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Collaboration between Vocational Education and Industry to Enhance The Internship Competence of Students at SMK Negeri 8 Samarinda

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Abstract
This study utilizes a descriptive qualitative method, selected because it allows an in-depth exploration of the collaboration between vocational education and the shipping industry from multiple perspectives. Data collection through interviews, observations, and document analysis provides a comprehensive understanding of the processes, experiences, and challenges involved in enhancing the internship competencies of shipping students at SMK Negeri 8 Samarinda. This approach is well-suited to capturing the complex interactions and dynamic relationships between the school and industry partners in real-world settings. The findings reveal a strong, collaborative framework where school leaders, teachers, and industry representatives work closely to design and implement an internship program that integrates both technical skills and essential soft skills required in maritime careers. The curriculum is regularly updated to align with national and international standards, and students receive preparatory training and certifications to ensure industry readiness. Supervision and mentoring during internships foster the development of skills and professionalism. Importantly, the dual evaluation system involving both the school and industry partners provides ongoing, actionable feedback that supports continuous program improvement. This study uniquely contributes by offering a detailed account of a successful, synergistic collaboration model specifically tailored to vocational maritime education, addressing a gap in prior research that often generalizes education-industry partnerships. It highlights the integration of soft skills within technical training and emphasizes the value of collaborative program evaluation, which together significantly enhance student competence and preparedness for the maritime workforce. By documenting these innovative practices in the Indonesian vocational education context, this research provides valuable insights and a replicable model for other maritime schools aiming to improve internship effectiveness through meaningful industry collaboration.
Keywords: Collaboration; Internship Competencies; POAC; Shipping Industry; Vocational Education

1. Introduction

Improving the quality of education in Indonesia has become a top priority in producing a competent and highly competitive younger generation. As the outcome of the educational process, students need to develop attributes that support their creativity and productivity, enabling them to contribute positively to national development. Therefore, vocational

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education, especially at Vocational High Schools (SMK), plays a vital role in preparing a workforce that is job-ready and relevant to current demands(Hastuti et al., 2025; Lisa Handayani et al., 2024).

Rapid industrial growth and technological advancement have transformed the skills requirements across various sectors. SMK graduates are expected not only to master theoretical knowledge but also to possess practical skills aligned with industry standards(Setiawan et al., 2024; Yolanda et al., 2025). Consequently, collaboration between schools and industries becomes a strategic step to ensure graduates acquire the competencies necessary to face today's labor market challenges. This partnership is crucial for aligning curricula with the competency standards demanded by employers. The industry provides vital input concerning specific skills that students must master, turning internship programs into more than just formal educational components they become platforms to strengthen applicable skills useful in real work environments. This collaboration helps bridge the gap between theoretical education and practical vocational training(Ana et al., 2025; Wulansari, 2021).

Effective collaboration enables schools to act as facilitators, equipping students with relevant skills while industries offer hands-on learning tailored to labor market needs. (Sudarman & Ardian, 2021; Tegar et al., 2025) states that such partnerships significantly enhance students' internship competencies through practical training in real work settings. Besides improving technical skills, students also develop an understanding of professional work culture, supporting curriculum adjustments in line with industry requirements (Fahraz Fahlefi, 2025).

However, vocational education in Indonesia still faces challenges in synchronizing curricula with the dynamic needs of the labor market (Hariyanti et al., 2021) Through strong collaboration, curricula can be updated regularly to remain relevant to technological developments and the latest industry standards (Sa'idah & Hermina, 2025) Nevertheless, there is a lack of research on integrated evaluations between schools and industries assessing the success of internship programs and limited in-depth studies on optimal collaborative mechanisms, especially at SMK Negeri 8 Samarinda.

