



Evaluation of the impact vocational high school center of excellence program on hospitality skills

Dwi Ratnasari^{1*}, Edy Supriyadi¹ , Fitri Alfarisa² 

¹ Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, Indonesia.

² Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, Indonesia.

* Corresponding Author. E-mail: dwiratnasari.2024@student.uny.ac.id

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ABSTRACT

The Center of Excellence Vocational High School Program aims to strengthen vocational education through a work-based learning approach aligned with industry needs. However, empirical evidence regarding its impact on students' technical competencies remains limited. This study analyzes the impact of the program on hospitality students at SMK Negeri 1 Sijuk using the CIPP evaluation model, focusing on the Input and Product components. Data were collected through interviews and questionnaires from 30 respondents, including the principal, vocational teachers, an industry representative, and students. Instrument validity was assessed using Aiken's V, and reliability was estimated with Cronbach's Alpha. The findings indicate that the program has achieved strong institutional readiness, with most Input indicators categorized as Very Good. The Product component also showed high satisfaction, particularly in graduate quality and competency certification, suggesting that graduates possess adequate hard and soft skills. However, implementation gaps were identified, particularly in teacher readiness, mindset transformation, and the suboptimal application of Project-Based Learning (PjBL). Industry feedback further highlighted concerns regarding students' readiness before internships. Overall, the main challenge lies in strengthening instructional implementation and enhancing student preparedness prior to workplace training.

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INTRODUCTION

Education plays a pivotal role as a driving force in national development, particularly in fostering high-quality, innovative, and competitive human resources. In the context of Industry 5.0 and globalization, rapid technological advancements demand the availability of skilled and competent workers (Oeij et al., 2024). Therefore, vocational education has gained strategic importance as a pathway to prepare human resources capable of mastering emerging technologies and competing in the global labor market.

Vocational schools represent a formal level of education that places greater emphasis on practical skills and specific occupational competencies compared to general senior secondary schools. Vocational High Schools (VHS) are designed to produce graduates who are competent and ready to enter the workforce. As part of the national education system, VHS aim to develop

professional workers capable of meeting labor market demands (Purwitasari et al., 2024). Vocational education, particularly at the VHS level, plays a crucial role in preparing competent human resources who are ready to compete in the labor market. National development policies increasingly emphasize the importance of preparing work-ready human resources to address the challenges of Industry 4.0 and Society 5.0 (Dermawan et al., 2025; Ellitan, 2020; Sugiarta et al., 2023).

As vocational institutions, SMKs are required to produce graduates equipped with technical skills, soft skills, and professional attitudes aligned with industry needs. To enhance the quality and competitiveness of VHS graduates and ensure their competencies meet industry standards, the government issued Presidential Instruction No. 9 of 2016, mandating comprehensive revitalization of vocational schools to improve the quality and competitiveness of Indonesia's human resources (Erlinda et al., 2021). This policy includes curriculum development, improvement of teacher quality, strengthening industry partnerships, enhancement of facilities and infrastructure, development of certification systems, and institutional restructuring.

In order to implement the mandate for vocational education development as stipulated in Presidential Instruction No. 9 of 2016 and Presidential Regulation No. 18 of 2020 concerning the National Medium-Term Development Plan, the government has designated the improvement of vocational education quality as a primary focus. To achieve this objective, the Ministry of Education and Culture established the Center of Excellence Vocational High School Program (CEVHSP) as a strategic and priority initiative (Tanjung et al., 2025).

This program aims to enhance the quality of vocational education through implementation strategies that support local wisdom and community-based excellence, while increasing the number of SMK graduates who enter employment, pursue entrepreneurship, or continue to higher education (Susatya et al., 2023). Thus, the CEVHSP represents a measurable component of Kemendikbud's priority initiatives. Given its status as a national strategic program intended to significantly improve vocational education quality, comprehensive and systematic evaluation of the CEVHSP implementation has become an urgent necessity to ensure its effectiveness, efficiency, and achievement of intended outcomes at the institutional level (Asngad et al., 2023; Dzulkurnain et al., 2024; Satriyanto & Niron, 2025).

