

# A Qualitative Study of the Strengths and Weaknesses of Internships in the Eyes of Students and Industry Players: Post-Pandemic Student Internship Practice Research

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**Abstract.** The biggest challenge facing the modern world today is the talent shortage. One of the causes of talent shortages is the mismatch between university graduates and industry needs. Many graduates do not have the skills or knowledge relevant to today's digital civilization. There is a need for cooperation between the government, industry, universities, and the community to create an apprenticeship system in companies that is of high quality and dignity. This study uses a qualitative research method with a phenomenological approach. In this study, researchers reviewed the experiences of 12 vocational students who were undergoing internships at various state-owned and private companies. This study's purpose is to find out their views on the importance of apprenticeship activities and their impact on the creation of quality talent. The results of the analysis in this study show that in complicated economic conditions, then according to the recognition para-intern, place student paying internship apprentice has been a favorite. So that internships are one way to fill the void in the workforce in industries that have experienced a negative impact from the Covid-19 pandemic.

Keywords: the talent shortage, internships, industries

# 1 Background

The biggest challenge facing the modern world today is the talent shortage. According to research from the Korn Ferry Institute, by 2030, there will be a deficit of 85.2 million talented people worldwide. According to the predictions of this report, there could be an economic loss of 8.5 trillion USD. Some industries that require a high-quality workforce, such as financial services, technology, media, and telecommunications, will find it difficult to recruit and retain competent employees (2023). This can hinder growth and innovation in these sectors. So, the apprenticeship program is one step to answer the challenge of the talent shortage of existing workers. Because by allowing students to do internships or practicum studies, giving them the benefit of understanding the

profession they are pursuing and studying in college. Furthermore, they also could directly experience the world of work that they will be engaged in (Tovey, 2001).

In Armin Trost's 2014 book "Talent Relationship Management": Competitive Recruiting Strategies in Times of Talent Shortage, talent shortages have existed for a long time. According to him, several macro trends will cause a severe shortage of talent in many countries. These trends include.

Increasingly aging population. This will result in many employees retiring in the next few years. At the same time, the younger generation is shrinking in number.

The Internet makes the labor market more transparent. Of course, this phenomenon increases competition for the recruitment of existing talent. Job posting sites and social media platforms promote many jobs, employee profiles, candidates, employers, and their social interactions to everyone.

The knowledge and information related to the growing economy have led to a gradual transition from physical work to intellectual work. So, the impact is an increase in the need for highly skilled workers.

Highly qualified workers or candidates are also sought globally. So, some countries are worried about losing their best talent to other countries.

Then there is also a shortage of graduates in scientific and engineering fields. The public education system is unable to meet the long-term demand for specialized jobs. And also, future generations expect more openness and candor in their communications with and about employers. Entrepreneurs should be able to connect more effectively with young age groups to have a positive side (Trost, 2014).

Real examples of talent shortages and their impact on many countries have been studied by many researchers. In China long ago as it ages and its workforce shrinks, it faces the challenge of sustaining not only its economic expansion but also climbing global value chains. To address the shortage of skilled workers, countries need to reform their education systems and cultivate more practical and linguistic competencies (Farrell and Grant, 2005). One of the main reasons for the talent shortage is the inadequate planning of the labor market in India by the government, industry, and educational institutions. A lack of coordination between stakeholders is also apparent. And also, the curricula and teaching methods are out of date and ineffective in higher education. There has also been a shift in the skills and attitudes of a new generation of Indian workers. In addition, the gap between industry demands and the qualifications of graduates from vocational and higher education institutions is also a major factor behind the difficulties faced by India (Chatterjee et al., 2014).

As global suppliers of labor, China and India alone experience a potential loss of talent. This is also seen in Indonesia. The availability of an educated and skilled workforce in

Indonesia is still limited, and the demand will increase in the future, but the supply is not proportional to the number of job vacancies available (Handayani, 2015). In more depth, Nazarudin Malik in his book Power Market Dynamics (2018), sees one of the critical issues in the field of employment is an imbalance between the number and quality of the workforce and the needs of the job market. This is caused by several factors, namely:

Faster population and labor force growth than the creation of new jobs

Job competition is getting tougher and job opportunities are getting more limited every year, as well

The low labor productivity is due to the lack of education and skills possessed by many workers, which makes them work mostly in the informal sector and are not settled.