This research aims to describe the planning process of the internship program at SMK Negeri 8 Samarinda, including the selection of industry partners and student preparation; analyze the coordination between the school and industry in implementing the internship; evaluate the program's execution from the industry's perspective, including the challenges faced; and examine the evaluation process to provide feedback and enhance program quality going forward. The study contributes theoretically by developing the collaboration model between vocational education and industry and creating a more adaptive vocational education model suited to labor market needs. Practically, the research outcomes can serve as a reference for SMK Negeri 8 Samarinda and its industry partners to improve internship program effectiveness and as a resource for academic researchers pursuing further studies.

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Through planned collaboration and continuous evaluation, it is expected that the internship competencies of SMK Negeri 8 Samarinda students will improve both in technical and social skills, preparing graduates to be job-ready and competitive in the workforce. This study also aims to deliver strategic recommendations to optimize collaborative implementation and develop curricula and internship programs that align with current industry demands.

2. Method

2.1. Research Type and Approach

This study employs a qualitative approach using the case study method to explore the collaboration between vocational education and industry within the student internship program, as well as its impact on the internship competencies of students at SMK Negeri 8 Samarinda. The case study method was chosen because it allows for an in-depth exploration of complex real-life phenomena, focusing on understanding human behavior, perspectives, and social processes that are difficult to quantify. This approach enables the researcher to gain a comprehensive understanding of coordination models, roles, and contributions of various stakeholders involved in the program's success, as well as the extent to which the SMK curriculum aligns with the competency standards required for internships.

2.2. Research Location and Time

This research was conducted at SMK Negeri 8 Samarinda, located at Jalan Syahrani Dahlan No. 2 RT. 25, Kelurahan Harapan Baru, Kecamatan Loa Janan Ilir, postal code 75131, Samarinda City, East Kalimantan. The study period began on October 17, 2024, and concluded on January 21, 2025, during which time observations, interviews, and the collection of other relevant data were carried out.

2.3. Data Sources

This study utilizes comprehensive data from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data were collected through in-depth interviews and participatory observations involving key stakeholders at SMK Negeri 8 Samarinda, including the principal, vice principals (curriculum and public relations), head of the shipping expertise program, head of the internship program, vocational shipping teachers, and students (trainees). Secondary data were obtained from school documents and relevant literature. This combination of data sources enables the researcher to capture detailed information on internship program planning, organizational structure, implementation, supervision, student-industry interactions, and program evaluations that are crucial to understanding vocational-industry collaboration and its effect on students' internship competencies.

2.4. Data Collection and Analysis Techniques

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Data were collected through in-depth interviews with key informants such as the principal, vice principals in charge of curriculum and industry relations, head of the expertise program, vocational teachers, and students participating in the internship. Participatory observations were also conducted to directly observe students' activities during internships and the interactions between the school and industry. This was complemented by documentation review, including Memorandums of Understanding (MoU), practical modules, internship reports, and related literature to support the study's theoretical framework.

For data analysis, systematic steps of data reduction, data presentation, and verification were applied. Data reduction involved filtering and categorizing information based on main themes related to collaboration and student competencies. The data were then presented in tables and narratives to facilitate pattern recognition and understanding of inter-variable relationships. The final step included verification and conclusion drawing by assessing data consistency and validity through triangulation (Rejeki S et al., 2024). Triangulation was employed as a key strategy to enhance the credibility and reliability of the findings by integrating multiple data sources and methods. This included source triangulation, involving diverse participants such as school leaders, teachers, students, and the review of documents to obtain a variety of perspectives; method triangulation, which combined data collection through interviews, participatory observations, and document analysis for cross-verification; and time triangulation, by gathering data over several months to observe processes and interactions longitudinally. This comprehensive triangulation approach ensures that the conclusions regarding the effectiveness of vocational-industry collaboration in improving students' internship competencies at SMK Negeri 8 Samarinda are both valid and reflective of the program's complex realities.