CEVHSP represents one of the Indonesian government's strategic initiatives aimed at producing vocational graduates with industry-standard competencies, high competitiveness, and strong capacity for self-development. The CEVHSP concept is grounded in industry-aligned curricula, enhancement of teacher and educational staff quality, provision of adequate facilities and infrastructure, and the establishment of strong partnerships with industry (Sucipto et al., 2024; Valentine et al., 2025). In the context of Indonesia's tourism sector development, the hospitality field constitutes a critical area supporting sustainable growth (Marasabessy et al., 2025). The demand for skilled and competent professionals in hospitality remains high, placing significant responsibility on vocational high schools offering hospitality programs to produce work-ready graduates capable of meeting labor market needs (Hodril & Suryanto, 2022; Yuwantinaingrum et al., 2025).

SMK Negeri 1 Sijuk is one of the schools selected to implement the S CEVHSP and consequently faces both distinct challenges and opportunities. The school is in Sijuk District, Belitung Regency, Bangka Belitung Islands Province, an area recognized as one of Indonesia's leading tourism destinations. This regional potential makes the hospitality program particularly relevant and strategically positioned for development (Valeriani et al., 2023), especially considering the increasing demand for professional workers in the tourism and hospitality sectors.

In response to these opportunities, SMK Negeri 1 Sijuk has utilized the CEVHSP to strengthen students' competencies through curriculum alignment with industry standards, enhancement of practical training facilities, and intensive collaboration with leading hotels. However, program success cannot be assessed solely based on implementation processes but must be evaluated through its tangible outcomes and impacts. Effective program evaluation involves key performance indicators (KPIs) encompassing both quantitative and qualitative dimensions, such as participation rates, behavioral changes, and long-term impacts on beneficiaries (Kazanskaia, 2025). In this context, impact evaluation becomes essential to determine the extent to which the CEVHSP has improved students' technical (hard) skills, identified supporting and inhibiting factors, and provided evidence-based recommendations for future program refinement (Azraeny, et al., 2023;

Sibuea et al., 2023). Such evaluation is particularly urgent given that many vocational graduates continue to face challenges in competing within the labor market. Open unemployment rates in Indonesia are disproportionately dominated by VHS graduates (Assalam & Sunitiyoso, 2025; Purnomo et al., 2024), and evidence indicates that their competencies do not yet fully meet industry standards (Ramadhani et al., 2025). Therefore, the CEVHSP is expected to contribute meaningfully to addressing these challenges, particularly by improving the overall quality of vocational graduates.

The hospitality field requires students to master a wide range of competencies, particularly technical skills. These include front office services, housekeeping, food and beverage service, and laundry management (Pratiwi & Asshofi, 2023; Wirya, 2023; Widyaningsih & Atmoko, 2024). Such competencies constitute fundamental skills that must be acquired by students prior to entering the workforce. In addition to technical expertise, students are expected to demonstrate strong communication abilities, foreign language proficiency, critical thinking skills, teamwork capability, and conflict management competence (Gelacio-Macedo et al., 2025; Marneros et al., 2020; Qili & Hebron, 2024).

The CEVHSP was designed to address these challenges through a work-based learning approach. To provide students with relevant workplace experience, SMK Negeri 1 Sijuk has implemented the program by increasing practical training hours and expanding internship placements in leading hotels in Belitung. However, despite these efforts, there remains limited empirical evidence demonstrating the tangible impact of such interventions on students' skill development. Therefore, this study is essential to provide empirical insights into the effectiveness of the program in enhancing students' technical competencies.

