2) development of appropriate study skills; (3) development of appropriate communication and human relations skills; (4) time management and personal responsibility; (5) development of appropriate academic and personal goals and planning for their implementation; and (6) maintaining proper mental and physical health [8].

To answer these challenges, college counselors must create the most appropriate strategy in addition to providing responsive service. The most appropriate strategy is to develop a personal development plan.

B. Personal Development Plan

Personal development planning (PDP) can be interpreted as a structure and process carried out by students to reflect and plan their personal, educational and career development [9,10,11]. Through PDP, students carry out three activities, which are reflecting, planning, and implementing. The reflection activity here is contemplating the learning process, performance and achievements so far [9,10,11]. The intended planning activities are making plans to develop personal, academic and career. The development plan is then implemented and recorded properly.

The main objective of PDP is to increase the students' capacity to reflect on learning activities so far, plan the learning process and its development, and independently be responsible for it [10,6,11]. PDP in more detail through 6 things that are the core of PDP implementation:

1. A structured process that is integral to learning at all levels. PDP is inseparable from the learning process by paying attention to developments at every level of education. Each level of education has its own unique characteristics either the learning environment, the method of study, or the character of the students themselves. Therefore, PDP is made based on the needs of students and their environment.
2. Concerned with learning in a holistic sense (in academic, personal and professional contexts). In a personal context, learning is the process of studying the condition of the self, understanding the weaknesses and strengths of the self, understanding the purpose of life, and developing personal behavior or skills. While learning in academic context is to understand the strengths and weaknesses of learning possessed, and to study the learning skills needed in order to improve learning achievement. In professional context, learning can be interpreted as an activity of learning the abilities and skills needed and developing themselves according to standards in certain professions that will be useful for their career life.

3. An inclusive process, open to all learners. PDP can be carried out by all students and are adjusted to the conditions of each student. Although PDP is carried out according to student conditions, the PDP process is not carried out arbitrarily, it must be designed in a structured manner, which involves a number of stages and definite planning.
4. Something that an individual does with guidance and support which decrease as personal capability is developed so that it becomes self-sustaining. Although it focuses on individuals and is carried out by students themselves individually, the implementation of PDP requires support from other parties. The support comes from tutors, academic staff and institutional systems. Initially, students need the involvement of others to guide and support the PDP process. Here, guidance from peer counselors and tutors is needed. Then the higher the ability of students and the more independent the implementation of PDP, the less guidance and support provided. When a student can carry out PDP independently, that's when he becomes a tutor to help other students who need guidance and support. This has an impact on the policies and strategies that must be held to implement, monitor and improve the quality of PDP.
5. A process that involves self-reflection, the creation of personal records, and planning and monitoring progress towards the achievement of personal objectives. Through PDP students are invited to reflect on the process and learning outcomes as well as their achievements so far. Students are trained to have high self-awareness and learn to criticize themselves, and to be active in making self-development plans in accordance with their goals. Personal development planning must be recorded in detail and documented so that the process and results achieved can be controlled independently.
6. Intended to improve the capacity of individuals to communicate their learning to others (for example, academic staff and employers). Through detailed and well-documented personal development planning notes, students are indirectly trained to communicate their learning process to others. Counselors can see and evaluate the abilities that students have not and already have so that certain training can be given to conform to predetermined standards/criteria [9].

The PDP process requires commitment from oneself to get used to reflecting, making plans and executing plans made. All processes in PDP are carried out continuously, thus forming a cycle of PDP process circles [10,12]. If described, the PDP process will take the form of a cycle like the following picture [12]:



Figure 1. Personal development plan cycle

1. Review phase

It means conducting a review of what happened and making it possible to do it [13]. In this phase, students identify their current capacity or abilities [12]. Reviewing is not free from reflection activities. Reflection is the key to the development and learning process [10]. The purpose of the review is not only to see the success that has been achieved but also by reviewing the present and comparing what is desired in the future, career plans and personal goals [14].

In the reviewing process, there are two important things, which are the activities that has already been done and the purpose of life. The intended activities include all skills and achievement development activities related to personal, academic, and career. These activities are then compared to life goals that embrace the most important values of students and form the basis of making decisions [15]. Students ask and answer questions about themselves and what they want for the future.