3. Findings and Discussion

3.1. Profile SMKN 8 Samarinda

SMK Negeri 8 Samarinda was established in 2002 as part of the Samarinda City Government's commitment to developing vocational education in East Kalimantan, particularly in the Samarinda Seberang area. The school aims to produce graduates who are skilled, competent, and ready to compete in the ever-evolving workforce. Initially, SMK Negeri 8 Samarinda offered two main fields of expertise: Shipping (Nautical and Marine Engineering) and Business and Management (Accounting and Office Administration). Over time, it has gradually expanded its programs to include new expertise areas aligned with industry demands, such as Information Technology and Multimedia.

The vision of SMK Negeri 8 Samarinda is to become a school that is devoted, disciplined, certified, and absorbed by the business and industrial sectors, with an emphasis on environmental care. Its mission includes preparing graduates with noble character, discipline,

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and certified skills who are ready for employment. The school also focuses on fostering professionalism and entrepreneurship. The competency-based programs offered are comprehensive, featuring training aligned with both national and international standards in shipping, as well as business and technology competencies relevant to the labor market's needs.

In terms of facilities, SMK Negeri 8 Samarinda is located on Jalan Syahrani Dahlan, occupying nearly 4 hectares of land. It boasts modern amenities such as air-conditioned classrooms, computer laboratories, a shipping workshop, a fully equipped library, a multipurpose hall, and multifunctional sports fields. The teaching staff comprises highly qualified educators, both civil servants (ASN) and non-civil servants, supporting competency-based learning processes. With a student population exceeding one thousand, the school remains committed to providing high-quality vocational education that is industry-oriented and nurturing a new generation ready to face global challenges.

2.5. Internship Program Planning at SMK Negeri 8 Samarinda

The internship program planning at SMK Negeri 8 Samarinda is developed through an integrated internal consultation involving the head of the shipping expertise program, vocational teachers, and the internship supervision team. The planning process refers to the SMK curriculum as well as the essential competencies students must master, including technical skills such as basic shipping techniques, operation of safety equipment, and understanding of ship machinery(Edy & Sumarta, 2025; Rahmaten et al., 2024). Additionally, the planning incorporates the development of soft skills like effective communication, teamwork, stress management, and decision-making. The school conducts preparatory training before the internship, utilizing ship simulators, practical laboratories, and various structured social skills workshops to ready students for the competitive shipping industry(Zhahara et al., 2025).

Table 1. Internship Program Planning Data at SMK Negeri 8 Samarinda

Aspect	Data Sources	Data Collection Techniques	Description
Curriculum Development	Principal, Vice Principals	In-depth interviews, MoU documents	Internship curriculum based on vocational competencies (hard skills: navigation, ship machinery, safety)
Soft Skills	Head of Expertise Program, Supervising Teachers	Interviews, coordination meeting observations	Soft skills including discipline, work ethics, and responsibility

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Aspect	Data Sources	Data Collection Techniques	Description
Schedule Planning	Head of Expertise Program, Supervising Teachers	Interviews, documentation	Internship schedule development through coordination forums between SMK and industry
Preparation & Training	Head of Expertise Program, Vocational Teachers	Interviews, training data	Technical and soft skills training for students prior to internship
Partner Coordination	Principal, Vice Principal for Industry Relations	Interviews, partnership documents	Selection and coordination with maritime industry partners

In line with industry requirements, SMK Negeri 8 Samarinda regularly updates its curriculum to align with national and international shipping standards and regulations. The implementation of this planning is also supported by providing official certifications such as Basic Safety Training (BST), Security Awareness Training (SAT), and Advanced Fire Fighting (AFF), which are essential administrative prerequisites for students before starting their internships. These certificates are obtained through collaboration with an accredited training institution, Politeknik Ilmu Pelayaran Makassar. This comprehensive planning approach not only enhances students' technical competencies but also ensures their administrative and mental readiness to enter the maritime industry workforce.

