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VOCATIONAL INTERNSHIP MANAGEMENT IN THE FASHION INDUSTRY: A CASE STUDY AT YECE BY YETI TOPIAH

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Abstract

Programs for vocational internships are crucial for matching industry demands with vocational education. Nonetheless, little research has been done on internship management in the creative fashion sector, especially in fashion houses that integrate technical and artistic education. The management of vocational internship students at the Yece by Yeti Topiah fashion house in Malang, Indonesia, is the focus of this study. This study employed a qualitative descriptive methodology. Eight vocational high school students, internship supervisors, and the owner of the fashion house were interviewed, observed, and documented. The Miles and Huberman interactive model was used to analyse the data, and source triangulation was used to guarantee the validity of the data. The results demonstrate the methodical planning, execution, and assessment phases of internship management at Yece. Students took part in design, pattern-making, sewing, finishing, fashion events, and product photography, among other phases of the fashion production process. Both technical and soft skills—such as teamwork, communication, creativity, discipline, and professional responsibility—were enhanced by the program. This study contributes to vocational education research by presenting a competency-based and industry-collaborative internship management model in the fashion sector. According to the results, fashion houses can work well as collaborators to promote hands-on, industry-focused vocational education.

Keywords: vocational internship management, vocational education, fashion industry, experiential learning, fashion house

Abstrak. Program magang kerja lapangan (Praktik Kerja Lapangan/PKL) sangat penting untuk menyelaraskan tuntutan industri dengan pendidikan kejuruan. Namun demikian, sedikit penelitian yang dilakukan tentang manajemen magang di sektor mode kreatif, terutama di rumah mode yang mengintegrasikan pendidikan teknik dan seni. Manajemen mahasiswa magang di rumah mode Yece by Yeti Topiah di Malang, Indonesia, menjadi fokus penelitian ini. Penelitian ini menggunakan metodologi deskriptif kualitatif. Delapan siswa SMA kejuruan, supervisor magang, dan pemilik rumah mode diwawancarai, diamati, dan didokumentasikan. Model interaktif Miles dan Huberman digunakan untuk menganalisis data, dan triangulasi sumber digunakan untuk menjamin validitas data. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan perencanaan, pelaksanaan, dan penilaian yang sistematis dalam manajemen magang di Yece. Mahasiswa berpartisipasi dalam desain, pembuatan pola, menjahit, penyelesaian, acara mode, dan fotografi produk, di antara fase-fase lain dari proses produksi mode. Baik keterampilan teknis maupun soft skill—seperti kerja tim, komunikasi, kreativitas, disiplin, dan tanggung jawab profesional—ditingkatkan oleh program ini. Studi ini berkontribusi pada penelitian pendidikan vokasi dengan menyajikan model manajemen magang berbasis kompetensi dan kolaborasi industri di sektor mode. Menurut hasil penelitian, rumah mode dapat bekerja sama dengan baik sebagai kolaborator untuk mempromosikan pendidikan vokasi yang berorientasi pada praktik dan industri.

Kata Kunci : manajemen magang vokasi, pendidikan vokasi, industri mode, pembelajaran pengalaman, rumah mode

Background

Education is a fundamental aspect of human life and plays a central role in shaping the character and quality of a nation's human resources (OECD, 2020). In Indonesia, attention toward vocational education has increased significantly as national development priorities have shifted from infrastructure-oriented policies to human resource development. President Joko Widodo, through the official website of the Ministry of Education and Culture, emphasized that employability skills are essential for the younger generation in responding to the demographic dividend and global competition. As a form of formal education, vocational high schools (SMK) therefore hold a strategic responsibility in preparing graduates equipped with employable skills (Yusuf & Suryadi, 2022).

According to Law Number 20 of 2003 and Government Regulation Number 19 of 2005, one of the primary objectives of vocational education is to prepare students to live independently and to continue their education in accordance with their fields of expertise (Siregar et al., 2022). To achieve these objectives, the Education Office is encouraged to strengthen collaboration with business and industrial sectors through the implementation of industrial internship programs, commonly known as internships as an integral component of the curriculum.

Internships program plays an important role in supporting the learning process in vocational high schools. Under the Independent Curriculum, internships has become a compulsory subject that requires students to engage directly in authentic workplace environments (Directorate of Vocational High Schools, 2023; Rosyad et al., 2024). Although previous curricula used different terms such as Industrial Work Practice and Dual System Education, the fundamental purpose remains the same: integrating classroom-based

theoretical learning with practical workplace experience. Through PKL, students are expected not only to develop technical competencies but also to strengthen soft skills, including communication, teamwork, discipline, and adaptability within professional settings.