One of the causes of talent shortages is the mismatch between university graduates and industry needs. Many graduates do not have the skills or knowledge relevant to today's digital civilization. In addition, several countries are also facing the problem of population aging, which forces them to increase their pension figures or reduce working hours to reduce the burden on the state. However, this can create recent problems, such as reduced productivity or increased unemployment (Muhson, et al. 2018). Therefore, vocational education is one solution that can overcome talent shortages. Vocational education is education that prepares students with material according to industry needs with an education pattern of 70% practice and 30% theory. Therefore, Vocational education graduates can be immediately ready to work and contribute to the world of work. Many developed countries, such as Australia and the UK, have realized the importance of a skilled workforce and are trying to improve the quality of their vocational education. So, what stakeholders have carried out is an internship program.

Internship programs or practicum courses allow students to benefit from apprenticeships involving supervisors in the business sector, supervisors in the academic realm, and sometimes counselors within a company. Internships allow students to apply the theory and practice they have learned and practiced in class to real-world work situations. The workplace environment differs from the classroom setting in many ways, such as the scope, impact, and context of the work. The workplace can also help students discover their talents, interests, and skills. This can help them make informed choices about their future (Tovey, 2001). Moghaddam's study (2011) shows that students feel that they are academically prepared to do internships. Internships are an effective way to impart knowledge and prepare them for their future careers. Apprentice offices and companies or agencies sponsoring internships are also found to be effective in placing and supporting students. However, this perception or expectation is more pronounced for students who have not done an internship than those who have completed or are currently doing one. So, it is necessary to examine further the impact of internships on students through exploratory studies. And this is what will be studied in this research. This perception or expectation is more pronounced for students who have not done an internship than those who have completed or are currently doing it. So, it is necessary to examine further the impact of internships on students through exploratory studies. And this is what will be studied in this research. This perception or expectation is more pronounced for students who have not done an internship than those who have completed or are currently doing it. So, it is necessary to examine further the impact of internships on students through exploratory studies. And this is what will be studied in this research.

The blurry portrait of jobs that are getting less and less talent is also due to fraud. One of them is the existence of cases of labor brokers who take advantage of graduates for personal gain. One of the factors that trigger fraud in the recruitment of contract workers is the complicated process and requirements for finding a job, especially if the job expected is exceedingly difficult and requires a lengthy process. This causes some in our society to tend to look for easier and faster ways to get the job they want, without considering the risks that may arise. As a result, many job seekers choose jobs that are instantaneous, for example through intermediaries or what people commonly call brokers (Sumadi and Santoso, 2022).

Therefore, there is a need for cooperation between the government, industry, universities, and the community to create an apprenticeship system in companies that is of high quality and dignity. The government must make strict regulations to protect the rights of apprentices and eradicate the practices of labor brokers. Industry must provide support and facilities for prospective skilled workers so that they can develop and innovate. Universities must align their curriculum and learning methods with market demands and technological developments through apprenticeships. And people must change their view of apprenticeships not just as a bridge to the real world of work. Thus, students in the internship program can face the challenge of talent shortages positively and productively.

# 2 Research Methodology

## 2.1 Approach

This study uses a qualitative research method with a phenomenological approach. Qualitative research methods are methods that focus on expressing meaning and deep understanding of complex and holistic social phenomena, without generalizing or measuring certain variables (Creswell, 2014). A phenomenological approach is an approach that seeks to explain and interpret the subjective experiences of informants involved in a particular phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). By using this approach, a researcher can explore and understand how informants give meaning to their experiences, and how they construct their social reality (Smith et al., 2009).

To conduct research using qualitative methods and phenomenological approaches, several steps need to be taken. First, determine research topics and research questions that are following the objectives of phenomenology. Research questions must be open and flexible, and describe the phenomenon to be studied (Creswell, 2014). Second, determine the criteria and strategies for selecting sources. Resource persons must have direct

experience with the phenomenon under study and be willing to share their experiences honestly and deeply (Moustakas, 1994). The number of informants is not determined with certainty but depends on the adequacy and richness of the data obtained (Smith et al., 2009). Third, collect data using in-depth interview techniques. In-depth interviews are techniques that allow you to engage in interactive and reflective dialogue with sources, and explore the meaning and essence of their experiences (Creswell, 2014). Often an interview guide is also needed which contains key questions related to the phenomenon being studied, as well as additional questions that may arise during the interview process (Moustakas, 1994). Sometimes several researchers also recorded and transcribed interviews accurately to facilitate data analysis (Smith et al., 2009). as well as additional questions that may arise during the interview process (Moustakas, 1994). Sometimes several researchers also recorded and transcribed interviews accurately to facilitate data analysis (Smith et al., 2009), as well as additional questions that may arise during the interview process (Moustakas, 1994). Sometimes several researchers also recorded and transcribed interviews accurately to facilitate data analysis (Smith et al., 2009).