There are three questions students must answer when conducting a review [14]:

- a. *Where have I been? Retrospective reflection.* Students review their past activities by taking notes and then comparing it with their life goals. Students evaluate and introspect whether activities carried out in the past help realize or even make it difficult to achieve goals.
- b. *Where am I now? Reflection on the current situation.* Students make a list of current activities which are carried out every day for a period of two weeks to one month to find out how far they achieve their goals. By conducting a review of current activities, students can find out their position towards the goals set and or find the actual destination so they can see the planned route that they made. Can the carried out activities improve the skills needed to realize the goals and produce achievements? Just like setting goals, every student needs to know where he is in life and what he wants to be like [15].
- c. *Where do I want to get to? Review of opportunities and identification of personal goals or objectives.* Students make a comparison between the list of activities in the past with the present. By comparing these activities students can assess whether there is consistency in developing skills and achievements, or reflecting confusion and lack of purpose.

2. Plan phase

Is a very important stage in PDP, which is how to achieve goals and to meet learning needs [16]. In the planning phase, information is obtained from the results of the review phase assessment. Planning provides two contributions to student life, which shows how to change from current conditions to desired conditions and identify the resources needed. Planning can be described as "thinking before doing". This indicates that planning is the initial activity that must be done to get the goal, which is thinking about what is desired and how the best that can be done to achieve these goals [15].

The most important thing about a plan is the process. By processing, it will be known how that process is very important in achieving goals. To ensure that the process of achieving goals can run optimally, commitment and

creative thinking are required. "The keyword in any planning process is 'flexibility'" [15]. Flexible does not mean not committed. Commitment is directly related to the goal, while flexible is related to the way how to achieve that goal. If the plan that has been made does not go as expected, what must be done is to change the plan, not change the goal. "Never change the goal because the plan did not work - change the plan" [15]. Part of the planning process involves obstacles that can hinder the achievement of goals. To overcome these obstacles, it requires a mature plan based on the solution. Therefore, creative thinking is needed to generate ideas in overcoming these obstacles.

In essence, planning is to answer two questions, which are:

- a. *How do I get there? Possibilities and decisions on the best way of achieving goals/objectives.* Through this question, students make the best possibilities and decisions to achieve success.
- b. *How will I know I've got there? Strategy for setting targets and progress.* The thing to do is to design targets and arrange evaluation tools so that progress against the targets can be measured.

The first step in the planning stage is to write down goals. The objectives referred to in the planning stage are slightly different from the objectives at the reviewing stage. At the reviewing stage, the intended purpose is a large goal or general goal as a basis for reflecting on past and present activities. The objectives at the planning stage are more detailed because the objectives set are equipped with strategies so that those goals are achieved.

3. Implement phase

After designing a strategy, the thing that must be done so that the objectives set are achieved is doing the *action* and implementing the plan that has been made [17]. In this phase, students carry out their self-development activities. Worksheets that have been designed at the planning stage are used as a road or route at the implementation stage. Students carry out activities as planned in the planning stage. The goal is successfully achieved if the planned activities in the planning stage are successfully carried out in accordance with the plan. However, a key aspect of the action is not only doing the activity but also recording and writing down the activity [16]. Daily logs or diaries need to be developed by students to record the activities that have been done.

C. Benefits of a Personal Development Plan

PDP helps increase students' self-awareness of their strengths and weaknesses and awareness to change for the better. Besides, PDP also helps students to understand the added value through learning inside and outside the objectives of the courses they are learning. PDP is beneficial for students to: (1) make plans by integrating and taking responsibility in personal, career and academic development, identifying learning opportunities in academic programs and extracurricular activities; (2) recognize the values and evidence of learning and its development, both inside and outside the curriculum; (3) be more aware of how to learn and of the different learning strategies to achieve goals; (4) monitor and review learning progress effectively by using learning notes and evidence; (5) evaluate and recognize your strengths and weaknesses, and identify ways to overcome your perceived weaknesses and increase

strengths; (6) develop identity in relation to academic, professional and personal development; (7) develop vocabulary in developing communication and achievement; (8) prepare yourself in finding, continuing or changing jobs; (9) express the skills and knowledge that have been obtained to others; and (10) be better prepared for the demands of ongoing development and career development in professional and academic careers [9].

The practice of PDP is not only beneficial for students but also beneficial for college counselors in terms of [9]: (1) helping students to be more independent; (2) providing a framework for discussion on individual student progress; (3) providing the right mechanism to connect the curriculum with the world outside of tertiary institutions by improving the quality of interaction between tutors and students; (4) make opportunities outside the campus to study more effectively; (5) creating a mechanism through career-related skills and abilities; and (6) enhance student understanding of individual development and the ability to provide meaningful work references.