In its implementation, SMK Negeri 1 Sijuk has increased practical training hours and expanded internship placements in hotels. However, these intervention measures have not yet been supported by robust empirical evidence demonstrating their direct impact on the improvement of students' technical competencies. The absence of valid and reliable evidence underlines the urgency of this study, particularly in the context of program accountability involving substantial financial investment. Considering this evidence gap, the present study focuses on evaluating the impact of the CEVHSP on enhancing the technical skills of students in the hospitality program at SMK Negeri 1 Sijuk. Specifically, this research analyzes changes in students' competencies by comparing conditions prior to program implementation and after the program has been carried out. The findings of this evaluation are expected to contribute meaningful empirical evidence to support evidence-based vocational education policy development in Indonesia.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed an evaluative research design aimed at measuring the achievement of the Center of Excellence Vocational School Program by examining its specific impact on the improvement of technical skills among students in the Hospitality Program at SMK Negeri 1 Sijuk, Belitung, Bangka Belitung Islands Province. The evaluation framework adopted in this study was derived from the CIPP (Context, Input, Process, Product) model developed by *Stufflebeam (1971)*. However, this research focused specifically on the Input and Product components. The selection of these components represented a strategic approach to directly assess program effectiveness. The Input component provides a foundation for understanding the program's potential for success in terms of resource readiness and institutional commitment, while the Product component directly measures the ultimate outcomes of the program, namely the enhancement of students' technical housekeeping skills and graduate employability.

The population of this study consisted of the school principal, vocational hospitality teachers, representatives from Industry and the Business Sector, and Grade XI students of the Hospitality Program at SMK Negeri 1 Sijuk who had participated in the Center of Excellence Vocational School Program. A purposive sampling technique was used to select respondents who were directly involved in the implementation of the program. The research sample consisted of 30 respondents, including one principal, two vocational hospitality teachers, one industry representative, and 26 Grade XI hospitality students.

Data were collected using a triangulation approach through interviews and questionnaires to obtain comprehensive and credible information. Interviews were conducted to gain in-depth insights into participants' experiences and interpretations regarding the implementation of the Center of Excellence Vocational School Program. A semi-structured interview format was adopted, allowing the researcher to prepare guiding questions while maintaining flexibility to explore emerging issues during the interview process. In addition, a questionnaire was administered to gather structured information regarding the research variables. The questionnaire consisted of closed-ended statements measured using a five-point Likert scale (1–5) designed to capture respondents' levels of agreement systematically, thereby generating quantifiable data suitable for descriptive statistical analysis.

The evaluation indicators for the Input component included the adequacy of facilities and infrastructure, institutional commitment and readiness to implement the program, governance preparedness, and the level of collaboration and alignment with industry. Meanwhile, the Product component indicators included improvements in students' technical housekeeping skills, strengthened school–industry partnerships, and the level of graduate employability.

The developed instruments were validated by three experts, consisting of one evaluation specialist and two practitioners involved in the Center of Excellence Vocational School Program. Content validity was analyzed using Aiken's V index. Based on the calculation results, the questionnaire instrument consisting of 39 items was declared valid, with Aiken's V coefficients exceeding 0.80. Furthermore, the reliability of the instrument was tested using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. The reliability analysis produced a coefficient value of 0.892, indicating that the instrument demonstrated high internal consistency and strong reliability.

Table 1. Instrument Validity Summary

Instrument	Number of Items	Range of Aiken's V
Input	15	0.857 – 1.000
Product	24	0.883 – 1.000

Qualitative data obtained from interviews, observations, and document reviews were analyzed using triangulation techniques. The analysis process consisted of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction involved selecting, focusing, categorizing, and summarizing raw data from field notes and interview transcripts. The reduced data were then organized according to the Input and Product evaluation indicators and presented in descriptive narrative form to facilitate interpretation. Finally, conclusions and recommendations were drawn by identifying relationships, similarities, and patterns emerging from the analyzed data. The credibility of the findings was ensured through source triangulation and method triangulation.

Meanwhile, quantitative data obtained from the questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The analysis included calculating the mean and standard deviation as well as determining the percentage of the Respondent Achievement Level (TCR) for each Input and Product indicator. The TCR results were then categorized into descriptive levels such as Very Good, Good, and Fair to provide a clearer interpretation of the program's achievements. In the final stage, both qualitative and quantitative findings were integrated to provide a comprehensive evaluation of the program. Quantitative results illustrated the magnitude of the program's impact, while qualitative findings explained how and why these impacts occurred, resulting in a holistic conclusion of the program evaluation.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Vocational education aligned with industry demands is essential for producing graduates who are prepared to meet labor market requirements and contribute effectively to economic development. Achieving such alignment requires strong collaboration between vocational institutions and industry partners, with a focus on strategic management, joint curriculum design, and continuous professional development for educators to ensure they remain responsive to technological advancements and evolving sectoral needs (Mahmudah & Santosa, 2021; Tarkan Düzgünçinar, 2025). Numerous studies emphasize the importance of integrating practical skills, emerging technologies, and sustainability practices into the curriculum, particularly in rapidly

