



# The Impact of Internship Programs on Formal Vocational Education in Indonesia

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## ABSTRACTS

Living a life requires many things to meet needs for the present, tomorrow, next week, next month, and even for the future. One fundamental factor that can support meeting life's needs and facilitate a smoother life is education. In brief, education provides new knowledge, shapes personal character for the better, and eases the path to a brighter future for all individuals pursuing formal and non-formal education, which benefits themselves, society, and the nation. After completing primary and junior high school education, one can continue to pursue secondary and higher education (bachelor's, postgraduate, professional, and vocational education). Internship becomes a mandatory aspect in vocational education as it serves as an introduction to the industry and the world of work. Vocational education emphasizes structured learning, skills, and more directed expertise. Therefore, this research aims to determine students' readiness to participate in internship programs, the benefits derived from internships, and the impact of internships on both students and vocational education. This research employs the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method. The results indicate that job readiness involves the development of students' work-related attitudes, values, knowledge, and skills, and internships are highly necessary to train students to become accustomed to real workplace conditions and environments.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Living a life requires many things to fulfil needs for the present, tomorrow, next week, next month, and even for the future. One fundamental element that can support meeting life's needs and facilitate a smoother life is education. Based on the Republic of Indonesia Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System, it states that 'Education is a fundamental and planned effort to create a learning atmosphere and learning process so that learners actively develop their potential for spiritual strength, self-control, personality, intelligence, noble character, and the skills required for themselves, society, nation, and state.' In short, education provides all new knowledge, shapes individual character for the better, and eases the path to a brighter future for everyone who pursues formal and non-formal education, which benefits themselves, society, and the nation (Rahayu, 2020).

Currently in Indonesia, all citizens are required to undergo basic education for nine years, consisting of six years of primary education (elementary school) and three years of junior high school education (middle school) (Sujatmoko, 2010). Basic education is a process not only aimed at providing foundational intellectual skills in reading, writing, and arithmetic but also at optimizing the development of learners' basic abilities in aspects such as intellectual, social, and personal development, to enable them to continue to junior high school education (Taufiq, 2020). Learners in basic education range in age from 6 to 13 years old. Junior high school education is the formal education level that follows the completion of basic education (Nusagama College, 2016). Learners in junior high school education are typically between the ages of 12 and 15.

For those who wish to continue their education to the next level in Indonesia, there are two available options: General Education, in the form of Senior High School (SMA), and Vocational Education, in the form of Vocational High School (SMK). Both SMA and SMK serve as educational institutions with several primary objectives (Aziz & Indrawati, 2017). The primary goal of Senior High School (SMA) is to prepare students to continue their education at the tertiary level, while Vocational High School (SMK) prepares students for the workforce. However, SMK graduates can still pursue higher education in a field related to their chosen SMK specialization. After completing general secondary education, one can further their education through undergraduate and postgraduate programs, professional education following completion of a bachelor's degree, and vocational education, including diploma or bachelor's degree programs.

Vocational work refers to employment that aligns with qualifications or expertise (KBBI V). Meanwhile, Vocational Education is higher education that supports the mastery or development of specific applied skills, typically encompassing diploma programs equivalent to academic programs at the undergraduate level. The distinction between Academic Education and Vocational Education lies in the fact that Academic Education emphasizes theoretical knowledge, whereas Vocational Education focuses on structured learning, skills, and more directed expertise. According to data from the Ministry of Research, Technology, and Higher Education, Vocational Education in Indonesia comprises 1,365 educational institutions, including 1,103 vocational academies and 262 polytechnics. Graduates of Vocational Education programs are conferred with vocational degrees or associate degrees. Moreover, they are equipped with specific skills and expertise that prove valuable when entering the workforce.

