

Strengthening Educational Administrator Competencies Through Internship Management: A Comparative Study in Indonesian Higher Education

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ABSTRACT. The management of internship programs in Indonesian higher education continues to face structural and implementation challenges, particularly under the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) policy, which promotes experiential learning and inter-institutional collaboration. This study critically analyzes internship governance in two distinct academic settings: the Islamic Education Management (IEM) program at UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta and the Educational Administration (EA) program at Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia Bandung. Drawing on Sondang Siagian's five management functions—planning, organizing, directing, supervising, and evaluating—a qualitative case study approach was employed. Data were collected from purposively selected stakeholders, including program heads, field supervisors, and student interns (n = 18), using in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis. The findings reveal two models of implementation: a structured two-phase system (IEM) and a flexible single-phase system (EA), both of which promote managerial, interpersonal, and technical competencies. However, shared obstacles persist, including irregular supervision, limited alignment with institutional needs, and evaluations focused primarily on summative outcomes. The IEM program excels in structured planning and alumni mentoring, whereas the EA program demonstrates strengths in international collaboration and technical briefings. This study proposes a hybrid model that integrates structured planning with adaptive field practices, supported by formative evaluations and leadership training. Theoretically, the study contributes to the discourse on work-integrated learning by contextualizing internship governance within the framework of educational administration. Practically, it offers a replicable model for institutions seeking to align internship programs with MBKM policy objectives and labor market expectations. Future research is recommended to examine longitudinal impacts and incorporate alumni and employer perspectives into internship assessments.

Keywords: *Internship Management, Educational Competencies, MBKM Policy, Program Evaluation*

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INTRODUCTION

The rapid evolution of the global workforce requires higher education institutions (HEIs) to adapt their curricula to equip students with the necessary skills and competencies to thrive in professional environments. Internship programs, a form of work-integrated learning, have emerged as a critical bridge between academic knowledge and practical application, particularly in the field of educational administration (Hadi et al., 2024). In Indonesia, the implementation of the *Merdeka Belajar-Kampus Merdeka* (MBKM) policy has further emphasized the importance of internship

programs in enhancing students' competencies as future educational administrators (Isnaini et al., 2024; Uddin et al., 2022). This policy encourages students to engage in real-world experiences, fostering a deeper understanding of their prospective roles within educational institutions (Hutagaluh et al., 2020; Sujaya, 2023). However, despite the growing recognition of the value of internships, there remains a need to systematically evaluate their management to ensure they effectively contribute to students' professional development (Putri et al., 2020; Wijaya et al., 2024).

Previous studies have highlighted the significance of internship programs in improving students' professional competencies. For instance, research conducted by Badrudin (2020) demonstrated that internships in Islamic educational institutions significantly enhanced students' managerial and technical skills. Similarly, Rosmida and Anita (2021) found that internships in polytechnic institutions improved students' self-competence and workforce readiness. However, a paradox exists in the literature, as some studies reveal discrepancies between industry expectations and students' preparedness, particularly in the context of educational administration (Abu Bakar et al., 2023; Wang, 2024). These gaps underscore the need for a more structured and well-managed internship framework that aligns academic training with professional demands.

Internationally, internship programs are widely recognized as an essential component of higher education. For example, in the United States, internships are often integrated into curricula to provide students with hands-on experience in their chosen fields (Abdelrahman et al., 2022). Similarly, in Japan, international internships have been shown to enhance students' global competencies and adaptability in multicultural environments (Tan & Umemoto, 2021). These practices highlight the importance of collaboration between universities and industry partners in designing internship programs that meet both educational and professional standards. However, the implementation of such programs varies significantly across countries due to cultural, institutional, and policy differences.

In the Indonesian context, the MBKM policy has provided a unique opportunity to reform internship programs, particularly in Islamic and public universities. Studies have shown that internship programs in Indonesian universities, such as those at UIN Sunan Gunung Djati and UPI Bandung, have successfully enhanced students' competencies in educational administration (Al-Balushi, 2022; Badrudin, 2020). However, challenges persist, including limited internship durations, insufficient supervision, and a lack of alignment between academic curricula and industry needs (Ifendi, 2020; Sutapa et al., 2020; Syahputra et al., 2023). These issues highlight the need for a more comprehensive approach to internship management, ensuring programs are both effective and sustainable. Consequently, stakeholders increasingly advocate for reforms that incorporate continuous feedback and strategic oversight into internship administration.

Despite the growing attention to internship programs, existing studies still exhibit a normative and output-oriented tendency. Most research focuses on enhancing student competencies (Badrudin, 2020; Rosmida & Anita, 2021; Wilton, 2012), yet tends to overlook governance aspects that are critical to the program's success (Baker & Henson, 2010). On the other hand, studies addressing managerial issues remain limited in terms of institutional comparisons, even though institutional differentiation—such as between PTKIN and PTN—could give rise to diverse management practices (Allen et al., 2013; Ifendi, 2020; Sutapa et al., 2020). Moreover, while the MBKM policy is normatively claimed to be transformative, it has not been accompanied by sufficient empirical studies on its impact on internship program management (Dhiu et al., 2024; Fauzi et al., 2023; Fitria, 2024). In this context, a systematic study of internship governance within the MBKM framework is not only relevant to address the gaps in the literature, but also serves as a critical intervention in institutional practices that remain largely procedural and insufficiently reflective.