evolving fields such as automotive technology and information (Onwusa & Asuai, 2025; Rosina et al., 2021). However, vocational education systems face several challenges, including outdated curricula, weak linkages with industry, and rigid educational structures that hinder responsiveness to industrial trends. Addressing these challenges requires dynamic partnerships and systemic reforms (Arthars et al., 2025; Riza Ubihatun et al., 2024). A future-oriented approach that incorporates active industry engagement, modular curricula, and continuous evaluation is crucial to bridge the gap between vocational education and industry needs, while simultaneously supporting sustainable workforce development. Therefore, alignment between labor market demands and vocational school curricula is imperative.

This study was conducted at SMK Negeri 1 Sijuk, located in Belitung Regency, Bangka Belitung Islands Province, Indonesia. The school is an implementer of the CEVHSP, with a specific focus on the Hospitality Study Program. The implementation of the CEVHSP at this institution is intended to align vocational education with the needs of Industry, Business, and the Labor Market (IBLM) through a practice- and product-oriented curriculum. Data were collected using a mixed-methods approach, combining in-depth interviews and questionnaire distribution. The interviews were conducted with four key informants, namely the school principal, two vocational (productive) teachers, and one representative from IBLM. Quantitative data were obtained from 26 students through a five-point Likert-scale questionnaire. Therefore, the total number of respondents in this study was 30.

The interview findings indicate a consistent view that policy frameworks and institutional partnerships have been well established. All informants emphasized that the curriculum has been aligned with industry needs and that formal collaborations with IBLM have been successfully instituted. These findings suggest that the administrative foundation of the link and match initiative has been formally established and is operational. Although practical facilities were considered adequate, the primary challenges were identified in the implementation phase, particularly concerning human resource readiness. The principal highlighted challenges related to shifts in mindset, teacher preparedness, and the need for continuous professional development. Vocational (productive) teachers further acknowledged that the core instructional approach of the CEVHSP with Project-Based Learning (PjBL), has not yet been fully implemented in practice. These findings indicate a gap between curriculum documentation readiness and the actual implementation of instructional practices in the classroom.

The gap between curriculum documentation and classroom instructional practices frequently arises from a misalignment between the theoretical framework articulated in the curriculum and its practical enactment in learning environments. Previous studies indicate that although curricula are designed to foster twenty-first century competencies such as critical thinking and collaboration, they show that their implementation remains constrained by structural barriers, limited resources, and resistance to pedagogical change (Thehli, 2025; Brosens et al., 2023).

Moreover, teachers are often insufficiently prepared or trained to implement innovative, student-centered learning approaches, resulting in instructional practices that do not fully reflect the intended curricular objectives (Nurtanto et al., 2021). Wanyama (2025) further argues that inadequate infrastructural support, including limited access to digital devices and stable internet connectivity, significantly hinders the implementation of competency-based learning aligned with curriculum documents. Similarly, Nkolika (2024) highlights the importance of collaboration between schools and industry to ensure that instructional practices remain relevant to actual workplace demands; however, such collaboration is often weak and requires strengthening. Therefore, enhancing teacher professional development, ensuring adequate resource provision, and developing contextualized learning modules are essential strategies for bridging the gap between curriculum documentation and classroom practice.

From the product component perspective, graduates were perceived to demonstrate satisfactory levels of both hard skills and soft skills. The formal recognition of competencies, including internship certificates and competency certification through the first-party Professional Certification Body, was also reported to function effectively. However, industry representatives raised concerns regarding students' readiness during their internships and the perceived excessive duration of the internship program. These findings suggest a distinction between the competence of

graduates who have entered the workforce and the preparedness of students who are still undergoing their educational process. Such discrepancies are often attributed to misalignment between educational curricula and labor market demands.