The Ministry of Education and Culture (Kemendikbud) has launched the policy of 'freedom to learn, freedom campus,' which is interpreted as a mandate for educational institutions to provide interest and flexibility for their students in determining the form and content of learning according to their chosen interests (Kemendikbud RI, 2020). This policy includes nine programs, namely campus teaching, internships, independent study, independent student exchange, independent entrepreneurship, Indonesian international student mobility awards, practical teaching, Bangkit by Google, Goto, and Traveloka, and the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources (ESDM) - Guerrilla. The goal of this policy is to create a culture of autonomous educational institutions, free from bureaucracy, and to establish a more innovative learning system based on specialization and the guidance of an increasingly modern world (Arifin & Muslim, 2020). Furthermore, it aims to enhance students' interaction with their environment, both within their own institution and with other campuses, the community, as well as industry and the workforce. One form of learning under this policy is through internships. Internships are a mandatory component of Vocational Education as a means of introducing students to the industry and the world of work. Moreover, internships serve as a platform for applying the knowledge and skills acquired, as well as gaining a deeper understanding of the real-world working environment.

Participating in internship activities typically involves several requirements that students need to meet, such as being an active student, being in the 5th, 6th, and/or 7th semester, having a minimum GPA as per the company's policy, being ready to commit, and preparing various other necessary documents (STIE EKUITAS, 2020). During the internship, participants will implement or put into practice what they have learned on campus. Additionally, participants are expected to learn new things that cannot be acquired in a classroom setting. The duration of internships varies from one institution to another, with some lasting for just one month, three months, and others ranging from 4 to 6 months or being converted based on the number of credit hours associated with the courses taken (Aisyah, 2023).

## 2. METHODS

This research began with the brainstorming of ideas, followed by reading various relevant journals. The research also employed the Systematic Literature Review method, which was used to gather and evaluate secondary data related to the topic. The procedures conducted in this research involved composing the background and objectives, identifying the problem, searching for literature, screening literature, assessing quality, extracting data, and synthesizing final data. The literature data used included academic articles from various national and international journal sources, as well as news articles published by the Food Security Agency with a timeframe from 2017 to 2021. The systematic literature synthesis procedure recommended by Cooper (1988) involves several steps, these are steps include:

- a) Formulating the problem
- b) Gathering data
- c) Evaluating the data's appropriateness
- d) Analyzing and interpreting relevant data, and
- e) Organizing and presenting the findings

## 2.1 Formulating The Problem

Based on the background discussed in this research, the researcher aims to determine whether the utilization of internship programs as a place for students to gain insights, reflection, and the application of theory during their learning process is appropriate or not. To ascertain this, the researcher has formulated the following questions::

- 1) Does the readiness of students in carrying out internship programs affect the effectiveness of the internship program?
- 2) What are the benefits obtained from the internship program?

## 2.2 Gathering Data

In this stage, the required data for the research are collected for further analysis. The following are the steps in data collection by searching for:

- 1) Website <https://scholar.google.co.id/> with the keyword "Internship Programs in Vocational Education".
- 2) Website <https://scholar.google.co.id/> with the keyword "Readiness in Internship Programs" with a specific range from 2014-2020.
- 3) The website <https://scholar.google.co.id/> with the keyword 'Education in Indonesia'.
- 4) Keywords "Internship or OJT in Vocational Education".
- 5) Keywords "Benefits of Internship for Students".

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the literature review conducted, the researcher obtained answers to the two questions in the problem statement, as follows:

### 1) Readiness of Students in Carrying Out Internship Programs

Internship programs, also commonly known as Practical Work Experience (PKL), are activities undertaken by learners to both learn and gain work experience in a company for a certain period (C, 2021). Internship programs are typically carried out by vocational school students, university students, or employees as a trial work period. At the university level, PKL is the implementation of the educational program within the institution in a real working environment to achieve specific skill levels. Practical skills encompass the understanding of theories related to a particular field (cognitive) and practical skills (psychomotor). An individual's practical skills are based on fundamental knowledge combined with regularly practiced movements that result in proficiency. These activities contribute to the formation of practical experience. Learning through the practical experiences possessed by learners is more effective in making them more skilled (Ahmad Awaludin Baiti & Sudji Munadi, 2014).