Previous studies have demonstrated that link-and-match programs are highly effective in aligning vocational graduates' competencies with the needs of industry (Maulina & Yoenanto, 2022; Yusuf & Suryadi, 2022). This approach is further reinforced through the Center of Excellence (CoE) program, which promotes stronger industry involvement in vocational education (Ahmanda et al., 2022). Several strategies have been implemented to support this alignment, including competency-based training, industrial work experience, and curriculum synchronization with industry demands (Maulina & Yoenanto, 2022).

In practice, the management of internship programs involves several stages, including planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation (Abdillah, 2020; Nurharisma & Kuswanto, 2020). These stages require effective coordination between schools and industry partners to ensure the quality of students' learning experiences. The success of internships programs is strongly influenced by the suitability of the internship placement selected by the school. In fashion design programs, internship placements are generally categorized into garment or convection industries, couture ateliers, tailoring businesses, boutiques, and fashion houses. Among these, boutiques and fashion houses are considered capable of providing more comprehensive learning experiences, covering the entire fashion production process—from creative design development and pattern making to production management and marketing activities. Consequently, the fashion industry is expected not only to provide technical training opportunities but also to expose students to market trends and the dynamic nature of the fashion business.

Prior research has demonstrated that link-and-match policies and internship programs play a major role in coordinating vocational education with labour market demands. However, the majority of earlier research has primarily concentrated on the use of internships in technical and manufacturing industries. There is still little research on internship management in the creative fashion sector, particularly in boutiques or fashion houses.

Few studies have specifically examined internship management in fashion houses as part of vocational fashion education, despite the fact that many studies have addressed vocational internship programs in manufacturing and technical industries. The integration of creative processes, portfolio development, and industry exposure in fashion-based internships is still understudied; the majority of prior research has primarily concentrated on technical skill development. In order to close this gap, this study looks at how a fashion house uses a competency-based, industry-oriented approach to manage internship students.

In this context, Yece by Yeti Topiah Fashion House in Malang presents a unique model of vocational internship management. Yece offers students extensive learning experiences covering concept development, fashion design, pattern making, sewing, finishing, product photography, and direct participation in fashion shows and exhibitions, in contrast to many internship placements that prioritise repetitive production tasks. The fashion house actively combines creative learning opportunities with industrial processes, allowing students to simultaneously acquire professional and technical skills. This strategy shows how fashion houses can make a substantial contribution to vocational education by establishing hands-on, industry-focused learning environments.

Tabel 1 Internship Data at Yece by Yeti Topiah

Year	Internship Students	Teacher Interns	University Student Interns	Origin of Internship Students
2018	8 students	-	-	SMK Negeri 3 Malang, SMK Negeri 7 Malang
2019	4 students	-	-	SMK Negeri 7 Malang
2020	3 students	-	-	SMK Negeri 3 Malang, SMK Negeri 7 Malang
2021	13 students	8 teachers	-	SMK Negeri 3 Malang, SMK Negeri 7 Malang, SMK Cendika Bangsa, SMK Negeri 3 Blitar
2022	14 students	5 teachers	3 university students	SMK Negeri 3 Malang, SMK Negeri 7 Malang, SMK Cendika Bangsa, SMK Negeri 3 Blitar
2023	15 students	17 teachers	5 university students	SMK Negeri 3 Malang, SMK Negeri 5 Malang, SMK Negeri 7 Malang, SMK Cendika Bangsa, SMK Negeri 3 Blitar, SMK Negeri 1 Pelaihari

From 2018 to 2023, Yece by Yeti Topiah has accommodated 57 vocational high school internship students, 30 teacher interns, and 8 university students, as presented in Table 1.1. This achievement reflects the fashion house's strong commitment to supporting vocational education and human resource development in the fashion sector.

Therefore, the excellence of Yece by Yeti Topiah in managing internship students represents a concrete example of successful collaboration between education and industry. The fashion house does not merely provide internship opportunities, but actively guides and develops students' potential to become competent future fashion designers. Based on these contributions and experiences, it is important to further examine the management of internship students at Yece by Yeti Topiah. This study is expected to provide a comprehensive understanding of how the fashion industry can effectively contribute to vocational education and serve as a valuable reference for the development of PKL programs in fashion design departments at vocational schools across Indonesia.