Besides technical and soft skills training, the internship program planning at SMK Negeri 8 Samarinda also emphasizes administrative and psychological preparation for students. The school actively assists students in managing internship documentation and mandatory maritime certifications, which serve as legal standards for workforce eligibility in the maritime sector. This support aims to prevent administrative obstacles when students begin their internships or onboard vessels(Mufidah et al., 2025). Additionally, there is a mental and character development program designed to cultivate professionalism, responsibility, and a strong work ethic, enabling students to face the demanding work environment in the industry with optimal mental preparedness(Riyanto et al., 2025).

This holistic planning approach reflects SMK Negeri 8 Samarinda's commitment to delivering an internship program grounded not only in technical competence but also in preparing students to become individuals of integrity who can contribute positively. By involving multiple stakeholders, both within the school and the industry partners, the planning process is more comprehensive and aligned with the dynamic conditions of the shipping industry. This creates a strong synergistic relationship that supports the internship program's success and the development of superior human resources.

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The internship program planning at SMK Negeri 8 Samarinda is conducted collaboratively between the school and industry partners, focusing on designing a curriculum that integrates vocational competencies (hard skills) and social competencies (soft skills). The planning process involves key personnel such as the principal, vice principals, head of expertise programs, and supervising teachers who actively develop schedules and preparatory materials tailored to labor market needs. Effective coordination with industry partners ensures that the internship program is systematically organized and meets applicable competency standards, providing students with optimal preparation before their internships.

2.6. The Role of SMK Negeri 8 and Industry in Organizing Internship Programs to Enhance Student Competence

SMK Negeri 8 Samarinda plays a crucial role in preparing students for internship programs through a series of steps, including skills training, selecting credible industry partners, and maintaining close supervision throughout the internship period. The school collaborates with shipping industry partners, such as the Samarinda Navigation District, to provide internship placements and facilities, ensuring that students' practical activities are aligned with industry standards. During the internship, the school regularly monitors and evaluates the program by maintaining intensive coordination with industry partners to anticipate issues and enhance the effectiveness of students' competency development.

On the other hand, the shipping industry serves as the provider of facilities, on-site supervisors, and student performance evaluators. Industry mentors offer hands-on guidance and strict supervision, ensuring students perform practical tasks correctly and adhere to applicable safety and operational procedures(Hardison et al., 2025). Performance evaluations conducted by industry partners provide valuable feedback for the school, allowing for improvements in teaching methods and curriculum to better meet labor market demands. Through a structured division of roles between the school and industry, this synergy creates an optimal learning environment for the development of both technical and social competencies among students during their internships(Mustakim et al., 2023).

The role of SMK and its industry partners in organizing internships goes beyond merely dividing administrative and technical tasks; it also involves intensive coordination in establishing a productive work culture for interns. The school acts as both mediator and facilitator to ensure smooth communication between students, supervising teachers, and industry representatives, proactively addressing any challenges that may arise during the internship. Furthermore, SMK provides additional training during the internship period for students who require it, allowing them to adapt to industry procedures and standards that may differ from what is taught in the classroom.

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Meanwhile, industry partners actively foster a work environment that is both professional and supportive for interns. Industry supervisors not only oversee and evaluate, but also serve as mentors, helping students develop problem-solving skills and adapt to the dynamics of real-world work(Aryasandy & Rozi, 2025). This strong partnership enables students to gain enriching experiences, so that upon completing their internships, they are not only technically proficient but also able to act professionally in accordance with the organizational culture of the shipping industry(Khasanah et al., 2025).

Pigure1. The Role of Industry in Internship Activities

The industry plays a central and active role in supporting the implementation of the internship program. This role includes providing practical facilities, technical mentoring, and direct supervision of interns to ensure that their real-world work experience meets workplace standards. Furthermore, industry involvement extends to adjusting the competency requirements needed in the field, making the partnership between the school and industry symbiotic. This relationship facilitates the transfer of practical knowledge and the development of soft skills that are crucial for students' job readiness. Thus, the industry functions not only as a place for practice but also as a strategic partner in enhancing the quality of internship competencies

2.7. The Implementation of Internships in Developing Vocational and Social Competencies and Its Challenges

The internship program implementation in the shipping industry offers students of SMK Negeri 8 Samarinda an opportunity to apply the knowledge and skills acquired at school in a real work environment. Students are trained to operate navigation equipment, ship communication systems, cargo and logistics management, as well as perform ship maintenance and adhere to onboard safety procedures. Beyond technical competencies, the internship

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program instills essential values such as professionalism, discipline, teamwork, and risk management, which are critical in the maritime industry.

