The Effectiveness of the Link and Match Program in Vocational Education through the CIPP Evaluation Model

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of a vocational education–industry link and match program using the Context, Input, Process, and Product (CIPP) evaluation model. Employing a qualitative case study design, data were collected through in-depth interviews, direct observations, and document analysis involving key stakeholders, including school administrators, vocational teachers, and students. The context evaluation reveals that the program is highly relevant to industry workforce demands and addresses existing skills mismatches in vocational education. Input evaluation indicates that the program is supported by competent human resources, industry-based teacher upskilling, and access to industrial-standard equipment, although infrastructural limitations constrain optimal utilization. Process evaluation demonstrates effective collaboration between educational and industrial partners through distance learning, competency-based competitions, and industrial work placements, which collectively enhance students' technical skills and work readiness. Product evaluation shows that the program achieves its primary objective of improving graduate employability, as evidenced by employment absorption rates that meet established targets. However, some graduates continue to face challenges in job placement, highlighting the need for strengthened career support mechanisms. Overall, the findings confirm that the CIPP model provides a comprehensive framework for evaluating vocational education–industry partnerships and offers valuable insights for improving the effectiveness and sustainability of link and match programs.

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INTRODUCTION

In the era of globalization and rapid technological advancement, industries across the world are experiencing significant transformations that demand a highly skilled and adaptable workforce. The industrial sector, in particular, requires workers who possess not only technical competencies but also practical experience aligned with current industrial standards. However, a persistent gap remains between the competencies acquired by graduates of vocational education institutions and the actual needs of the labor market (Jalinus et al., 2022; Khan et al., 2022; Suyudi et al., 2022). This mismatch has become a critical issue in many developing countries, where vocational education is expected to play a strategic role in preparing job-ready graduates. As a response to this challenge, the concept of the link and match program has emerged as a strategic policy framework aimed at strengthening collaboration between educational institutions and industry. Through this approach, vocational education institutions are encouraged to align curricula, training processes, and assessment systems with industrial requirements (Al-Issa, 2020; Mulyana et al., 2024). The ultimate goal of such collaboration is to enhance graduate employability and reduce unemployment among vocational

school graduates. Despite the widespread implementation of link and match initiatives, questions remain regarding their effectiveness, sustainability, and actual impact on graduate outcomes, thereby highlighting the need for systematic and evidence-based program evaluation.

Vocational education is designed to prepare learners with specific skills and competencies that are directly applicable to the workplace (Duffy et al., 2021; Mahmud et al., 2023). In this context, effective collaboration between vocational institutions and industry is essential to ensure that training programs remain relevant and responsive to technological developments. Industry involvement may take various forms, including curriculum development, provision of training equipment, industrial internships, teacher upskilling, and competency certification. Such partnerships are expected to create a learning environment that closely resembles real industrial settings, thereby enhancing students' technical proficiency and work readiness (Abdullah et al., 2024; Nasution, 2021; Tommasi et al., 2023). However, the success of vocational education–industry partnerships is highly dependent on how well these collaborations are planned, implemented, and evaluated. In many cases, partnerships are established formally but lack systematic monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, resulting in suboptimal outcomes. Consequently, it is crucial to examine whether link and match programs genuinely contribute to improving the quality of vocational education or merely function as administrative agreements. A comprehensive evaluation framework is therefore required to assess the alignment between program objectives, implementation strategies, and actual outcomes. This study positions itself within this discourse by examining the effectiveness of a link and match program through a structured evaluation model.

Program evaluation plays a vital role in determining the effectiveness and value of educational interventions. Without systematic evaluation, it is difficult to identify strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement within a program. One widely recognized evaluation framework in educational research is the CIPP model, developed by Stufflebeam. The CIPP model emphasizes decision-oriented evaluation and provides a comprehensive approach by examining four key components: context, input, process, and product (Kultsum et al., 2022; Mutohhari et al., 2021). Context evaluation focuses on identifying needs, problems, and opportunities that justify the implementation of a program. Input evaluation assesses strategies, resources, and action plans used to achieve program objectives. Process evaluation examines the implementation of the program to ensure it is carried out as planned, while product evaluation measures the outcomes and impacts of the program. The strength of the CIPP model lies in its holistic perspective, enabling evaluators to not only judge outcomes but also understand how and why those outcomes occur. As such, the CIPP model is particularly suitable for evaluating complex educational programs, including vocational education–industry partnerships, where multiple stakeholders and processes are involved.