Metode

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach to obtain an in-depth understanding of the management of vocational internship programs at Yece by Yeti Topiah Fashion House in Malang, Indonesia. A qualitative approach was selected because the study

aimed to explore participants' experiences, interactions, and internship management practices within their natural setting. This method allowed the researcher to gain a thorough understanding of the internship program's planning, execution, and evaluation procedures.

This study was carried out at the Yece by Yeti Topiah Fashion House in Malang City, Indonesia. The owner of the fashion house, internship supervisors, and eight vocational high school students from various Malang City vocational schools who were participating in internship programs at the fashion house made up the participants. Based on their direct participation in internship activities and their applicability to the study's goals, the participants were purposefully chosen.

Participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation were used to gather data. The owner of the fashion house, internship supervisors, and interns were interviewed in-depth to gather detailed information about the design, execution, and assessment of the internship program. Without interfering with the ongoing process, participant observation was conducted by closely observing internship activities and student interactions in the workplace. To bolster and validate the research findings, additional documentation was gathered, including student portfolios, activity archives, internship reports, and photos.

The interactive model created by Miles and Huberman, which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, was used to analyse the gathered data. By choosing, classifying, and streamlining pertinent data according to the research's focus, data reduction was carried out. In order to aid in interpretation and comprehension, the data were subsequently presented descriptively in narrative form. In order to guarantee consistency between the findings and the field data, conclusions were finally reached and continuously confirmed during the research process.

Source triangulation was used to compare information from observations, interviews, and documentation in order to guarantee the validity and reliability of the data. To further enhance the validity, accuracy, and consistency of the results, ongoing observation and cross-checking of the data were carried out. Throughout the research process, each participant gave their consent after being made aware of the study's objectives.

Result and Discussion

Result

The study's conclusions show that Yeti Topiah Fashion House's management of Yece's vocational internship students was carried out methodically through phases of planning, execution, and assessment. Both the development of technical competencies and hands-on learning in the context of the fashion industry were prioritised in the internship program.

The planning stage of the internship program involves determining objectives, strategies, tactics, and operational procedures. The objectives of the program are designed in alignment with the vocational high school curriculum and the demands of the fashion industry.

These objectives are formulated collaboratively by the school and the industry partner as part of the implementation of the link-and-match concept between vocational education and industry needs.

Table 2 Objectives of the Yece Internship Program

Yece Internship Program Objectives	Relevance to the Vocational High School Curriculum
Improving students' soft and hard skills	Supports competency-based learning outcomes in vocational education
Providing real-world work experience	Strengthens practical understanding of workplace environments
Encouraging students' entrepreneurial spirit	Develops independence and business-oriented competencies

To achieve these objectives, several main strategies are implemented, including introducing students to current fashion trends, guiding them in developing fashion concepts, applying task rotation systems, and involving them in fashion events. These strategies are integrated into a flagship program in which students create a complete fashion portfolio, beginning from concept development and garment production to the final photoshoot presentation.

In supporting the implementation of the program, several tactics are applied, such as selective recruitment processes, initial orientation and training, and periodic evaluations to monitor students' progress. The internship program is continuously developed through collaborative discussions and coordination between Yece by Yeti Topiah and the partnering schools to ensure that the program remains relevant to educational objectives and industry needs.

The planning stage demonstrated a structured collaboration between the fashion house and vocational schools to ensure that internship activities were aligned with students' competencies and learning objectives.

The implementation of the internship program was carried out in accordance with the established plan and was supported by intensive supervision from both the program coordinators and the owner of the fashion house. During the internship, students were actively involved in various stages of the fashion production process, ranging from design development and garment production to participation in fashion exhibitions and runway events. This comprehensive involvement enabled students to gain direct experience within a professional fashion industry environment.

Table 3 Internship Implementation

Main Implementation Activities	Description
Production and Design Activities	Students were guided and supervised directly by the person in charge and the owner during the design and production processes.
Participation in Fashion Events	Students were actively involved in fashion events as dressers, show teams, and supporting event crews.
Gradual Evaluation	Evaluations were conducted periodically and delivered directly in a corrective and constructive manner to improve students' competencies.
Communication and Work Regulations	Effective communication was maintained through clear work procedures and workplace regulations.

Students engaged in creative and professional activities like fashion styling, product photography, and fashion events in addition to garment production. This suggests that the internship program offered exposure to the industry that went beyond technical production skills.