Fourth, after the steps above have been carried out, then proceed to analyze the data using the steps of phenomenological analysis. These steps include: (1) reading and absorbing all data; (2) identifying meaningful units or significant themes from the data; (3) grouping significant themes into main categories; (4) compiling textual descriptions and structural descriptions of the sources' experiences; (5) synthesize textual and structural descriptions into the essence or general meaning of the phenomenon being studied; and (6) validating analysis results by triangulating data, member checking, or peer review (Creswell, 2014; Moustakas, 1994; Smith et al., 2009).

Fifth, after analyzing the researcher then presents the results of the research using a qualitative research report format. This format includes (1) an introduction containing the background of the problem, the formulation of the problem, the research objectives, the benefits of the research, as well as the theoretical and conceptual framework; (2) research methods that contain research design, characteristics of sources, data collection techniques, data analysis techniques, and aspects of research ethics; (3) results of research and discussion which contain textual and structural descriptions of the experiences of the informants, the essence or general meaning of the phenomena studied, as well as the theoretical and practical implications of the research results; and (4) conclusions and suggestions that contain the main conclusions from the results of the research and suggestions for further research or practical actions related to the phenomenon studied (Creswell, 2014).

## 2.2 Participant

In this study, researchers reviewed the experiences of 12 vocational students who were undergoing internships at various state-owned and private companies. They come from universities located in Jakarta. They are currently taking semester six or seven. Of the 12 students, 7 of them are female students and the remaining 5 are university students.

They have and are doing internships in private and government companies. The company is engaged in the communications and digital sectors. We will also conduct interviews with 3 industry representatives from private companies who have nothing to do with the 12 student informants. They have provided their views on the importance of internships for vocational students and the challenges and opportunities that exist in the current world of work.

### 3 Research Results and Discussion

After conducting interviews and exploring the experiences of the 12 internship students. Interviews were also conducted with companies or industries where students did their internships. This section will discuss the results of the interviews and their implications for apprenticeship programs and talent absorption today. The internship program carried out by students is the Independent Learning Internship. This internship program is also called the Certified Student Internship Program (PMMB) 2020 either in state-owned or private companies. PMMB has the spirit and close association with the Independent Campus Program by the Ministry of Education and Culture. One of the Merdeka Campus policies linear with the PMMB program is the Three Semester Study Rights policy outside the Study Program. Through this policy, students have the freedom (may be taken or not) to take several types of activities outside their study program.

From the results of the analysis in this study, some students PMBB in BUMN is a prestigious program for two reasons, namely getting pocket money and being a well-known company. The following are excerpts from the interview results and their perceptions about apprenticeships in BUMN. Although none of the students interviewed could do an internship at BUMN.

"... after we finished our internship, we wanted to pursue an independent internship at BUMN. Because it's good to get money. keep the company big and famous. And all the kids are scrambling to get in there, "Informant 6

Informant 6 has assessed PMBB in BUMN as a prestigious program for two reasons, namely getting pocket money and being a well-known company. This shows that informant 6 has extrinsic motivation in participating in the apprenticeship program, namely, to get financial rewards and prestige. Informant 6 also considered that apprenticeships in SOEs were a rare opportunity and were in great demand for many students.

"Even though it's the government, BUMN is a company. It should be different. So, we believe it must be clearer the job, "Informant 9

Informant 9 believes that even though BUMN is a government, it is also still a company. This shows that informants 9 have perceptions about the characteristics of SOEs as legal entities engaged in business but also have a social responsibility to the state and society. Informant 9 also believed that apprenticeships at SOEs would provide clearer and more structured work experience than internships elsewhere.