This study focuses on two institutions in Indonesia: the Islamic Educational Management (IEM) program at UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta and the Educational Administration (EA) program at UPI Bandung. Both institutions have implemented the MBKM policy and hold international accreditation, making them ideal case studies for examining internship management in

educational administration. The selection of these institutions facilitates a comparative analysis of how different university types administer internship programs, offering a more nuanced understanding of best practices and areas for improvement. This comparative approach also helps identify common challenges and effective solutions in program management. Ultimately, the study aims to serve as a reference for future policy and curriculum development in higher education.

This study aims to examine the management of internship programs in the MPI and EA departments, identify best practices, and propose strategic recommendations for program enhancement. The analysis is grounded in Sondang Siagian's (1987) management theory, which comprises five key functions: planning, organizing, actuating, supervising, and evaluating. Employing this framework, the research seeks to construct an integrated model for internship governance aligned with the MBKM policy. The findings are expected to contribute to the scholarly discourse on work-integrated learning within the field of educational administration. Moreover, the study offers practical insights to strengthen institutional collaboration and improve program responsiveness to professional demands. Accordingly, the central research question is: how are internship programs in the MPI and EA departments managed across the five managerial functions, and to what extent do they align with competency development imperatives under MBKM?

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative case study approach to investigate the implementation of the internship program within the framework of the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) policy at two higher education institutions. The selection of the two study programs was based on specific and strategic considerations. The Islamic Education Management Program (MPI) of the Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training (FITK) at UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta represents a PTKIN that has integrated MBKM into its curriculum and has received international accreditation from FIBAA Germany. The Educational Administration Program (AP) at Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia (UPI) Bandung, a PTN also internationally accredited by AQAS Germany, has demonstrated structured internship practices with international reach. These institutional characteristics were deemed relevant for comparative analysis due to their alignment in educational administration focus and MBKM implementation.

The researcher acted as the primary instrument, employing natural settings, descriptive approaches, and inductive reasoning to interpret the meaning of phenomena studied (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Data were collected through direct observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation studies. Observations were conducted by the main researcher with support from research assistants in each study program. Interviews involved internship program administrators, study program heads, field supervisor lecturers, and students participating in the internship. The respondents were selected purposively, based on their knowledge and involvement in the implementation of the internship program (Cohen et al., 2017).

Instruments used in the research included semi-structured interview guides, field notes, and audio recorders. Triangulation was applied by comparing data from interviews, observations, and documentation to ensure credibility. Data were analyzed using Miles et al., (2018), involving three stages: (1) data condensation, which included selecting, focusing, simplifying, and abstracting raw data obtained from the field; (2) data display, through organizing the data in narrative, matrix, or visual formats to facilitate conclusion drawing; and (3) conclusion drawing and verification, involving pattern recognition, explanation development, and generalization.

In this study, data condensation was realized through thematic coding of interview transcripts and field notes, where key categories such as planning, organizing, motivation, control, and evaluation were developed. The data display was arranged in comparative tables and matrices to highlight similarities and differences across the two institutions. Conclusions were verified through peer debriefing sessions and continuous engagement with theoretical frameworks.

To ensure the robustness of the findings, the researcher consistently referred to relevant management theories and involved fellow researchers in discussions for validation. This

methodological framework allowed for an in-depth understanding of the internship program's alignment with MBKM objectives, institutional challenges, and contextual best practices. Accordingly, the central research question that guided this methodology was: How is the internship program managed across the five managerial functions in the MPI UIN Sunan Kalijaga and AP UPI Bandung, and to what extent do these management practices align with the competency development goals set by the MBKM policy?

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Management of Internship Program at Islamic Education Management (IEM) Study Program, UIN Sunan Kalijaga

The internship program at the Islamic Education Management (IEM) Study Program, UIN Sunan Kalijaga, is called the Education Internship Program (EIP), and it is an intracurricular activity designed to provide students with hands-on experience in educational management practices at partner institutions. The program consists of two phases: EIP 1 (observation in the sixth semester) and EIP 2 (field practice for 45 days in the seventh semester).

The following figures illustrate the internship mechanisms applied in both study programs, highlighting the structure and stages of implementation based on program documentation and field observation.