The model allows researchers to capture the multidimensional nature of vocational programs, which involve curriculum alignment, infrastructure readiness, instructor competence, and learner performance (Gianni et al., 2024; Peñate et al., 2024; Ramos et al., 2022). In the context of link and match programs, CIPP evaluation helps determine whether the program addresses actual industry needs (context), utilizes adequate resources and partnerships (input), is implemented according to established standards (process), and produces graduates with relevant competencies (product). Several empirical studies have indicated that many vocational programs fail not due to poor objectives but because of weaknesses in implementation and resource allocation. By applying the CIPP model, evaluators can provide actionable recommendations for policymakers, school administrators, and industry partners. Moreover, the use of a well-established evaluation framework enhances the credibility and generalizability of research findings, making them more relevant for international academic discourse. Therefore, employing the CIPP model in evaluating link and match programs

contributes not only to institutional improvement but also to the broader field of vocational education research.

Despite continuous efforts to improve vocational education systems, graduate competency remains a significant concern. Studies have shown that vocational graduates often lack the practical skills, work attitudes, and technological familiarity required by industry. This issue is frequently attributed to outdated curricula, limited access to modern equipment, and insufficient industry exposure during training. Furthermore, the rapid pace of technological change poses additional challenges for vocational institutions, which may struggle to update training programs in a timely manner. These challenges underscore the importance of structured collaboration between vocational schools and industry partners. However, collaboration alone does not guarantee success; its effectiveness must be systematically evaluated to ensure that intended objectives are achieved. Without rigorous evaluation, vocational education reforms risk becoming symbolic rather than transformative. Therefore, research that critically examines the implementation and outcomes of link and match programs is essential to inform evidence-based policy and practice. Such research can identify best practices, highlight common pitfalls, and offer strategic recommendations for strengthening vocational education systems.

This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of a link and match program in vocational education using the CIPP evaluation model. By examining the program's context, input, process, and product, the study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of how vocational education–industry collaboration is designed, implemented, and experienced. The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the improvement of vocational education practices by offering insights into critical success factors and existing challenges within link and match programs. Additionally, this research provides empirical evidence that may support policymakers and educational stakeholders in refining strategies for strengthening vocational education–industry alignment. From an academic perspective, the study enriches the literature on program evaluation and vocational education by demonstrating the applicability of the CIPP model in assessing industry-linked educational initiatives.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research approach using a case study design to obtain an in-depth understanding of the implementation of the link and match program in vocational education. A qualitative case study was considered appropriate because it allows for a comprehensive exploration of complex educational programs within their real-life contexts (Köhler, 2024). The research was conducted at a vocational high school that implements an industry-linked program, focusing on how the collaboration is designed, executed, and experienced by key stakeholders. The case study design enabled the researcher to examine the program holistically, capturing multiple perspectives and contextual factors that influence its effectiveness.

Data were collected through multiple qualitative techniques, including in-depth interviews, direct observations, and document analysis. In-depth interviews were conducted with school administrators, including the principal, vocational teachers, and students, to obtain comprehensive insights into the planning, implementation, and outcomes of the link and match program. The use of multiple participant groups allowed for a richer understanding of the program from managerial, instructional, and learner perspectives. Direct observations were carried out to examine teaching–learning activities, workshop practices, and industry-related training processes. Additionally, relevant documents such as curriculum plans, partnership agreements, training modules, and evaluation reports were analyzed to support and contextualize the interview and observation data.

Data analysis was conducted by systematically organizing and categorizing the collected information according to the four components of the CIPP evaluation model: context, input, process,

and product. Interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents were analyzed descriptively to identify patterns, strengths, and weaknesses in program implementation. The analysis followed the interactive model proposed by Miles and Huberman (2014), which involves data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. This approach enabled the researcher to interpret the data carefully and ensure that findings were logically derived and methodologically sound.

To enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, data triangulation was employed. Triangulation was achieved by comparing information obtained from different data sources and data collection methods, including interviews, observations, and document analysis. This strategy helped reduce potential bias and increase the accuracy and reliability of the findings. By cross-validating data from multiple sources, the study ensured that interpretations were supported by consistent evidence. Overall, this methodological approach is expected to contribute meaningful insights into the evaluation of vocational education–industry link and match programs and to provide practical implications for improving vocational education quality and graduate readiness in response to industry needs.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Context and Input Evaluation of the Link and Match Program

The context evaluation indicates that the link and match program is strategically aligned with current industrial workforce demands, particularly within the manufacturing and heavy equipment sectors. Rapid technological advancement has increased the demand for vocational graduates who possess not only technical proficiency but also industry-relevant work attitudes. The collaboration between vocational education and industry is therefore positioned as a response to persistent skill mismatches. From an institutional perspective, the program addresses a clear need to improve graduate employability and strengthen workforce readiness. Industry involvement in defining competency standards demonstrates a proactive approach to ensuring relevance and sustainability. This alignment suggests that the program is not merely symbolic but grounded in actual labor market requirements. The context evaluation further highlights that vocational education institutions benefit from direct exposure to industrial expectations, allowing them to adjust learning objectives accordingly. Such alignment reinforces the importance of industry-driven input in vocational education planning. Overall, the context evaluation confirms that the program is justified by both educational and industrial needs, making it a relevant and necessary intervention within the vocational education system.