D. Type Ideal Personal Development Plan

PDP has three ideal types which are grouped based on complexity and diversity in the structure of PDP [18], namely:

1. *Professional*, is based on professional competency criteria and focuses on developing professional competencies related to working in certain fields that are strongly influenced by established requirements. In this type, the profession pursued by students must have ongoing practice development and professional competence.
2. *Employment*, based on the criteria for job requirements that must be owned, and focus on work or soft skills, not on work discipline. Students are prepared to face a competitive job market, and to develop the skills needed to face the stages of job acceptance selection.
3. *Academic*, criteria based on abilities that must be possessed in the learning process that is focused on academic development, metacognitive skills, and special discipline skills. Students develop an understanding of the learning process, thinking skills that support learning and awareness of how they as individuals learn, as well as other skills such as essay writing skills, report writing, and presentation skills.

In general, each of the three types of PDP cannot be found independently. It usually found as a mixture of the them. However, the differences of these types have an impact on the differences in objectives, which will then lead to differences in methods in the assessment and criteria used to prove and assess the learning process [19].

E. Implementation of a Personal Development Plan

The implementation of PDP cannot be separated from student's involvement. Students are encouraged to be actively involved in the activities and the recording process of PDP. Students are also given the opportunity to integrate extracurricular experiences to develop and reflect on themselves, make learning notes containing information about the qualities and the acquired skills, and provide feedback about their experiences during the PDP process. Students are given clear guidance on the appropriateness of their learning evidence and work records at a verified institution.

Therefore, as well as recognition and development of student involvement in the PDP process. The most important factor in successful introduction of PDP policy is the application of strategy. Five PDP implementation strategies to support the needs of certain student groups, which are:

1. *Discrete*. PDP is an additional curriculum and is designed separately from the curriculum in tertiary institutions. Through this strategy, the students involved must have high motivation and the involvement of other parties is very important to support the effectiveness of the implementation of PDP.
2. *Linked*. PDP is linked to the existing curriculum and is seen as aligned with the curriculum. Students fill in a personal log to view and link PDP activities with the curriculum.
3. *Embedded*. PDP is embedded to certain elements in the curriculum in tertiary institutions that reflect the main support in implementing PDP. PDP also functions as a link between one material with another material in the curriculum.
4. *Integrated*. Elements of the curriculum are in line with the PDP process. All important parts of the curriculum involve activities that are in line with the PDP process.
5. *Extended*. PDP is not only integrated into the curriculum but is also explicitly integrated into learning activities outside the curriculum [9].

To determine the right PDP implementation strategy is by paying attention to three things, which are: curriculum, the readiness of the parties involved, and other environmental factors. The curriculum in universities plays a major role in the implementation of PDP. Counselors need to examine the possibilities of whether the PDP process can be included in the existing curriculum. Is it necessary to develop a curriculum that is consistent with the PDP process? Is the curriculum possible to be developed? What is the appropriate curriculum design that is in accordance with the PDP process.

The PDP process is not only involving students but also many other parties. The number of parties involved is greatly influenced by the existing curriculum. The more curriculum elements associated with the PDP process, the more academic staff will be involved. In order for the PDP process to run smoothly and effectively, the academic staff involved need special training. The counselor is responsible for providing this specific training. Students as PDP implementers must also be prepared by introducing and conveying the benefits of PDP to the students' personal, academic and career development. Counselors must also prepare tutors who can help students during the PDP process.

Environmental factors include existing facilities and infrastructure as well as financing. Many things must be considered and adjusted. One is about how to deliver PDP material; is it delivered through a workshop or seminar or only studied through modules that have been prepared PDP file forms that reflect the process are based on practicality, effectiveness and financing factors. Is the PDP process recorded in written form using a module or in e-file format? The form of storage affects the facilities and infrastructure that must be built.

III. CONCLUSION

The implementation of PDP in higher education is in line with the counselor's task, which is to facilitate the counselee to develop an independent and responsible character, to master hard skills and soft skills with a service that focus on career stabilization in accordance with his educational track record and the need to actualize himself. In addition, the application of PDP in tertiary institutions provides alternative strategies for providing assistance to students by counselors, so that guidance and counseling services in tertiary institutions are not only limited to responsive services. To ensure the success of the PDP process, the implementation of the strategy must be in accordance with the curriculum, the readiness of the parties involved and the existing environmental factors is of concern. In the process, PDP is inseparable from the involvement of all parties, especially students. The implementation of PDP in higher education provides an opportunity for students to develop themselves, improve academic achievement, and prepare themselves to achieve their careers in the future. Students must have a commitment to be actively involved and get used to reflecting, making plans and implementing the plan continuously, so that the cycle of the PDP process is formed. This paper is a mere author's idea, so further research is needed on the effectiveness of PDP in guidance and counseling services in tertiary institutions. Research on PDP development at Indonesian tertiary institutions is also very appropriate to be carried out considering that no research has been done before.

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