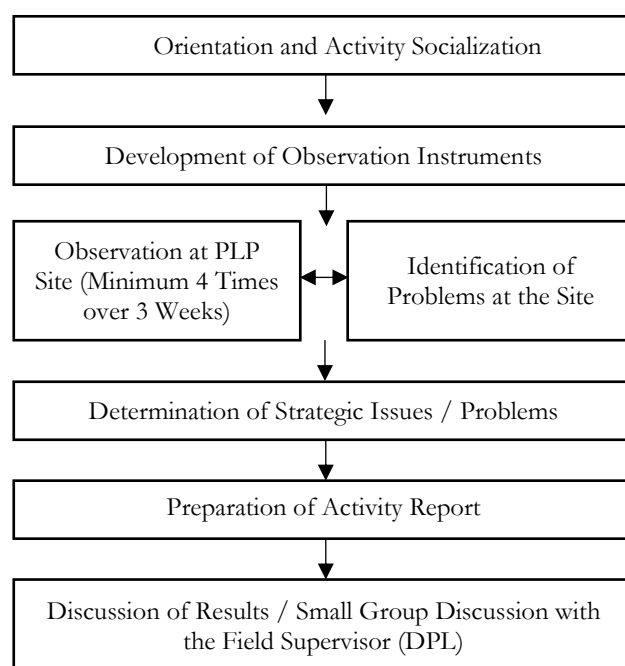


Figure 1. Mechanism of Internship Implementation in the Islamic Education Management Study Program, UIN Sunan Kalijaga (Source: IEM Study Program's Documentation, 2024).

According to the 2024 SFI guidelines, the primary objective of the program is to apply educational management theories acquired in class to real-world situations in various partner institutions, including government ministries, schools, and Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*). Several students have expressed that the program's planning process is well-structured, encompassing stage division, student quota allocation, and administrative procedures. Ahmad Kamal and Aiz Afwa, who completed their EIP at the Ministry of Religious Affairs in Jakarta (October 14, 2024), noted that the university had prepared application letters and coordinated internship placements with partner institutions. However, they also encountered challenges, particularly with the technical briefings, which they found overly general and lacking depth. "The

preparatory sessions before EIP should be more specific so that students can better understand their assigned tasks”, remarked Ahmad Kamal.

In alignment with the aim of integrating theory into practice, the current briefing modules still lack a strong problem-based learning component. Therefore, it is necessary to revise the preparatory phase to include realistic case simulations, analytical scenarios, and interactive group discussions that enable students to apply educational management theories to practical challenges within institutions. These strategies are expected to enhance students’ problem-solving skills and provide a more effective bridge between classroom learning and field demands. Additionally, integrating Sondang Siagian’s five managerial functions—planning, organizing, motivating, supervising, and evaluating into these simulations could further strengthen the experiential application of theoretical concepts.

Coordination between the university and partner institutions has also been identified as a significant challenge. Yoga, an EIP student at the Education Quality Assurance Agency (Balai Penjaminan Mutu Pendidikan–BPMP) in Yogyakarta (November 9, 2024), stated that while program planning is aligned with managerial principles, field implementation requires improvement, particularly in terms of communication between the university and its partners. This concern was echoed by Hasriyah, an EIP student at State Islamic Senior High School 2 Bantul (MAN 2 Bantul) (November 10, 2024), who observed that supervision from the Field Supervising Lecturer (FSL) was insufficient, leaving students without adequate guidance during the program.

The university supports the EIP by assigning supervising lecturers and providing financial assistance for student placements. Some students acknowledged the helpfulness of DPLs (Academic Supervisors) in developing work programs and addressing technical challenges. However, stronger coordination between the university and partner institutions remains crucial to ensure that students fully benefit from the field experience. In particular, fostering shared responsibility and establishing regular feedback loops among supervisors, students, and partner institutions could further enhance the program’s implementation.

During the EIP, students engage in various managerial activities, such as drafting work programs at BPMP DIY. Nonetheless, some students felt insufficiently involved in decision-making processes at their placement sites. This gap highlights the need to strengthen experiential learning strategies that empower students to actively participate in institutional processes, thereby fostering educational leadership competencies. Incorporating theoretical frameworks on participatory management and distributed leadership into the pre-internship modules may support this development.

Program evaluation is currently conducted through written reports. However, students have suggested broadening the assessment approach to include methods such as group discussions or Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) to facilitate a more comprehensive exchange of experiences and solutions. Embedding formative and collaborative assessment methods would respond to the need for stronger integration of theory and practice, ultimately enhancing the internship’s overall effectiveness and impact. Such an evaluation model would not only assess outcomes but also promote reflective practice and continuous professional development—critical components of educational management training.

In conclusion, although the EIP at UIN Sunan Kalijaga exhibits strong planning and engagement in the field, further improvement is needed. This includes incorporating theory-based, problem-centered approaches into both preparatory and evaluative stages. These enhancements will ensure that the internship experience is not merely procedural but transformative in developing the competencies of future educational administrators.

Management of Internship Program at Educational Administration (EA) Study Program, UPI Bandung

The internship program within the Educational Administration (EA) Study Program at Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia (UPI) Bandung begins with a well-structured planning phase. This phase includes aligning the curriculum with the *Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka* (MBKM) policy, detailed scheduling, site selection, and student placement procedures. The program is formally guided by an internship handbook that outlines comprehensive steps for implementation, including preparatory activities, field monitoring, and evaluation procedures. A key component of the preparatory stage is the program orientation and technical briefing, which consists of two to three meetings held at the beginning of the semester. These sessions are designed to equip students with foundational knowledge in research methods, academic writing, workplace communication, and professional ethics.