Analysis of the interviews also shows that in complicated economic conditions, then according to the recognition para-intern, place student paying internship apprentice has a favorite. Because it will also help them economically. It is disclosed in the following interview excerpts:

"...if possible, I'm looking for a paid one. Because sometimes it's too far from home. I have to pay my bills, then I don't pay for lunch and other things," Informant 2

Informant 2 said that he was looking for an internship that paid for internship students because of the complicated economic conditions and the transportation and food costs that had to be incurred. The explicit information from this statement is that Informant 2 is experiencing financial difficulties and needs economic assistance from an internship. The implied information from this statement is that Informant 2 may not pay too much attention to the quality and relevance of the internship to their field of study, as long as they get paid.

"Not bad if paid. Because it can reduce the burden on parents during internships. Although it's not much, at least it's safe for the stomach or fare, "Informant 5

Informant 5 said that he felt it was not bad if he was paid during the apprenticeship because it could reduce the burden on his parents. The explicit information from this statement is that Informant 5 has a moral responsibility to help parents financially. The implied information from this statement is that informant 5 might prefer an internship that is close to home or easy to reach, so as not to incur large transportation costs.

Although all of the respondents did not have apprenticeships at several BUMN's their perceptions from the results of their interviews and analysis also found interesting things. Info 4 below states the reason why he chose an internship in a private company rather than in a BUMN. Informant 4 realized that the BUMN Merdeka Internship Program had a limited registration period and was not always available. Therefore, informant 4 was realistic and accepted an internship offer from a private company that was willing to accept him. Informant 4 did not rule out the possibility of doing an internship at a BUMN if there is an opportunity in the future.

"It's an apprenticeindependentBUMN has a period, so it's not always open. That's why I accept - just accept it as soon as someone wants to accept me, "Informant 4

Five out of 12 students have done an unpaid internship. They also do internships with an average duration of internship 1-2 semesters. There is one student who has done an internship for 4 semesters since the pandemic Covid-19. Some of their perceptions of apprenticeship are as follows:

"Vocational schools are required to do apprenticeships. But before my apprenticeship, I didn't start working. Let's not be nervous when I graduate. It's fun too. Moreover, yesterday was a pandemic, so college was online, now I can do internships, even physically, "Informant 11

The meaning of his statement is that informant 11 has the motivation to do an internship prematurely because he wants to get work experience from an early age. Informant 11

feels that vocational education does require students to have practical skills that are ready to be used in the world of work. Therefore, informant 11 took advantage of online lecture opportunities during the pandemic to do physical internships at work.

Informant 11 also stated that the internship was quite exciting and fun. This shows that informant 11 enjoys the process of learning while working and does not feel burdened by his status as an unpaid apprentice. Informant 11 may have hoped that his internship would open up future career opportunities or at least provide him with useful knowledge and connections.

Some of the students (5 people) were satisfied with being able to do an internship even though they were not paid. This is because the company where they work as apprentices provides a wide range of freedom for them to explore. They feel trusted to be able to do a lot of work that they never imagined before. They also experience a lot of different practices from the theoretical material taught on campus. That's why students are happy with this internship. They come to know the real truth in terms of actual practice in the industry. According to them, practice and internships are the main core of vocational education. Because they feel they can see and feel what the world of work is like. Second, they can get to know industry people earlier.

Several interview results also revealed that after their apprenticeship they feel that work is not easy. Because they must be able to communicate with permanent workers who are seniors. In addition, they also have to communicate with clients. Not only that, as an apprentice, 5 out of 12 students said that they were given a lot of responsibility too and started from nothing. Even unpaid apprentices confess that some companies often feel hesitant or not nice to ask them to do more work. This statement implies that there is a difference in treatment between unpaid apprentices and those paid by some companies. Unpaid interns may feel underappreciated and respected by the company, so they admit that they often feel uncomfortable when asked to do more work. In contrast, paid apprentices may feel more motivated and responsible for doing more work, because they are being appropriately rewarded.

An example of this statement is when an unpaid intern at a media company is asked to write an article on a topic that does not match his interests and abilities. He may feel bad about refusing or complaining because he fears being seen as ungrateful or unprofessional. However, he is also dissatisfied with his job, as he feels he is not getting useful experience and learning. Meanwhile, a paid intern at the same company might be more eager to write an article on any topic, because he or she feels valued and recognized by the company. He also feels more confident to provide input or criticism, because he feels he has rights and obligations as part of a team.