Chigbu and Nekhwevha (2022) found that students' perceptions of work readiness vary across faculties and are influenced by the extent to which educational institutions effectively prepare relevant workforce competencies. Furthermore, differences between academic learning standards and professional practice requirements constitute a significant factor, as newly graduated students frequently encounter difficulties when curricula emphasize academic knowledge over the management of complex, real-world cases (Ellis et al., 2020). Factors such as academic motivation, cognitive skills, and instructional quality play a substantial role in shaping academic self-confidence, which subsequently influences graduate quality. Teng et al. (2019) further emphasized the importance of embedding soft skills development within the curriculum to enhance students perceived readiness for a dynamic labor market, although such perceptions may vary across countries and institutional contexts. Overall, strengthening collaboration between educational institutions and industry, along with developing more contextualized and practice-oriented curricula, is essential to reducing the gap between student readiness and the level of graduate competence required in the workplace.

Quantitative data analysis was conducted on 26 respondents (N = 26) using descriptive statistics derived from a five-point Likert-scale questionnaire. The results were categorized based on predetermined score intervals: 4.21–5.00 were classified as Very Good, 3.41–4.20 as Good, 2.61–3.40 as Fair, 1.81–2.60 as Poor, and 1.00–1.80 as Very Poor.

Table 2. Summary Table of Descriptive Questionnaire Analysis of Input Component

Item	Mean	Remark	Item	Mean	Remark
Q01	4.3077	Very Good	Q09	4.5385	Very Good
Q02	4.4231	Very Good	Q10	4.3846	Very Good
Q03	4.0385	Good	Q11	4.3462	Very Good
Q04	4.1538	Good	Q12	4.1538	Good
Q05	4.3077	Very Good	Q13	4.5385	Very Good
Q06	4.3077	Very Good	Q14	4.3846	Very Good
Q07	4.5000	Very Good	Q15	4.3077	Very Good
Q08	4.3077	Very Good			

The results of the input component analysis indicate that the CEVHSP was generally perceived as Very Good, with 12 out of 15 items obtaining mean scores above 4.21. The Graduate Quality aspect (assumed to correspond to items Q09 and Q13) achieved the highest level of satisfaction (mean = 4.5385). However, three items were categorized as Good, namely Q03 (mean = 4.0385), Q04 (mean = 4.1538), and Q12 (mean = 4.1538). The relatively low scores on these items suggest areas for improvement, particularly regarding implementation aspects and student readiness, which are further supported by the qualitative findings. Azzahra et al. (2025) and Sarmila et al. (2025) emphasize that workplace internships and hard skills development significantly enhance vocational students' work readiness by providing authentic experiences and relevant technical competencies.

Therefore, the implementation of effective instructional models is essential to strengthen both students' competencies and soft skills. Tanjung et al. (2025) report that learning models such as the Teaching Factory approach have proven effective in improving students' technical competencies and soft skills, thereby reinforcing curriculum relevance to industry needs. Furthermore, intensive collaboration between schools and industry, along with continuous supervision, is crucial to ensuring optimal internships implementation and improving students' work readiness (Aditya & Kencanawaty, 2024; Kristanto et al., 2025). Consequently, strengthening Internship management, enhancing teacher professional development, and providing adequate supporting facilities are key strategies to address implementation challenges and improve student readiness within the CEVHSP.

Table 3. Summary Table of Descriptive Questionnaire Analysis of Product Component

Item	Mean	Remark	Item	Mean	Remark
Q01	4.2308	Very Good	Q13	4.2308	Very Good
Q02	4.1154	Good	Q14	4.5385	Very Good
Q03	4.3077	Very Good	Q15	4.4231	Very Good
Q04	4.1923	Good	Q16	4.3846	Very Good
Q05	4.3077	Very Good	Q17	4.6538	Very Good
Q06	4.2692	Very Good	Q18	4.3846	Very Good
Q07	4.0385	Very Good	Q19	4.4615	Very Good
Q08	3.8846	Good	Q20	4.3077	Very Good
Q09	4.000	Good	Q21	4.5385	Very Good
Q10	4.3077	Very Good	Q22	4.3846	Very Good
Q11	4.1154	Good	Q23	4.5000	Very Good
Q12	4.4231	Very Good	Q24	4.5000	Very Good

The results of the product component analysis indicate that the outcome and impact dimensions achieved the highest levels of satisfaction. The highest mean scores among all product items were observed for Q17 (mean = 4.6538), Q14 (mean = 4.5385), and Q21 (mean = 4.5385). These elevated scores suggest that respondents held positive perceptions regarding graduate quality and the legal recognition of competencies, which is consistent with the qualitative findings indicating that graduates' hard skills and soft skills were satisfactory and that the certification process was effectively implemented.

