Internship Concepts and Assessments: Perspectives from Student, Academic Staff, and Company

Tsuroyya[1*], Danang Tandyonomanu[2], Anam Miftakhul Huda[3]

[123] *Communication Science Department, Universitas Negeri Surabaya, Indonesia*
[*]*Corresponding author. Email: tsuroyya@unesa.ac.id*

ABSTRACT

Current Indonesian Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology requires each university to hold student internship for 20 credits during a semester. This policy eventually leads to developing an internship program that accommodates need of university, student, and company. Studies on internship which discuss its concept and assessment covering 20 credits are limited. To fill this gap, this study investigated 16 research articles and discussed internship concept and assessment. Results show internship concepts vary from student, academic, and company perspectives. Students incline to acquire practical learning experiences, whereas academics are obliged to implement university curriculum. On the other hand, companies view internship participants should meet "the whole package" criterion. In regards to assessment, different types of assessment including oral presentations, electronic portfolio reflective journals, and an online journal system show a positive outcome as they reflect learning process and practical experiences during the internship.

Keywords: internship, concept, assessment

1. INTRODUCTION

Internship activities are a part of Indonesian Ministry of Education's new policy, MBKM curriculum program that allows students to gain practical experience in the industrial world for at least one semester. Obviously, the industrial internship program demands intensive involvement of practitioners considering that student outcomes are not only internship credit numbers, but are also integrated with other courses with a maximum number of 20 credit hours [1]. Universities should provide industrial internship opportunities for students to integrate lectures and practical experiences with specific contexts [2], [3].

Globally, industry internships contribute to corporates, students and academics. Corporates benefit from an increase in the number of human resources and productivity, as well as cost savings for training and workforce recruitment [4]. Students on other hand take advantage of internship opportunities to enrich their portfolios, improve interpersonal skills, and explore various careers of interest [5], [6]. Academic involvement in the program includes adding insight and understanding of the industrial environment, especially from a practical perspective serving as updating teaching materials in a classroom [5].

For more than a decade (2009-2021) various studies on industrial internships have been conducted in an effort to improve the quality of the program while meeting corporate and university expectations including internships in nursing and marketing [5], [7]. In the field of librarianship, the internship program is claimed to be very useful considering that the program provides opportunities for students to acquire librarianship skills; improve work ethic and professionalism; build networks for career gain after graduation; receive guidance for applying for jobs, and opportunities to develop themselves in training, seminars, and conferences [8].

In contrast to internship research in terms of scientific disciplines, recent research findings from various countries including Malaysia, Spain, and Iraq focus on program benefits and inter-stakeholder relations in internships [2], [9], [10]. One of the benefits of internships is as a solution to the issue of graduates who lack communication skills, group work, problem solving, and a very minimal work ethic [2]. The findings of a similar study in Iraq conclude that university students are satisfied with the duration of the internship program during the summer vacation. Students consider an internship opportunity to be one of the advantages in their portfolio to increase competitiveness and bargaining power in labour market [10].

Unlike the previous countries, the United States of America views internships as power relations in the program. Industrial internships that pay students a salary have proven to be more structured and have a higher workload than unpaid students. This situation highly affects practical experiences gained by students. The trend of incentive and non-incentive internships triggers students to be pro-active and ask companies about job descriptions, field supervisors, regular assessments, opportunities for innovation and opinion, and new skill master [4].

Internship apparently requires an assessment that can measure student's competence and capabilities during the program [11]. The assessment is deemed necessary considering the purpose of the internship is the application of theory, readiness to enter the labour market, opportunities to be recruited by companies, and efforts to reduce the gap between academics and practitioners [5], [12]. However, internships are also considered to have several weaknesses including interns are considered as volunteers who are not paid in finishing tasks [4]. In addition, students, academics, and practitioners have poor program planning and supervision. Students often join a company without knowing the main purpose of the internship program and are posted in a particular division that do not match their competence and skill. Another weakness of internships is that the majority of corporates require the use of uniforms for interns so as to create class differences and power within the corporation over students [5], [6].

This literary review aimed to provide internship concepts and assessment from three key stakeholders: students, academics, and companies. The primary objectives of this study were critically analysing various internship assessment formats that proved to be effective in reflecting the stakeholder's needs, and suggesting future research direction on developing an MBKM internship assessment to be implemented by Indonesian universities.

2. METHODS

A rational approach to correspond the research question was first to obtain qualitative data 16 research articles on internship, internship evaluation, and training ranging from 2009 to 2021. This step led to the next one which was analyzing the internship concept from three different perspectives, namely students, academics, and companies, as well as exploring appropriate internship assessment format matching key stakeholder's needs, particularly for communication science students.

The first dataset obtained was internship definition from student's viewpoint including what it meant to them financially, academically, and professionally. Despite various benefits an internship program offered,

scholars claimed an incentive for interns affects their job satisfaction. Another concern of internship originated from university curriculum which lacked of balancing industrial and student's needs.