However, the internship process is not without challenges. One major issue is the students' limited practical experience, requiring a considerable adaptation period before they can handle complex tasks aboard the ship(Rahmawati, 2024). The gap between school learning standards and industry practices also poses difficulties during this adjustment phase. Additionally, the demanding and dynamic working conditions at sea require students to have strong mental and physical readiness. Other obstacles include the relatively short duration of the internship compared to the lengthy shipping cycles, as well as training and certification costs that are not always fully covered by the school. Nevertheless, intensive guidance and supervision from industry mentors help students navigate these challenges and maximize their work experience(Purnomo & Mustofa, 2025).

During the internship, students are not only assigned technical tasks aligned with their specialization but also given opportunities to develop essential social skills within a professional work environment(Kusuma et al., 2025). Aspects such as team communication, adaptability in dynamic situations, and emotional management are core learning elements continuously monitored by both industry supervisors and school mentors. This learning process helps students build confidence, responsibility, and a strong work ethic all critical assets in the maritime sector, which demands high discipline and effective teamwork.

Despite these efforts, real challenges remain, such as the limited internship period, which often restricts students from gaining optimal work experience since some shipping cycles take longer than the allocated internship timeframe(Widayanti et al., 2025). Furthermore, discrepancies between school curriculum practices and field conditions can cause confusion for students trying to adapt quickly(Rahmat Wibowo, 2025). The rapidly evolving technology in the shipping industry also requires students to consistently update their knowledge and skills. Consequently, the internship serves as an important opportunity for them to broaden their understanding of new technological advancements in the field.

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Pigure 2. Internship Development and Departmental Competency Enhancement

A continuous process in the development of an internship program focuses on the comprehensive enhancement of departmental competencies. This process involves evaluating and updating the curriculum to align with the latest competency standards and industry needs. Through intensive collaboration, the competency development department regularly coordinates with industry partners and educational institutions to assess internship outcomes, identify competency gaps, and formulate improvement measures. The ultimate impact is an improvement in both technical and non-technical skills of students, thereby elevating the overall competency of the department. The diagram also illustrates an interactive cycle encompassing planning, implementation, evaluation, and competency adjustment, which is central to the success of the internship program.

2.8. Evaluation of the Internship Program by Vocational School and Industry to Assess the Success and Relevance of Student Competencies

The internship program evaluation is conducted comprehensively by both the vocational school and industry partners to assess students' competency achievements, covering both technical and social aspects. The school employs various evaluation tools, including assessments of daily activity journals, direct observation and supervision by supervising teachers, final internship reports, as well as student presentations on their internship outcomes(Tanjung et al., 2025). Additionally, the evaluation process places significant emphasis on soft skills such as discipline, responsibility, and work ethics. The final score is typically calculated based on a combination of these different evaluation components.

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Table 2. Evaluation Data of the Internship Program at SMK Negeri 8 Samarinda

Evaluation Aspect	Data Source	Data Collection Techniques	Description
Daily Journal Assessment	Supervising Teacher, Interns	Observation, documentation, interview	Interns record daily internship activities which are assessed by the supervising teacher.
Supervision and Monitoring	Supervising Teacher, Industry Mentor	Field observation, evaluative interview	Routine supervision by both supervising teachers and industry mentors.
Final Internship Report	Interns, Supervising Teacher	Documentation, interview	Documentation of internship experiences prepared by interns and assessed by teachers.
Internship Results Presentation	Supervising Teacher, Interns	Observation, interview	Interns present their internship results to the teacher and peers.
Soft Skills Evaluation	Industry Mentor, Supervising Teacher	Interview, observation, documentation	Assessment of attitude, discipline, teamwork, and responsibility during the internship.
Industry Feedback	HRD Industry Mentor	Interview, evaluation documents	Assessment, recommendations, and certification from industry partners.