Even so, the results of the interviews also revealed that 2 of the 12 students who had apprentices had even been offered to become permanent workers, even though they were still students. According to them, after an apprenticeship, the ideal job does not require WFO or work from the office. So they can still manage time for other activities.

Added to this are technical reasons in Jakarta for congestion and high transportation costs. However, on the other hand, they also realize that finding an internship is difficult, let alone finding a job. Students are more realistic looking at their future. They feel that it doesn't matter just being paid UMR, the most important thing is being able to have a job after graduation. They do not feel that they have a strong bargaining position to be able to propose honorarium or monthly salary figures. Three out of 12 students have very broad job desks. They are even trusted to meet clients, for direct presentations to clients. This also implies that apprentice students are prepared in earnest to face the world of work.

In terms of interviews with industry players, interesting things were also found. Internships are one way to fill the void in the workforce in industries that have experienced a negative impact from the Covid-19 pandemic. Many industries have experienced a decrease in turnover, layoffs, or business closures due to the pandemic. With apprenticeships, industries can take advantage of cheap and flexible labor to assist their operations. While looking for talent still requires time and costs which are also not cheap. Then, the presence of student apprentices, who are indeed less capable, helps with matters-administrative matters such as searching for data, preparing powerpoints, and making appointments, all of which are sufficiently done by interns.

The following are the results of interviews conducted with several industry players in Indonesia. The purpose of this interview is to find out their views on the importance of internships for industry and students. Based on the interview, several things can be concluded as follows.

The challenge of finding apprentices is that students often rate themselves too highly. Between what is written on the CV and what is later shown is not appropriate. In other words, there is a discrepancy between the qualifications written on the CV by students and the performance shown during the internship. This shows that students often rate themselves too high and unrealistically.

Their endurance is also lacking in the face of workloads. Apart from that, the industrial sector also complains about the lack of resilience of students in facing a heavy and varied workload. Only a small number of students are willing to learn and adapt to the work environment.

Some good, want to learn. Most are unable to communicate properly. Most students are unable to communicate properly with supervisors, superiors, colleagues, or clients.

University background doesn't matter. From a good university, not necessarily qualified for it. Another finding is that a university background does not guarantee student quality. There were students from well-known universities who turned out to be unqualified, and there were also students from less well-known universities who turned out to be qualified.

Part Apprentices expect certain financial compensation. Some are suitable, some are not. Finally, the industrial sector also found differences in expectations between students and companies regarding the financial compensation given to apprentices. Some students expect compensation that is too high, and some companies provide compensation that is too low.

There are two types of apprentices, who are "introverts" and the second who are "extroverts". Both have advantages and disadvantages. Introverts are usually more diligent, but communication is weak, and tend to work alone. Meanwhile, "extroverts" are adaptive, and easy to get along with, but on the other hand, they are often too engrossed in socializing and forget about work and even enter the political office.

Most apprentices lack critical power. Tasks given, less analyzed well, and find other innovations, even though they have been guided by examples, even references.

#### 4 Conclusion

Student internships are one way to prepare for a competitive and demanding world of work. Student internships provide an opportunity to apply the knowledge learned on campus to real situations, develop professional skills, and build a network of relationships. Student internships can also increase student confidence, motivation, and responsibility at work. With student internships, students can find out their interests and talents, and adapt to different work cultures. Student internships are important for creating professional and qualified workers because student internships are a continuous and results-oriented learning process.

From the results of the exploratory interviews above, it can be concluded that there are several important things from apprenticeship activities and their impact on the creation of quality talent. First, internships are beneficial for students who wish to gain work experience and improve their skills. With internships, students can learn directly from industry practitioners, get to know the work culture, and expand their networks. Internships can also be a bridge to getting permanent jobs in the industry after graduation.

Second, internships also have challenges and obstacles that need to be overcome. One of them is the low quality and competence of apprentices. Many interns are only able to do simple administrative tasks, such as searching for data, preparing powerpoints, or making appointments. These jobs do not require special skills and can be done by anyone. Third, it is necessary to improve the quality and competence of apprentices through intensive training, guidance, and evaluation. Industry and universities must work together to develop curriculum and apprenticeship standards that suit industry needs and student competencies. Apprentices must also be given assignments that are challenging and relevant to their field of study so that they can develop their potential and creativity.

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