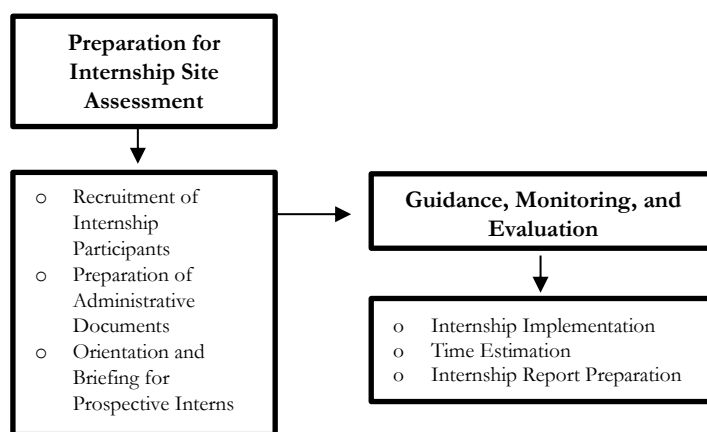


Figure 2. Strategy for Internship Implementation in Educational Administration Study Program at UPI Bandung, including preparation, mentoring, and evaluation stages (Source: Program Documentation, 2024).

Organizationally, the program involves both academic advisors and institutional mentors who collaboratively support students throughout the internship. Students are required to develop structured weekly activity plans aligned with the needs of their host institutions, allowing them to gain hands-on experience in administrative operations. According to a student identified as SN (November 4, 2024), the flexible implementation of tasks enabled interns to take on various roles, including planning, coordination, documentation, and supervision. This flexibility reflects a student-centered approach while maintaining alignment with the guidelines stipulated in the internship handbook.

Another student, identified as AM, highlighted the practical application of digital tools during the internship: *“We learned to prepare institutional quality evaluation reports using spreadsheet applications and performance indicator mapping. This helped us understand how accreditation and quality management are implemented in partner schools”* (Interview, November 6, 2024).

These experiences illustrate how technical knowledge from coursework is directly applied in operational field settings.

Observation notes from one school site recorded that students participated in school committee meetings, prepared agenda materials, and documented minutes. This real-time involvement allowed interns to understand stakeholder engagement and decision-making processes within educational leadership contexts (Observation, November 2024).

Motivational support is provided through continuous dialogue and group discussions between academic advisors and interns. However, findings from the research report suggest that student motivation could be further enhanced through reflective learning mechanisms and structured feedback sessions. These would help students connect their field experiences to theoretical frameworks more effectively. Additionally, incorporating alumni mentors into

orientation and reflection meetings is recommended, following successful practices in the Islamic Education Management (MPI) program at UIN Sunan Kalijaga. This approach could help bridge the academic-practice divide.

Supervision and evaluation are carried out collaboratively by institutional mentors and faculty supervisors through regular on-site visits and post-internship reporting. Students are required to submit daily logs, progress updates, and a comprehensive final report. However, a significant gap remains in the absence of holistic assessment tools that capture growth in soft skills such as leadership, collaboration, adaptability, and professional communication. The current evaluation model, which is primarily report-based, remains largely cognitive and output-focused. There is a pressing need for a more balanced assessment framework that incorporates peer reviews, self-reflection essays, and behavioral observations to provide a comprehensive view of students' competency development.

To enhance the alignment between theory and practice, the EA program should consider adopting competency-based evaluation frameworks explicitly derived from the program's intended learning outcomes. These could include multi-source feedback (e.g., 360-degree evaluations), portfolio-based assessments, and FGD-based post-placement reviews. Such instruments would enable institutions to evaluate not only academic and technical competencies but also students' professional character and interpersonal effectiveness.

In conclusion, the internship program of the Educational Administration Study Program at UPI Bandung demonstrates commendable organizational structure and flexible implementation. Nevertheless, greater integration of problem-based learning into the preparatory phase, more reflective motivation strategies, and the adoption of holistic evaluation models are essential for realizing the full potential of the internship in developing competent and adaptable educational administrators.

Supervision is conducted by field supervisors and faculty members through on-site visits. Students are required to maintain daily logs and submit a final report for evaluation. The program's evaluation process assesses students' competency, skills, and adaptability, measured through thesis defense sessions and report presentations.