The link and match program is designed as a long-term workforce development strategy rather than a short-term recruitment initiative. Official information from the human resources division of the industry partner indicates that regular recruitment from partner schools serves as preparation for fulfilling future direct manpower needs. The program establishes a structured recruitment pipeline that enables the industry to maintain consistent workforce quality while reducing recruitment lead time. A targeted graduate absorption rate of at least 30 percent per partner school reflects a measurable and outcome-oriented objective. This approach underscores the industry's commitment to investing in vocational education as a source of skilled labor. By integrating recruitment planning with educational collaboration, the industry ensures that training outcomes align with operational requirements. This strategic orientation strengthens the relevance of the program's context and supports the argument that vocational education–industry partnerships can function as effective workforce ecosystems rather than isolated initiatives.

The context evaluation reveals that the program emphasizes quality assurance in graduate selection. The focus on identifying high-performing candidates from industry-linked classes reflects an effort to maintain competitive standards. This approach encourages vocational institutions to

continuously improve instructional quality and student performance. The program also promotes early exposure to industrial culture, enabling students to internalize professional norms and expectations. Such exposure contributes to the development of both technical and non-technical competencies, which are increasingly valued by employers. The contextual relevance of the program is further strengthened by its adaptability to changing industrial demands. Continuous communication between industry and education stakeholders allows the program to remain responsive to emerging skill requirements. As a result, the context evaluation confirms that the program operates within a dynamic framework that prioritizes relevance, sustainability, and mutual benefit.

The input evaluation focuses on the resources and strategies employed to support program implementation. One of the key strengths identified is the availability of competent human resources, particularly vocational teachers who actively participate in industry internships. These internships function as upskilling and reskilling mechanisms, enabling teachers to update their technical knowledge and instructional practices. Exposure to industrial processes enhances teachers' ability to deliver competency-based learning that reflects real workplace conditions (Husna et al., 2024; Jalinus et al., 2022). This investment in teacher development strengthens instructional quality and ensures consistency between school-based training and industrial standards. The presence of industry-trained teachers also fosters greater confidence among students, as learning experiences become more authentic and relevant.

Another significant input component is the provision of industrial-standard equipment and technology to support practical learning. The use of modern tools allows students to develop hands-on skills that closely match industry expectations. Access to such equipment reduces the skills gap that often characterizes vocational education outcomes. However, the evaluation also identifies infrastructural challenges that limit optimal equipment utilization. Constraints related to electrical capacity and facility readiness hinder the full integration of advanced technology into daily learning activities. Despite these limitations, the availability of industry-grade equipment represents a critical step toward improving training quality. Addressing infrastructural gaps would further enhance the effectiveness of this input component.

The input evaluation suggests that the program is supported by strong foundational resources, including skilled educators, updated technology, and institutional commitment. These inputs collectively contribute to creating a conducive learning environment for vocational students (Koca & Ortakaya, 2023; Suwastika et al., 2025). Nevertheless, the effectiveness of these resources depends on continuous investment and institutional readiness. Strengthening infrastructure and expanding teacher development opportunities would further reinforce program sustainability. The input evaluation therefore highlights both strengths and areas for improvement, providing a basis for informed decision-making and future program enhancement.

Context and Input Evaluation of the Link and Match Program

The process evaluation examines how the link and match program is implemented and coordinated between educational and industrial partners. Findings indicate that the program is characterized by structured collaboration and shared responsibility. Both parties actively participate in planning and monitoring learning activities, ensuring alignment with agreed objectives. This collaborative approach supports consistency in program delivery and facilitates continuous improvement. The implementation process reflects a shift from traditional school-centered instruction toward a more integrated, industry-responsive model. Such a model enhances the authenticity of vocational training and strengthens student engagement.

One of the central implementation strategies is the use of distance learning to maintain curriculum synchronization. Distance learning enables continuous updates on industry developments

and allows students to access industry-driven content regardless of geographical constraints. This approach reduces discrepancies between school instruction and industrial practice. By leveraging information and communication technology, the program ensures that learning materials remain current and relevant. Distance learning also promotes flexibility in instructional delivery, accommodating both school schedules and industry availability. As a result, it plays a crucial role in sustaining program alignment.

Industry-led competency competitions represent another important process component. These competitions function as both motivational tools and performance evaluation mechanisms. Students are encouraged to demonstrate their technical skills under standardized conditions, fostering a culture of excellence and healthy competition. From the industry's perspective, competitions provide valuable insights into learning outcomes and skill mastery levels. The competitive environment also promotes self-confidence and professional identity among students. By integrating evaluation into competitive activities, the program reinforces learning outcomes while maintaining student motivation.