The company that accepts learners has the right to assign tasks and is obligated to provide guidance during the internship period. When the internship duration is about to end, the company will assess the work performed by the learner. While carrying out the tasks assigned by the company, the learner also forms critical reflections on the requirements of the vocational field and the level of education achieved. The most suitable workplace for practical training is one that closely resembles the environment the learner will eventually be placed in because the identification process will happen most immediately there, and the level of personal involvement will be highest.

Internship programs also require learners to be prepared to enter the workforce directly. The Customer Service Institute of Australia (2005, p.1) states that work readiness can be viewed as both a process and a goal that involves developing students' workplace-related attitudes, values, knowledge, and skills. This enables students to become increasingly aware and confident in their roles and responsibilities. In other words, work readiness can be seen as a process, interest, and goal that involves the development of learners' workplace-related attitudes, values, knowledge, and skills. A person's interest will impact the extent of their participation in an activity (Suyanto, Rahmi, & Tasman, 2019). The more interested someone is, the more they care about the activity they are engaged in (Yusuf, 2010). Additionally, here are some considerations to keep in mind when preparing for an internship program to ensure that prospective learners are ready for the internship:

- a) Possessing knowledge and skills (in line with the company's requirements)  
This is essential because it will help learners deepen their understanding, which is the goal of their internship.
- b) Having work ethics and behaviour  
This should be observed and possessed, such as proper conduct, discipline, and responsibility, to avoid misunderstandings and to foster mutual respect when interacting with others.
- c) Knowing the purpose of the internship  
This needs to be determined beforehand to maximize the benefits of participating in the internship program.
- d) Finding an internship placement that aligns with interests and goals  
This should be considered to enhance both soft skills and hard skills and to maximize the benefits of the internship program.
- e) Creating a Curriculum Vitae (CV) and cover letter  
This should be done to reflect the learner's education, experience, skills, show interests, and motivations to attract the interest of the company they are applying to.
- f) Preparing for the selection process  
This should be considered when learners are asked to interview so they can be more informed about the desired position and the company.
- g) Managing schedules and commitments  
This should be taken into account so that learners can stay focused and responsible to the company, thereby maintaining the reputation of all parties involved.
- h) Preparing permits and documents  
This should be noted because companies typically require certain permits and documents to confirm that the learner is ready for the internship program.

## 2) Benefits of Internship Programs

In accordance with what Finch and Crunkilton (1999, p.75) stated, "The major goal of vocational instruction is to prepare students for successful employment in the labor market." This means that the primary objective of vocational education is to prepare learners to be successful workers in the job market, either as skilled labor or as entrepreneurs. Therefore, internship activities are highly essential to train learners to become accustomed to the real working conditions and environments.

Experience can be defined as memories that receive and store events that occur or are experienced by an individual at a specific time and place, serving as references for one's autobiography (Daehler & Bukatko, 1985). Nolker (1983) mentioned that educational institutions often lack the means to familiarize learners with the realities and challenges of the workplace. The insights needed can only be gained through accumulating practical work experience in actual workplace settings.

Besides the benefits gained by learners through internship programs, companies also benefit directly and indirectly, such as saving labor costs and identifying potential employees (C, 2021). Learners who are work-ready, even before completing their education, can be recruited as employees in the company, providing an advantage for both parties.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

Based on the research and findings obtained, it is concluded that:

- 1) Internship programs are activities carried out by students and involve direct participation from companies within a workplace environment.
- 2) Internship programs require students to be ready to enter the workforce in order to develop practical skills, including an understanding of theories in their field (cognitive) and practical skills (psychomotor).
- 3) The benefits of internship programs include training students to become accustomed to the real work environment and conditions. Relying solely on school facilities without providing direct practical learning in the workplace does not adequately prepare students to face the realities and challenges of the working world.

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