Table 1. Comparison of Internship Program Management

Aspect	IEM Study Program, UIN Sunan Kalijaga	EA Study Program, UPI Bandung
Program Phases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - EIP 1: Observation (Semester VI) - EIP 2: Field practice (45 days, Semester VII) 	Single-phase implementation with curriculum and schedule adjustments.
Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Well-structured: phase division, student quotas, and administration. - Technical briefings remain general. 	Well-prepared: handbook, orientation, and technical briefings (2–3 sessions).
Organizing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Field Supervising Lecturers (FSL) provide guidance. - Coordination with partner institutions needs improvement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Academic advisors and partner institution mentors are involved. - Students create structured activity schedules.
Actuating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students engage in managerial activities. - Limited involvement in decision-making. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Flexible implementation according to partner institution needs. - Students gain diverse experiences.
Controlling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Minimal supervision by FSL (only at the beginning and end of the program). - Monitoring is unscheduled. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Supervision by FSL and academic staff through visits. - Daily and final reports are required.
Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Evaluation through written reports. - Suggestion: FGDs for more in-depth assessment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Evaluation through thesis defense and report presentations. - Measures student competence and skills.

Notes: EIP: Education Internship Program (EIP), FSL: Field Supervising Lecturer, FGD: Focus Group Discussion

The data in this table were synthesized from interviews with students and program administrators, as well as program handbooks and observational notes collected during the 2024 field research (Documentation and Interviews, October–November 2024).

This table highlights that while both EIP programs in the IEM Study Program at FITK, UIN Sunan Kalijaga, and the Educational Administration Study Program at UPI Bandung share the same goal of providing practical experience for students, there are significant differences in their approaches and implementation. The IEM Study Program emphasizes a structured two-phase program (observation and field practice) with well-organized planning but faces challenges in technical briefings, coordination with partner institutions, and limited supervision from FSLs. On the other hand, the Educational Administration Study Program at UPI Bandung prioritizes flexible implementation, more structured technical briefings, and stronger supervision from both field and faculty supervisors. However, both programs need to enhance their evaluation processes—such as through FGDs or other methods—to ensure that students' field experiences align with learning objectives and the demands of the job market.

Best-Practice Internship Implementation in Islamic Education Management and Educational Administration Study Programs

The Best-Practice Internship in the IEM Study Program Sunan Kalijaga

The Education Internship Program (EIP) in the Islamic Education Management (IEM) Study Program, Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training (FITK), UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, has become a best-practice example in bridging theory and practice for students. This program is designed to strengthen technical and managerial skills relevant to the job market while building partnerships with institutions such as the Ministry of Religious Affairs, BPMP DIY, schools, and Islamic boarding schools. Based on interviews with five informants involved in various EIP locations, the following key findings were identified:

Strong institutional partnerships and alumni engagement were frequently mentioned as key drivers of the program's success. Students who completed their internship at the Ministry of Religious Affairs reported valuable professional exposure and recognition. As Aiz Afwa reflected: "*The EIP at the Ministry of Religious Affairs was a highly memorable experience. We learned many new things, from technical skills to a deeper understanding of the professional world.*" (Interview, October 14, 2024).

His remarks indicate that in addition to gaining proficiency in digital tools and administrative systems, students developed a clear understanding of workplace routines and expectations. This aligns with Ahmad Kamal's reflection, who noted the significance of mentorship from alumni in navigating institutional practices and professional responsibilities. "*The alumni network made it easier for us to adapt and learn quickly in the institution. We were guided in every task, which helped us understand how the Ministry operates.*" (Interview, October 14, 2024).

Another important theme was the application of academic theories in professional contexts. Yoga, who interned at BPMP Yogyakarta, emphasized the relevance of coursework when applied in the field: "*At BPMP, I was assigned to assist with archiving and human resources tasks. It was an opportunity to apply what I learned about organizational management and record-keeping in class.*" (Interview, October 20, 2024).

His account demonstrates how the internship bridged the gap between theory and practice, particularly in understanding administrative systems in public education institutions under both the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the Ministry of Education.

Meanwhile, Hasriyah's internship experience at MAN 2 Bantul highlighted the significance of collaboration, communication, and time management in a school context. She noted that successful task execution was supported by mutual trust and teamwork: "*The harmonious relationship between students and staff at MAN 2 Bantul was a great source of motivation for us. Good relationships facilitated task completion and enhanced work enthusiasm.*" (Interview, November 10, 2024).

Her role in handling administrative tasks such as asset inventory and document disposal was particularly instrumental in developing her organizational skills.

In another context, Faqih’s internship at Joglo Alit Islamic Boarding School revealed insights into pesantren-based education systems. His experience emphasized how Islamic educational management principles were implemented in non-formal institutional settings: *"I was involved in helping manage student records and contributing to the planning of weekly educational activities. It helped me connect the theories we learned with the real practices in pesantren."* (Interview, October 25, 2024).

He noted that pesantren internships allowed for deeper immersion into community-centered education, highlighting the distinct ethos of Islamic educational leadership.

Overall, these interviews illustrate that the EIP (EIP) at UIN Sunan Kalijaga effectively prepares students for the complexities of educational administration. The combination of strong partnerships, a curriculum aligned with field demands, and supportive environments across various institutions ensures that students not only engage in administrative functions but also internalize the values and competencies needed for future careers.