Overall, the product analysis demonstrates that outcome and impact aspects, particularly graduate quality and competency legality, received highly favorable evaluations. This reflects the perception that graduates possess adequate technical and interpersonal competencies, supported by well-functioning certification mechanisms. Prior research emphasizes the importance of developing professional competencies aligned with legal and ethical standards as a core indicator of graduate quality (Ivanchenko & Salmii, 2020). Furthermore, ensuring alignment between taught competencies and labor market requirements through a systematic competency-based approach is essential (Okhrimenko & Radygina, 2020; Soloviev & Pereskokova, 2021). Studies across various fields also highlight that collaboration between educational institutions and regulatory frameworks strengthens the legal validity of graduates' competencies (Bugakova & Gruntov, 2022; Padmore et al., 2021). Therefore, the strong performance in the outcome and impact dimensions indicates the program's effectiveness in producing professionally prepared graduates who meet applicable legal and industry standards.

Based on the triangulation of qualitative and quantitative findings, a strong consistency was observed in relation to formal policy aspects and overall program outcomes. Qualitatively, the curriculum was reported to be aligned with industry needs, and partnerships were perceived to function effectively. These findings were reinforced by the quantitative results in the Input component, which were predominantly categorized as Very Good. Similarly, satisfaction with graduates appeared consistent across interview and questionnaire data. Both industry representatives and teachers affirmed that graduates demonstrated satisfactory competencies, which corresponds with the high scores on graduate quality items within the Product component. However, the triangulation process also revealed several significant weaknesses.

The three Input items categorized as Good can be explained by interview findings highlighting challenges related to shifts in teachers' mindsets and the suboptimal implementation of Project-Based Learning (PjBL). This suggests that the primary weakness lies in instructional implementation rather than in curriculum design. The most apparent discrepancy emerged in the internship aspect. IBLM concerns regarding students' readiness prior to undertaking internships and the extended duration of the internship program were corroborated by relatively lower scores on items Q08 and Q09 within the Product component. These findings indicate a gap between the positive perceptions of graduates who have entered the workforce and the readiness of students who are still undergoing the educational process. Therefore, the principal issue of the CEVHSP at SMK Negeri 1 Sijuk does not pertain to policy, curriculum design, or graduate outcomes per se, but rather to

strengthening students' competencies prior to Internships through more optimal implementation of PjBL and a structural review of the Internships program design.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, three main conclusions can be drawn. First, the CEVHSP has achieved a high level of institutional readiness. The link and match curriculum has been implemented, and collaboration with Industry, Business, and the Labor Market (IBLM) has been well established. Satisfaction with graduate quality, particularly among alumni who are already employed, was consistently high across both qualitative and quantitative data, with mean scores falling within the Very Good category. This indicates that the administrative foundation and final outcomes of the program have been successfully established. Second, a significant gap remains between documented readiness and practical implementation in the field. This is evidenced by several quantitative items within the Input component that were categorized as Good rather than Very Good. Qualitative findings further explain this gap as stemming from human resource constraints, including the need for shifts in teachers' mindsets, improved preparedness, and sustained professional development. Additionally, Project-Based Learning (PjBL), as a core instructional approach of the CEVHSP, has not yet been fully implemented in practice. Third, the most critical issue was identified in the implementation of the internship program. Strong feedback from IBLM highlighted the need to enhance students' competencies prior to undertaking internships, as well as concerns regarding the six-month internship duration, which was perceived as excessively long. This critique was confirmed by quantitative findings within the Product component, where student readiness items were categorized as Good. From a triangulation perspective, the primary issue of the CEVHSP lies not in policy, curriculum design, or graduate outcomes, but in strengthening students' competency inputs through more effective implementation of PjBL prior to internships program design.

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