Industrial work placements constitute a core experiential learning component of the program. Through direct exposure to workplace environments, students acquire practical skills and develop professional attitudes. Work placements enable students to apply theoretical knowledge in real operational contexts, enhancing skill transferability (Jalinus et al., 2022; Mahmud et al., 2023; Skinner et al., 2021). The evaluation confirms that students gain valuable insights into industrial workflows, safety standards, and teamwork dynamics. Such experiences significantly contribute to work readiness and employability. However, the effectiveness of work placements depends on careful scheduling and supervision.

Despite its strengths, the process evaluation identifies several implementation challenges. Scheduling conflicts between school activities and industrial operations occasionally limit student participation (Koca & Ortakaya, 2023). In addition, communication gaps between stakeholders may affect coordination efficiency. These challenges highlight the need for clearer communication protocols and more flexible scheduling arrangements. Addressing these issues would enhance implementation consistency and reduce operational barriers. Continuous coordination meetings and formal feedback mechanisms could further strengthen collaboration.

The process evaluation indicates that the program is implemented through diverse and complementary learning strategies. The combination of distance learning, competitions, and work placements creates a comprehensive learning ecosystem. While challenges exist, they do not undermine the overall effectiveness of the program. Instead, they provide opportunities for refinement and innovation. Strengthening coordination mechanisms would further optimize program implementation and outcomes.

Context and Input Evaluation of the Link and Match Program

The product evaluation focuses on the outcomes and impacts of the link and match program, particularly in terms of graduate employability. Findings indicate that the program successfully produces graduates with competencies aligned to industry standards. A significant proportion of students from industry-linked classes are absorbed directly into the workforce. This outcome reflects the effectiveness of the program in preparing job-ready graduates. Employment absorption serves as a key indicator of program success and validates the relevance of training content.

The recruitment process is conducted through a multi-stage selection system designed to assess both technical and non-technical competencies. Stages include socialization, psychological testing, interviews, physical assessments, and medical examinations. This comprehensive process ensures that selected candidates meet industry standards in terms of ability and attitude. Internship-

based evaluation further reinforces selection accuracy by observing candidates in real work environments. Graduates who successfully complete these stages are offered contractual employment, demonstrating a direct link between training and employment.

In addition to recruitment outcomes, the program emphasizes continuous evaluation through annual memorandum of understanding reviews. These reviews provide opportunities for both parties to reflect on program performance and identify areas for improvement. The evaluation process supports transparency and accountability in partnership management. By revisiting objectives and outcomes annually, the program remains adaptive and responsive to change. This reflective practice contributes to long-term sustainability and effectiveness.

Despite positive outcomes, the evaluation identifies that not all graduates achieve immediate employment placement. Some graduates face challenges related to job matching and geographic mobility (Ogawa, 2025; Sudarsono et al., 2024). These findings suggest the need for enhanced career guidance and post-graduation support mechanisms. Strengthening alumni networks and career services could further improve employment outcomes. Addressing these challenges would enhance the inclusivity and impact of the program.

The product evaluation demonstrates that the program meets its employment absorption targets and produces graduates with strong technical competencies. The alignment between training outcomes and industry needs reinforces the value of structured vocational education–industry collaboration. The findings also highlight the importance of ongoing support for graduates to ensure smooth transitions into the workforce. Continuous monitoring of employment outcomes would provide valuable data for future program refinement.

The product evaluation confirms that the link and match program is effective in achieving its primary objectives. The program contributes positively to workforce development and vocational education quality. While areas for improvement remain, the overall outcomes support the continuation and expansion of similar initiatives. These findings underscore the importance of systematic evaluation in strengthening vocational education–industry partnerships and ensuring sustainable graduate employability.

CONCLUSION

The vocational education–industry link and match program evaluated through the CIPP model is effective in aligning educational outcomes with industry workforce needs and enhancing graduate employability. The context evaluation confirms that the program is relevant and strategically designed to address skills mismatches, while the input evaluation highlights strong support in terms of competent human resources and access to industry-standard facilities, despite existing infrastructural limitations. The process evaluation demonstrates that collaborative implementation through distance learning, competency-based competitions, and industrial work placements contributes to meaningful learning experiences and work readiness. Furthermore, the product evaluation indicates that the program successfully produces industry-ready graduates and achieves targeted employment absorption rates, although some challenges in graduate placement remain. Overall, the findings underscore the importance of sustained collaboration, continuous evaluation, and institutional readiness in ensuring the long-term effectiveness and scalability of vocational education–industry link and match programs.

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