Table 2. The best-practice internship in the IEM study program Sunan Kalijaga

No	Key Findings	Core Description
1	Institutional Partnerships and Alumni Engagement	The EIP program promotes institutional collaboration and alumni involvement, enabling students to gain practical exposure and build professional networks.
2	Practical Application of Managerial Theories	Students apply theoretical knowledge such as records management and HR practices in real institutional contexts, enhancing understanding of public administration.
3	Development of Soft Skills in Team-based Work	The program strengthens soft skills such as communication, teamwork, and effective time management in administrative settings.
4	Exposure to Islamic Boarding School Educational Systems	Engagement with pesantren provides students with experience in community-based education and Islamic educational management.
5	Determinants of Best Practices in Internship Implementation	Key success factors include strong institutional partnerships, alumni networks, applied curriculum, team collaboration, and adaptability to diverse institutional settings.

Best-Practice Internship in the Educational Administration (EA) Study Program, UPI Bandung

The internship program of the Educational Administration (EA) Study Program at Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia (UPI) Bandung demonstrates several best practices within the context of the *Merdeka Belajar–Kampus Merdeka* (MBKM) initiative. These practices include systematic program planning, multi-stakeholder engagement, and a direct alignment between internship activities and the learning outcomes of the study program. The internship is conducted in two stages: the Educational Unit Management Internship in the sixth semester and the Professional Development Internship for Educational Administrators in the seventh semester, as stated in an interview with the Head of the EA Study Program at UPI on October 11, 2024:

“The internship activities in our program are structured in stages to strengthen students’ professional readiness. We have also developed partnerships with international institutions to realize the program’s internationalization vision” (Interview, Head of EA Study Program, UPI, October 11, 2024).

Direct classroom observations and documentation of internship activities in the EA Study Program revealed that students receive technical training, such as the use of education management software, performance report writing, and institutional data analysis. This is supported by a statement from one of the internship participants: *“Through this internship, I have developed skills in data analysis, evaluative reporting, and gained a more concrete understanding of school management systems”....!* (Student, EA Study Program, UPI, Interview, October 11, 2024).

Additionally, according to the *Internship Program Guidelines of the EA Study Program, UPI, 2024*, the internship is designed to develop students' managerial, technical, and social competencies. The program emphasizes practical engagement in educational institutions and related government agencies, involving both academic supervisors and partner institution mentors. The guidelines also specify that students are required to design a quality improvement project in educational administration as their final internship assignment.

A notable best practice is the implementation of the international internship program, established in collaboration with educational institutions in Malaysia and Thailand. Three students from the EA Study Program participated in the ASEAN Education Management Internship in 2023, hosted by the International Islamic School Malaysia (IISM) and the Thai Ministry of Education Regional Office. Student reports from the program indicate that activities included studying international school management systems, observing administrative decision-making processes, and engaging in cross-cultural collaboration in multinational educational settings.

Internal evaluations of the program show that students who participated in the international internship demonstrated improvements in cross-cultural communication, understanding of ASEAN education policies, and problem-solving skills in global contexts. This aligns with the study program's statement in the AQAS international accreditation document that *“one of the pillars of the EA Program's internationalization is the enhancement of student mobility and cross-border collaboration in educational administration”* (AQAS Document, 2022).

The internship program of the EA Study Program at UPI Bandung can be categorized as a best practice in the field of educational administration in Indonesia. Its core strengths lie in the integration of technical and managerial competency development, active engagement with strategic partners at both national and international levels, and reflective experiences shared by student interns. Collectively, these elements indicate that the internship implementation not only meets the MBKM standards but also effectively prepares graduates to be relevant and adaptable to the dynamics of global education policy.

Table 3. Summary of Best Practice Aspects in the EA UPI Internship Program

No	Best Practice Aspect	Core Description
1	Structured, Staged Internship	The internship is conducted in two stages (The Educational Unit Management Internship and Professional Internship), focusing on both technical and managerial competencies.
2	Curriculum and Learning Outcome Integration	Internship assignments are directly linked to graduate learning outcomes (CPL) and quality improvement projects.
3	International Internship	The ASEAN Internship Program in Malaysia and Thailand broadens students' global perspectives.
4	Enhanced Interpersonal Competence	Students develop communication, negotiation, and cross-functional collaboration skills.
5	International Accreditation (AQAS)	AQAS accreditation from Germany strengthens the global competitiveness and legitimacy of the international internship practices.

The Education Internship Program in the IEM Study Program at UIN Sunan Kalijaga and the EA Study Program at UPI Bandung demonstrate best practices in bridging theory and practice. The key supporting factors include strong partnerships, an applied curriculum, effective communication, and diverse placement opportunities. These programs not only equip students with technical and managerial skills but also broaden their perspectives on the professional world.