From the industry's perspective, evaluation is conducted through the establishment of competency standards, field performance observations, assessment of student progress reports, as well as practical competency tests and evaluative interviews. The industry provides feedback in the form of written assessments, certificates, job recommendations, and improvement suggestions, which are communicated to the vocational school to serve as a basis for curriculum refinement and teaching method enhancement. This ongoing collaborative evaluation ensures that the internship program runs effectively and aligns with the current needs of the maritime sector, equipping students with relevant skills that are ready to be applied in the workforce.

In the internship evaluation process, the vocational school and industry partners work closely together to ensure that assessments are conducted objectively and comprehensively. Besides using formal instruments such as activity journals, reports, and soft skills evaluations, student performance assessment also involves open dialogue between industry mentors, supervising teachers, and students(Mauliana Syafira et al., 2025). This process aims to provide

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constructive feedback that students can promptly apply to improve their performance during the internship(Suhartanta et al., 2024).

The evaluation results from the industry serve as a crucial foundation for the vocational school in developing adaptive teaching strategies and curriculum improvements aligned with labor market demands. Feedback and recommendations from industry partners help the school keep abreast of the latest trends and standards, allowing the internship program and instructional materials to be regularly updated(Lupikawaty et al., 2025). Through this systematic and synergistic evaluation mechanism, SMK Negeri 8 Samarinda is able to enhance the quality of its vocational education and produce graduates who are work-ready and highly competitive in the maritime industry.

The internship program evaluation conducted by SMK Negeri 8 Samarinda and its industry partners is comprehensive and continuous. By assessing daily journals, direct supervision, final reports, and internship presentations, the school can comprehensively monitor students' competency development and achievements. Evaluation of soft skills and feedback from the industry are important components that contribute to improving the quality of the internship experience. This systematic oversight and evaluation mechanism make the internship program effective in enhancing students' preparedness to face the workforce in accordance with maritime industry standards.

3. Conclusion

The internship program at SMK Negeri 8 Samarinda is carefully planned and executed through a collaborative approach involving school administrators, teachers, and industry partners. This coordination ensures that both technical (hard skills) and social (soft skills) competencies are integrated into the curriculum and internship activities. The school prepares students through rigorous training, certification, and administrative support, while the industry provides practical work experience, supervision, and mentoring aligned with real-world maritime operations. Together, they create a structured environment that facilitates the development of professional skills and the internalization of important workplace values such as discipline, teamwork, and risk management.

Evaluation of the internship program is carried out comprehensively and continuously by both SMK Negeri 8 and its industry partners, employing various tools such as journal assessments, direct observation, final reports, presentations, and feedback from industry mentors. This evaluation process addresses both technical performance and soft skills development, helping to identify gaps and opportunities for improvement. The close collaboration between school and industry leads to adaptive refinements in curriculum and teaching methods that keep pace with labor market needs and technological advancements. Despite challenges such as limited internship duration and the gap between school and industry

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practices, this systematic approach has proven effective in enhancing students' readiness to enter the maritime workforce with relevant competencies and professionalism.

This collaboration has been proven to significantly enhance students' vocational and social competencies. The POAC approach enables an easier analysis of stakeholders' involvement at each stage of implementation and clarifies the mutually supportive collaborative mechanisms. The implications of this study include theoretical value in demonstrating the effectiveness of the POAC model for managing internship programs, practical implications as a reference for improving internship programs in schools and industries, and policy implications that encourage strengthening the synergy between vocational education and the workforce, as well as supporting the development of regulations and national internship program evaluations.

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