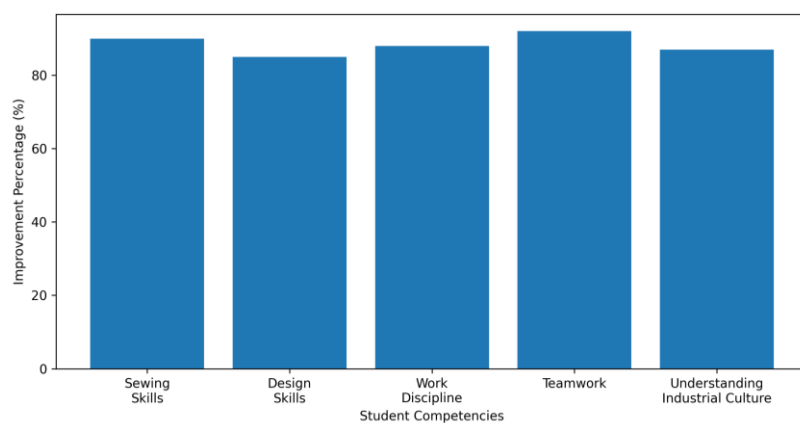


Figure 1. Students Competency After Internship at Yece by Yeti Topiah

To support the learning process, various facilities and infrastructure were provided, including sewing machines, fashion design equipment, and first aid kits. However, several limitations were still identified, particularly regarding the number of available tools and the capacity of the workspace.

In addition, occupational safety and health standards were implemented through the application of workplace safety procedures. These measures included the use of aprons during production activities, maintaining safe workspace arrangements by avoiding exposed cables, and providing vitamins, medicines, and regular health attendance monitoring for students. Through these efforts, the internship program sought to create a safe, supportive, and professional learning environment for all participants.

Evaluation is conducted across three aspects:

- a. Process: through work results, attendance, presentations, and assignment revisions.
- b. Benefits & Outcomes: Students experience significant improvements in technical and

soft skills.

- c. Impact: increased work awareness, independence, and industry adaptation.

Table 4 Dimensions of Internship Evaluation

Evaluation Dimension	Main Indicator
Process	Attendance, assignments, revisions, concept presentations
Benefits & Outcomes	Improved skills, portfolio, work readiness
Impact & Reflection	Character changes, entrepreneurial spirit

Throughout the internship program, Yece by Yeti Topiah Fashion House conducted ongoing evaluations. Direct supervision, daily performance observation, task assessment, and supervisor-student feedback sessions were among the evaluation activities. In addition to technical skills like sewing, creating patterns, and finishing clothing, the assessment also looked at soft skills like teamwork, communication, discipline, creativity, and professional responsibility. Supervisors supported students' competency development and adjustment to professional workplace standards by offering tailored guidance and constructive criticism. The results show that by coordinating industrial experiences with students' learning goals and industry expectations, ongoing evaluation helped to implement competency-based vocational education.

Discussion

The internship program at Yece by Yeti Topiah is designed with the comprehensive goal of supporting student development, both in soft skills and hard skills (Rahmawati & Prasetyo, 2023). This goal includes strengthening work character traits such as responsibility, ethics, and communication, as well as technical skills in the fashion industry, such as designing, sewing, patternmaking, and product finishing. Furthermore, this program provides students with real-world experience in the rhythm and challenges of the creative industry, while fostering a professional attitude and entrepreneurial readiness. These goals were developed jointly by the industry (Yece) and the school through a synchronization process to align with the vocational high school curriculum and the actual needs of the industry, as outlined in the Vocational High School Directorate policy (2023). This synergy is crucial to ensure that internship activities are not merely formalities but provide substantial benefits in developing students' work readiness. One of the challenges during the planning stage was the variation in students' competencies and readiness levels from different vocational schools. Therefore, coordination between the fashion house and schools was necessary to adjust internship activities with students' learning needs and competencies.

Yece's management strategy focuses on creating a comprehensive and contextual learning experience. Its primary strategies include fashion concept development activities that

begin with trend research and design visualization, hands-on learning about the latest fashion trends through discussion and observation, and task rotations to evaluate and develop students' individual potential. Furthermore, students are involved in various fashion events, such as exhibitions, fashion shows, and fashion photo shoots, to train them for the real world of the creative industry. Yece's flagship program, the creation of a comprehensive design portfolio, is a unique strategy that adds value to the student experience. This portfolio not only showcases the student's work but also reflects the development of creative thinking and technical skills during the internship.