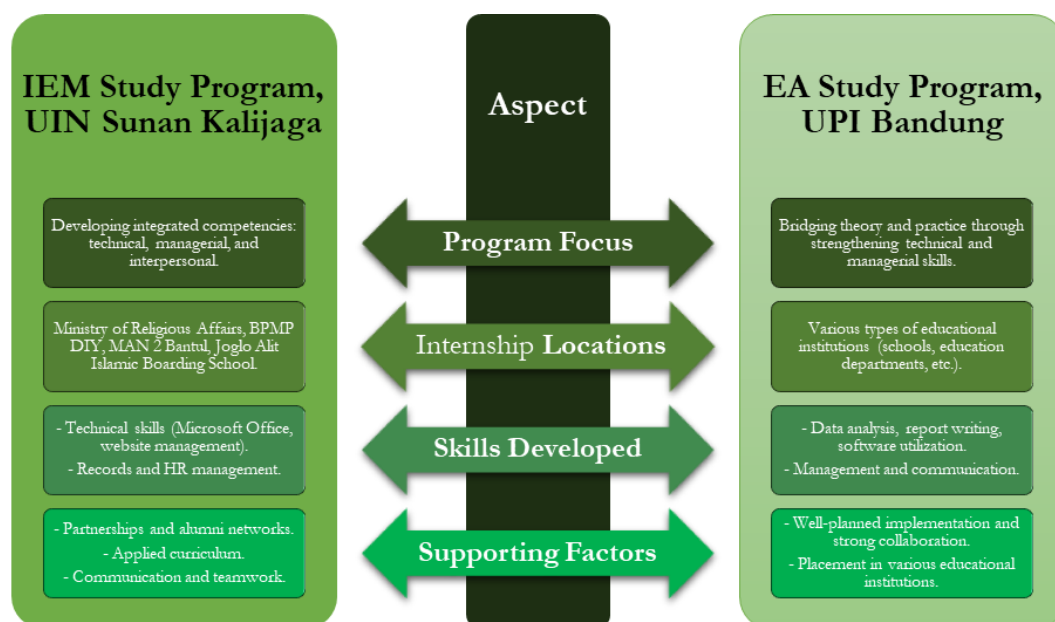


Figure 3. Best-Practice Internship Program in the IEM and EA Study Programs

Discussion

The primary objective of this study is to analyze the management of the Education Internship Program (EIP) in the Islamic Education Management (IEM) program at UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta and the Educational Administration (EA) program at UPI Bandung. Previous research has highlighted the role of internship programs in enhancing managerial competencies and technical skills within higher education, including in both State Islamic Higher Education Institutions and State Higher Education Institutions (Dahlan, 2021; Putri et al., 2020; Wijaya et al., 2024). Within the framework of Indonesia's higher education policy, internships are considered strategic initiatives to bridge the gap between academic curricula and the demands of the job market, as well as stakeholder expectations (Badrudin, 2020; Rosmida & Anita, 2021).

The findings reveal that the EIP structure in the IEM program at UIN Sunan Kalijaga is characterized by a two-phase model: EIP 1 (observation) and EIP 2 (field practice), with clearly defined quotas and schedules. However, supervision from Field Supervising Lecturers (FSLs) was found to be insufficiently intensive, with students reporting that guidance was concentrated at the beginning and end of the internship period. In contrast, the EA program at UPI Bandung has adopted a structured framework that includes orientation sessions, technical briefings, and collaborative mentoring with institutional partners. The flexible nature of the program at UPI allows students to tailor their activities to meet the specific needs of partner institutions. Nevertheless, maintaining consistent student motivation and supervisory quality remains a challenge. Moreover, the evaluation processes at both institutions require enhancement to ensure that assessment components are holistic and relevant to workforce expectations (Abeygunawardhana et al., 2024; Lacasandile et al., 2023; Wang, 2024).

Comparative findings from previous studies reinforce the importance of robust partnerships between universities and partner institutions in ensuring the effectiveness of internship programs (Berková et al., 2022; Cifor & Watson, 2020). In addition, diversified assessment strategies—including written reports and group discussions—have been shown to improve students'

understanding of real-world contexts (El-Sayed & Abdelaliem, 2023; Jaime et al., 2020; Tavener et al., 2021). Within the broader context of competency development, several studies stress the need for integrating theoretical foundations in educational management with practical administrative experience. While many programs have demonstrated success in enhancing professional skills, persistent issues such as inconsistent supervision and a lack of formative assessment mechanisms remain. Therefore, aligning institutional expectations with workplace realities is increasingly critical (X. Lv et al., 2022).

International literature also underscores the value of strengthening students' managerial and interpersonal competencies to ensure the success of internship programs (Lu, 2024; Tan & Umemoto, 2021). Providing comprehensive technical guidelines prior to student placement can minimize miscommunication and increase student autonomy during the internship period (Espiritu, 2024). Moreover, sustained field supervision has been shown to promote innovation and engagement among students, aligning with findings that highlight the demotivating effect of weak supervision (Talley & Spencer, 2024). Nevertheless, challenges emerge when universities allocate limited resources to supervision, reducing it to administrative oversight. Balancing program flexibility with technical consistency in the field is therefore essential (Pokharkar et al., 2024).