The next dataset described academic perspective in conceptualizing an internship program as linking and matching student's skills with company's need. Scholars focused their studies on practicum curriculum and structure of the program and its contribution to limited university budget and staff. Other researchers emphasized on student's learning aspect during the program showed in reflective journals serving as a means of assessment.

The next prominent dataset was company's point of view of internship particularly competences required for interns, greater role proportion of site supervisors in an assessment process, and talent seeking. Companies valued apprenticeship as additional low-cost qualified associate who contributed to an increase of productivity. However, several scholars argued that interns still lacked of competence and initiative which led to longer time to provide industrial practicum training and training.

The last dataset portrayed various formats of internship assessment that proved to be effective in reflecting student's and company's need. Scholars argued that oral presentations best reflected student's activities, whereas other researchers investigated the use of e-portfolio to record intern's daily tasks. Similar to e-portfolio, an online journal system was developed to assess three key aspects of internship, namely learning, system function, and management issues.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section is divided into two main subsections; they are internship concept from three main stakeholders and suitable formats of internship assessment. In order to elaborate the underlying concept of internship, we analyze the concept based on student, university, and company perspectives with a hope to identify each stakeholder's needs prior to, during, and by the end of internship program. The second subsection reveals various internship evaluation formats which prove effective in reflecting intern's performance, company's feedback, and university's expectation.

A. Between Money, Grades, and Jobs: Student's Concept of Internship

Students define an internship program as an opportunity to obtain practical learning experiences [13], fulfil academic requirement [5], and get a job early [14]. During the program, students learn and improve their hard skills as well as get more exposures to professional culture. As a part of curriculum, students

are assessed and graded by supervisors from both company and university. To interns, acquiring grades with flying colors will lead to early recruitment from the company which shortens a waiting period after commencement [14].

Related to financial aspect, internship program in the States is divided into two categories; they are paid and unpaid internships [4]. The former requires interns to work at the same pace and load as part time and/ or permanent staff. With a strict regulation, interns are expected to excel their task the same quality as fulltime staff. During the paid internship, students aim to earn money while working at a company as interns. The latter on the other hand, entails less work load and limited practical experiences. Students perceive internship as volunteer work which negatively affects how they feel of working at the company [4].

To students, the internship program emphasizes on personal and professional developments. Throughout the program, interns work collaboratively with peers and fulltime staff, pitch, and present results of particular task to a supervisor [15]. Hence, the program allows intern to advance their interpersonal skills. Professionally, an internship opportunity encourages students to join available seminar, workshop, and training that match their expertise and work interest [8]. In so doing, the students are expected to have more opportunities to explore future career. Despite internship concept from student's perspectives, the program is viewed lacking of decent and appropriate curriculum from universities [5].

B. Underneath a Long-Term Investment: Academics Viewpoint of Internship

Academics claim an internship program as a mandatory course which is an integral part of university curriculum. In fact, the curriculum requires more practicum work of this program at which students both apply and complement what has been learned in a classroom. Some academic staff however slightly disagree that internship should be a compulsory course for students [5]. Though credit hours of the program may vary from one university to others, the internship reflects strong conceptual and theoretical learning aspect aiming to provide good abilities and skills to meet the industry's needs [13].

Universities and academics argue that an internship opportunity does not only serve as a bridge to enter labor market for students [9], but also create strong links or networking between university and industry resulting in a long-term investment [2], [9]. This opportunity allows academic staff to update practical experiences and integrate them in classroom lectures. Thus, the program is valued as a long-term investment at which essential stakeholders including students, academics, and companies achieve mutually beneficial outcomes

[5]. However, students should be aware of the fact that internships do not necessarily mean employment [9] since immediate recruitment is based on intern's performance. Nevertheless, a growing body of evidence shows there is a correlation between internship participation at a higher learning institution and favorable employment after graduation [16].

Lecturer's roles in an internship involves preparing guidelines, providing valuable inputs as a feedback mechanism [8], and collaborating with on-site supervisors in assessing interns to reduce any uncertainty or possible bias [15]. In assessing interns, research findings suggest reflective journals as a means of fostering deep learning during the internship. The assessment eventually increases competitiveness of the graduates at both national and global levels. The outcomes of this program also contributes to Indonesian university reputation particularly in implementing the new policy with a provision of a six-month internship program [1].

C. Inside the "Program": Professional's Perspective of Internship

An intriguing perspective of internship concept offered by company professionals; that is the program's disadvantages outweigh its advantages. Companies view an internship program lacks of clear internship structure and student's training [5]. The former requires academics determine work load and competence that interns should acquire by the end of the program. Professionals claim students who participate in an internship program lack of competence needed by the companies and initiatives [6]. Some students unfortunately consider an internship as part-time work which does not require full attention and dedication [11].

Recent studies explore intern's competences required by companies to join the program. Findings show interns master both teamwork and interpersonal skills. At the same time, interns score lowest in the other two key competences; i.e. quality of work and writing ability [6]. This indicates university has not prepared students to experience hands-on learning with trainings and briefings [2].