To implement this strategy, Yece has established a number of systematic and measurable implementation tactics. Effective educational program planning requires integration between objectives, leadership, and resource management to ensure optimal and sustainable program operation (Even, 2024). The recruitment process for internship students is carried out by the school, but based on criteria and needs determined by Yece. These criteria include a strong interest in fashion, a determination to develop, and a readiness to face the challenges of the working world. To address this issue, Yece by Yeti Topiah conducted preliminary briefings and introduced workplace rules, production standards, and internship responsibilities before students began their internship activities. After the selection process, students were provided with initial knowledge about the work environment, basic fashion materials (such as trend forecasting and design), and applicable work regulations. For students who demonstrated difficulties in following the program, a coaching approach was implemented in stages, ranging from reprimands, personal discussions, involvement of the owner, to formal communication with the school. This demonstrated flexibility and attention to individual student learning.

The operational steps in the internship implementation included various core activities. Students were first introduced to the work environment and procedures at Yece. Next, they received material on emerging fashion trends and guidance on creating clothing concepts. After understanding these basics, students were invited to directly participate in design creation, pattern making, sewing, and finishing. The work process was structured using a rotation system based on the students' demonstrated skill level. This assignment helped accelerate adaptation and ensure mastery of every aspect of the work. In addition, students were involved in external fashion events as part of their social and professional learning. During the program, periodic evaluations are carried out with direct verbal corrections, to ensure the process is running according to objectives. Unlike internship planning in large-scale garment industries that mainly focuses on production placement, the planning process at Yece also emphasized creative learning experiences and competency development aligned with vocational education objectives.

The internship program at Yece proceeded according to plan, established during the planning stage. The work-based learning approach allows students to gain real-world work experience relevant to the skills they have learned in school (Putri & Hamid, 2021). Students receive ongoing support from both the person in charge and the owner. This support is provided at every stage of the process, from production and design to the preparation and execution of fashion events. Students are also guided to understand how to produce high-quality, visually appealing fashion. The hands-on approach and open communication allow students to ask questions, discuss ideas, and receive constructive feedback throughout the work process. Students at Yece were actively involved in creative processes like concept development, fashion styling, product photography, and fashion events, in contrast to internship models in manufacturing industries where students are frequently given repetitive production tasks.

In accordance with studies by Hasan & Muchtar (2021) and Wicaksono & Rahmawati (2023), evaluation was carried out through observations of students' skill development during the internship. Evaluation of the Field Work Practice's execution is an essential part of determining the program's efficacy and provides a foundation for enhancing the internship's execution in later phases (Hidayati & Firmansyah, 2022). Hard skills (designing, pattern-making, sewing), soft skills (communication, teamwork, creativity, and problem-solving), and work behaviour and attitude were all included in the evaluation. In order to raise the standard of the internship going forward, Yece also carried out a thorough internal assessment of the program. The disparity in students' technical proficiency, discipline, and ability to adjust to professional workplace standards was one of the issues found during the evaluation process.

Students stated that there were numerous concrete advantages to their internship at Yece. They felt that their technical abilities had greatly improved, particularly in digital design and sewing. Additionally, the practical experience of creating fashion concepts and taking part in events increased their self-confidence. Because they had a unique learning experience in contrast to other internship programs, student feedback was overwhelmingly positive. In order to support students' competency development throughout the internship process, supervisors instituted direct feedback sessions, individualised guidance, and ongoing evaluation.

Throughout the program, internal and external challenges were examined as part of the impact evaluation process. Internally, there were particular difficulties due to variations in the personalities and skills of the students. In the meantime, Yece had to constantly improve mentors' expertise due to the quick evolution of fashion trends. In order to adapt learning strategies to industry dynamics, Yece reduced student intake quotas, increased reflection, and improved industry-school communication. The application of Field Work Practices improved the job readiness of vocational high school students, especially in terms of work attitude,

discipline, and comprehension of the industrial world (Rahayu & Pratama, 2022). The evaluation process at Yece also emphasised creativity, communication skills, teamwork, and professional responsibility, in contrast to systems in large-scale manufacturing industries that mainly evaluate production output.

The findings of this study indicate that the management of the Field Work Practice (PKL) program at Yece by Yeti Topiah has been systematically planned and implemented in accordance with the link-and-match principle between vocational education and the industrial sector. The PKL program is not merely carried out as a formal requirement to fulfill the vocational school curriculum, but rather functions as a concrete bridge connecting competencies learned in school with the practical skills required in the workplace.