This study also highlights that strong collaboration between universities and partner institutions can enhance students' professional networks, particularly in the field of educational administration (Khorshidi et al., 2024; Muhammad Sya'dullah Fauzi, 2021). Students who engage in part-time internships or frequently interact with external stakeholders tend to be better prepared for workforce demands (Ngac & Menon, 2024). A conducive learning environment and mastery of soft skills including communication, leadership, and teamwork are also key factors in internship success (Brown, 2023; Isnaini et al., 2024). However, the diversity of institutional contexts and student backgrounds can present adaptation challenges, necessitating internship program designs that are responsive to local conditions. As such, interpreting the results of this study requires an understanding of each institution's specific context (Sujaya, 2023).

This analysis draws on Sondang P. Siagian's (1987) five core management functions: planning, organizing, actuating, controlling, and evaluating. In both programs, planning is evident through the structured preparatory stages and official documentation. However, disparities appear in the actuating and controlling phases. At UIN, limited supervision indicates weakness in the controlling function, whereas UPI's collaborative mentoring model reflects stronger implementation of the actuating function. Evaluative practices in both institutions remain focused on written reports, underutilizing more comprehensive assessment strategies. Applying Siagian's framework enables a deeper critique of institutional management practices, underscoring the systemic implications of each function for developing student competencies and professional readiness (Devi Pramitha & Bunga Aprilia Firdausi, 2024; Nurhikmah, 2024).

Further analysis of identified challenges points to the need for more systematic supervision schedules to avoid concentration of guidance at only the beginning and end of the program (Jaime et al., 2020; Sabarudin, Mubin et al., 2023). Regular coordination between faculty supervisors, institutional mentors, and students could support earlier identification and resolution of emerging issues (Hallen et al., 2020). Another key recommendation is the implementation of continuous assessment models that evaluate not only cognitive outcomes but also behavioral competencies such as leadership, adaptability, and teamwork (Kirkov et al., 2022; M. Lv et al., 2022). This would address the limitations of evaluation models that rely solely on written reports as feedback instruments. Ultimately, an adaptive and participatory internship policy design can contribute significantly to student development in the field of educational administration (Fitria, 2024).

Based on the overall findings, the practical implications of this study underscore the need to optimize coordination between universities, partner institutions, and alumni networks (Kirkov et al., 2022). The EIP could be enhanced through the inclusion of specialized modules on leadership development, conflict resolution, and communication skills. A mixed evaluation approach combining group discussions, report presentations, and direct field performance assessments would

ensure that the internship program meets real-world workplace demands. Furthermore, adequate infrastructure, sustainable funding, and supportive policies are critical to the long-term success of these programs (Pokharkar et al., 2024; Raszewski & Peterson, 2020). The synergy of these elements is expected to produce graduates who are highly competent and well-prepared for careers in educational administration.

Despite its comprehensive analysis, this study acknowledges several limitations that may affect the generalizability and depth of its findings. **First**, the scope of the research is limited to two institutions UIN Sunan Kalijaga and UPI Bandung which, while representing different higher education typologies, may not capture the full diversity of internship program management across Indonesia's higher education landscape (Gosselin et al., 2015). **Second**, data collection primarily relied on institutional documentation and interviews, without longitudinal observation of internship implementation, potentially constraining the ability to assess dynamic changes over time (Taylor & Hooley, 2014). **Third**, the study did not include perspectives from alumni or employers, which are crucial for evaluating the long-term impact of internship programs on employability. Future research should consider expanding institutional samples, incorporating multi-stakeholder perspectives, and employing mixed-methods approaches to enhance analytical depth and applicability.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the success of internship programs depends not only on the structure or flexibility of their design but also on the active engagement of all stakeholders, including universities, academic supervisors, partner institutions, and alums. At UIN Sunan Kalijaga, the involvement of alumni and structured planning serves as a reinforcing factor, whereas at UPI Bandung, a flexible approach and international partnership networks provide broader opportunities for learning experiences. Both programs have proven effective in enhancing students' managerial, interpersonal, and technical competencies, as well as in facilitating a transformation of internship practices beyond mere administrative processes.

The findings offer a theoretical contribution by reinforcing the importance of internship program governance that integrates experiential learning, cross-sector collaboration, and formative assessment. Practically, this study presents a model of best practices that can be replicated by other institutions, both Islamic and secular, through the strengthening of coordinative structures, utilizing alum networks, integrating leadership and communication training, and conducting comprehensive evaluations involving report presentations, group discussions, and field observations. This aligns with the growing need for internship programs that effectively bridge the academic environment with the realities of professional work.

The limitations of this study include its restricted institutional scope, the absence of a complementary quantitative approach, and the insufficient exploration of longitudinal dimensions and demographic variables. Future research is therefore recommended to develop real-time, data-driven digital evaluations, explore the effectiveness of internships through a comparative quantitative design, and expand the institutional and geographical scope of analysis. The study also recommends that the Ministry of Education and Culture, in collaboration with the Ministry of Religious Affairs, develop a national internship policy that is both adaptable and structured, aligning professional skills training with current labor market demands.

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