Companies in recent days prefer "the whole package students" as internship requirement and focus less on student's academic achievement [14], [15]. Professionals emphasize the importance of communication skills throughout the program since oral presentation is used as a favorable assessment for companies in the end of internship [5]. During the program, professionals expect to have a greater role both in grading and supervising on-site activities. Therefore, both academics and professional are necessary to collaborate in determining internship

structure and assessment prior the program commencement.

To professionals, an internship serves four distinct roles; they are apprenticeship, corporate social responsibility, talent seeking, and low-cost qualified associate [9]. An internship opportunity allows companies to train an intern and develop her professional experiences, such as participating in particular workshops. During the program, professionals evaluate the intern and may recommend her for future recruitment. In this case, companies spend inexpensive costs for new qualified talents. It seems that an internship merely benefits companies, yet professionals who are willing to train an intern are viewed as a part of company's community development program [9]. In other words, the internship serves as a part of corporate social responsibility particularly in contributing towards highly qualified human development.

D. Within Format and Proportion: Internship Assesssment

Much of internship assessment literature focuses on formats [3], [8], [15] and stakeholder's proportion in evaluating the program [5], [6], [10]. Assessment formats proposed include electronic portfolio and online journal system respectively by public health and library departments [3], [15]. Determining a proportion in an internship assessment is essential as this involves academics and on-site supervisors [5], [6], [10]. Therefore, an aligned evaluation is necessary mediating academics and professionals in better evaluating students during a period of internship.

Scholars argue that a portfolio describes evidence of experiences and achievements during an internship period [15]. A portfolio in fact exhibits efforts, progress, achievements as well as reflections of an intern within her field of discipline. Materials incorporated in a portfolio include projects, presentations, reports, and assessments. Studies claim that the portfolio is considered as a well-suited format of assessment in engaging interns in the process of learning [15]. However, portfolios may seem challenging to be describe in details the process of learning that an intern experiences.

Another alternative assessment format developed by library department aims to better elaborate intern's learning process as well as her reflective journals [3]. Using online journal system, interns are able to review what they experience and learn from daily tasks during the internship program. Interns view this system as user-friendly and well developed. In addition, the online journal system enables interns to record what they learn and get assistance when encountering problems [3]. Despite the system's benefits to both interns, practitioners, and academics, an online journal may not suit to students with complex materials and on-site

activities such as engineering, journalism, and science departments.

In relations to internship assessment, it is worth discussing who should be involved, what proportion should each assessor have, and what should be assessed in the process of evaluating. Based on earlier discussion on internship concept from university's and company's point of views, it is crystal clear that there are two assessors in student's internship program. Several studies agree that professionals should have bigger proportion to assess as they engage and supervise an intern on a daily basis. However, it is interesting to notice that companies weighs more oral presentations as the final assessment rather than written and reflective journals, whereas students and academic staff prefer the opposite [5], [6], [10].

In terms of what to evaluate, there are various items related to both hard skills and soft skills to be evaluated by on-site supervisors and academic staff. Fig. 1 shows a list of 15 skills performed by an intern [6].

15 skills	
Commitment at work	Ability to carry out instructions
Quality of work	Willingness to accept criticism
Writing skills	Ability to cooperate
Oral skills	Relationship with colleagues
Competency in carrying out the task	Reliability for carrying out task
Meeting deadline	Manners
Creativity	Punctuality
Ability to make decisions	

Figure. 1. Performance skills evaluated by the companies

Intern's hard skills include quality of work, competency in finishing the project, writing & oral skills, creativity, and reliability in handling a task. The remaining skills are categorized into soft skills ranging from professional culture such as punctuality, willingness to accept criticism, and commitment at work, to interpersonal skills in particular relationship with colleagues [6]. Details of both hard and soft skills may be varied depending on an emphasis that professionals, university, and students aims to achieve.

By the end of an internship program, an evaluation is deemed necessary to provide insights and feedbacks for the next batch of interns. Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) offers a new concept of alignment between students, academics, and companies. AHP evaluates each stakeholder's decision factors of internship to achieve mutual benefit [9]. This model can potentially be used to define internship structure and guidelines prior to the program.

Future research on internship assessment particularly in Indonesian context would serve as a model to accommodate student's needs, meet company's expectations, and fulfil university requirements. The

assessment should reflect work load similar to 20 credit hours with a clear set of competencies that are assessed by professionals and academic supervisors. The need to investigate this topic is deemed necessary as internship programs remains a significant factor to increase employment after graduation [14], and to improve student's competencies and soft skills [17].

4. CONCLUSION

The study highlights internship definitions by essential stakeholders, namely academic staff, students, and companies. The definitions involve benefits, setbacks, expectation, and requirements of internship. Several formats of internship assessment have been discussed to give a clear understanding in who should assess which aspect with how many proportions. This study claims Analytic Hierarchy Process may be potentially used to develop a better internship assessment for Indonesian universities. Since abundant internship assessment literature focuses on competencies and soft skills, we argue that developing an internship assessment worth 20 credit hours for a period of one semester in Indonesian context is deemed necessary aiming to accommodate the needs of student, academic staff, and company.

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