In its implementation, the learning approach applied at Yece reflects the concept of experiential learning, which emphasizes direct experience as a fundamental element in developing students' competencies. Recent studies have also demonstrated that practice-based learning is highly effective in improving both the hard skills and soft skills of vocational students (Rahmawati & Prasetyo, 2023). Through direct involvement in activities within the fashion industry, students gain not only theoretical understanding but also practical experience by engaging in authentic work processes. These experiences include working under time constraints, meeting production quality standards, communicating across divisions, and adapting to the social dynamics of professional work teams. As a result, the internship process contributes not only to the development of technical competencies but also to the cultivation of work values such as discipline, initiative, responsibility, and professionalism.

One of the most distinctive aspects of the PKL management at Yece is the implementation of a task rotation strategy that considers differences in students' initial competencies and learning capacities. This strategy provides students with broader opportunities for exploration while also reflecting the industry's responsiveness to the diverse backgrounds and abilities of internship participants. Through task rotation, students are able to experience various work roles, including fashion designing, sewing, pattern making, and participation in fashion presentations, fashion events, and photo shoots.

This strategy is further strengthened by a personalized mentoring approach, in which supervisors actively adjust assignments according to students' developmental progress, provide direct evaluations, and encourage constructive two-way communication. Open communication among students, supervisors, and the owner of the fashion house creates a learning environment that is reflective, collaborative, and supportive. Another innovative aspect identified in this study is the emphasis on developing fashion concept portfolios. These portfolios function not only as documentation of students' work but also as professional

representation tools that can support students in entering the workforce or building independent fashion businesses in the future.

Furthermore, the internship management at Yece reinforces the idea that relationships between schools and industry should not be limited to formal or administrative cooperation, but should instead be strategic and collaborative partnerships. This finding is consistent with the study of Miftakhu et al. (2024), which states that effective vocational programs must continuously adapt to industrial dynamics and utilize workplace feedback as part of the evaluation and improvement process in education. In this context, Yece not only provides a practice-based learning environment but also actively contributes input regarding curriculum development, student readiness, competencies that need strengthening, and current trends within the fashion industry.

The active involvement of industry in the educational process creates a complementary partnership in which schools provide academic foundations and character education, while industry offers practical experience and real-world applications. Such collaboration enriches students' learning experiences and supports the development of graduates who are not only work-ready but also creative, innovative, and adaptable to change.

Considering these findings, it can be concluded that the internship management model implemented at Yece by Yeti Topiah represents a best-practice example for strengthening vocational education based on the needs of the creative industry. As a dynamic and highly competitive sector, the fashion industry requires human resources who possess not only technical expertise but also the ability to adapt to change, take initiative, think creatively, and develop their potential independently. Through its integrative, personalized, and innovative internship management system, Yece by Yeti Topiah contributes to preparing vocational high school graduates not merely as workers, but also as creative and resilient future industry professionals. This is in line with the direction of Indonesia's national vocational education policy, which emphasizes the importance of active collaboration between educational institutions and industry in producing graduates who are relevant, competent, and capable of competing at both national and global levels.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the management of student internships (PKL) at Yece by Yeti Topiah Fashion House is carried out in a structured manner, starting from planning, implementation, and evaluation. The objectives of PKL include the development of soft skills, hard skills, creativity, and work readiness. The program implementation involves students in the entire fashion production process, intensively mentored, and directed at strengthening character and work ethic. Evaluation is carried out continuously through observation and

journals, and has proven effective in improving student competencies both technically and in work attitudes. The novel aspect of this study lies in the competency-based PKL management model and the active involvement of industry in every stage, which makes a real contribution to student work readiness and their success in the fashion industry. These findings imply that collaborative and industry-oriented PKL management is worthy of being used as good practice in the development of vocational education and industrial practice management theory.

Based on the findings of this research, it is recommended that Rumah Mode Yece by Yeti Topiah continue to maintain and further enhance its well-organized internship management system, particularly through intensive mentoring, project-based learning approaches, and the provision of creative spaces that encourage students' innovation and skill development. In addition, other fashion houses and fashion industries may adopt a similar internship management model by strengthening collaboration with vocational schools, designing structured and competency-based learning programs, and actively involving students in authentic industrial processes, ranging from the design stage to production and presentation activities.

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