
**Investigating Alumni Performances and Stakeholder Feedback of
English Language Teaching Department, IAIN Syekh Nurjati Cirebon:
A Tracer Study**

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Abstract

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The tracer study conducted by the English Language Teaching Department (ELTD) serves as a pivotal initiative that is aimed at assessing the efficacy of teaching and learning within ELTD at IAIN Syekh Nurjati Cirebon. This comprehensive study endeavors to scrutinize and delve into various facets, including performance and the employability of graduates from tertiary institutions (Higher Education), particularly those from the ELTD at IAIN Syekh Nurjati, upon entering the workforce. It aims to gauge the relevance of both hard and soft skills possessed by ELTD graduates and the competencies acquired during their tenure at ELTD. The achievement of graduates in their respective workplaces serves as a significant benchmark for assessing learning outcomes and their alignment with the vision and mission of the English Language Teaching Department at IAIN Syekh Nurjati, both for stakeholders and the broader community. In conducting this research, online questionnaires (utilizing Google Forms) were distributed to alumni and stakeholders, supplemented by in-depth interviews to validate the questionnaire data. The findings of this study shed light on various crucial aspects concerning alumni, particularly regarding the timeliness of job acquisition and the degree of alignment between their fields of work and educational backgrounds.

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INTRODUCTION

The tracer study conducted by the English Language Teaching Department (ELTD) is one of the critical endeavors in evaluating the Department's provision. It is believed that the primary objective of the Bachelor of Education (S-1) program in ELTD is to produce graduates proficient in the English language and capable educators in the field.

The investigation and evaluation of various academic activities and related matters

are essential for the ELTD's concern, serving as a means for improving and enhancing quality. Therefore, the Tracer Study conducted by the English Language Teaching Department is expected to provide accurate and precise data and information to measure and delve deeper into how the ELTD department at IAIN Syekh Nurjati prepares its graduates to achieve its vision and mission effectively, such as becoming outstanding and prominent English language educators. Additionally, in alignment with the

institution's vision and mission and the objectives of higher education in Indonesia, this Department's teaching and education system also aims to produce English Education graduates who are faithful, morally upright, professional, and competitive in the job market.

There has been a growing interest in conducting tracer studies or alumni surveys to evaluate the effectiveness and outcomes of English language teaching departments. These studies aim to gather feedback and insights from alumni who have completed these programs, focusing on their employment status, job performance, job satisfaction, and professional development needs (Ngoc & Cuong, 2018; Ulla, 2019; Sari & Saputra, 2021; Kabir, 2019).

The tracer studies revealed insights into alumni's employability and job prospects from English language teaching departments. Many studies, such as those conducted by Ngoc & Cuong (2018), Ulla (2019), and Sari & Saputra (2021), found that a high percentage of alumni were employed in teaching or education-related fields after graduating, indicating good job prospects. However, some studies also reported challenges, with a portion of alumni facing difficulties finding employment or taking jobs outside their field of study (Kabir, 2019; Ozturk & Akar-Vural, 2014).

Regarding the relevance of curriculum and training, alumni frequently cited the need for more practical teaching experiences, classroom management training, and exposure to current methodologies during their studies (Nguyen et al., 2020; Ulla, 2019). Additionally, some felt that the curriculum was too theoretical and did not adequately prepare them for the realities of the teaching profession (Mede & Uygun, 2014; Sari & Saputra, 2021).

By tracing alumni's career paths and experiences, researchers and educators can assess the strengths and weaknesses of their programs, identify areas for improvement, and align curriculum and training with industry demands and real-world teaching scenarios.

In achieving the goals of a tracer study, it is essential to ensure that the success of graduates from higher education institutions (HEIs),

especially the English Language Teaching Department at IAIN Syekh Nurjati, in entering the workforce remains monitored. Success in the job market is one of the indicators of learning outcomes and the relevance of the English Language Teaching Department at IAIN Syekh Nurjati to society.

Revisiting the curriculum and teaching activities within the ELTD department at IAIN Syekh Nurjati is crucial to monitoring the relevance of teaching activities to the job market's needs. Assessing the curriculum's alignment with the job market needs can be achieved through alumni tracer studies who have been actively engaged in society and through recommendations and insight from users/stakeholders.

In terms of relevance, universities are expected to produce graduates who meet the job market's needs, are competitive, and are ready to contribute to development. Currently, competition in the education sector is increasing. The proliferation of educational institutions necessitates existing educational institutions to compete and produce the best graduates who can compete. The challenges of change need to be positively responded to by improving the quality of education so that graduates produced can compete with graduates from other higher education institutions.

The extent to which graduates of higher education institutions can contribute to the institution's development can be determined through tracer studies. Tracer studies are conducted to evaluate the success of study programs in achieving their goals and to understand user responses, thus obtaining data that can be considered in developing the Department for the future.

Based on the background outlined above, conducting alumni tracer studies needs to be repeated to obtain feedback from alumni and current users regarding the learning process undergone by alumni during their studies. Additionally, through this activity, users can receive input regarding the skills that alumni should possess. The research results can serve as a reference for the Department to develop a

curriculum that meets user needs. Based on the underlying issues, the research questions formulated are: how are graduates' performances from the English Language Education Department? How relevant are the skills they acquired during their studies to their current jobs? How do alumni secure employment after graduating from the English Language Education Department? What are the alumni's responses to the learning process during their tenure in the English Language Education Department? What are the users' responses to the performance and skills of alumni working in their respective workplaces?

The objectives of this research are as follows: to examine the performance of graduates from the English Language Education Department. To assess the relevance of the skills they acquired during their studies to their current jobs. To examine the process and methods alumni use to secure employment after graduating from the English Language Education Department. It is also used to evaluate alumni's responses to the learning process during their tenure in the English Language Education Department. It is also used to assess users' reactions to the performance and skills of alumni working in their respective workplaces.

Tracer Study is a study concerning the graduates of higher education institutions (Schomburg, 2003). Other commonly used terms include "Graduate Surveys," "Respondent Researches," and "Follow-up Study." Tracer Study can provide information for the evaluation of higher education outcomes and can subsequently be used for improvement and quality assurance of the respective educational institutions. Tracer Study also offers valuable insights into the relationship between higher education and the professional workforce, assessing the relevance of higher education, providing information for stakeholders, and fulfilling the requirements for higher education accreditation. According to the National Accreditation Board for Higher Education, the Tracer Study has become one of Indonesia's accreditation requirements. Therefore, Tracer Study is often narrowly interpreted as a

requirement solely for accreditation by departments or institutions. However, the results obtained through Tracer Studies are essential for every higher education institution to assess the success of their educational processes.

Tracer studies allow researchers to explore factors influencing graduates' career decisions, such as personal interests, job market trends, and opportunities for professional advancement (Kramsch, 2013). In addition, Syafiq and Fikawati (2017) state that the Tracer Study aims to research the transition from education to the workforce. Tracer Study attempts to review work situations, particularly in the early stages when a graduate enters the workforce. Another function of Tracer Study is to gain deeper insights into the types and diversity of professions and jobs held by alumni. Furthermore, the results of Tracer Studies are helpful for designing training programs to enhance the employability of alumni entering the workforce.

Tracer Study research is also conducted to track the whereabouts and contributions of graduates after completing their education, especially during the transition into the workforce. Thus, the existence of tracer studies is not only to meet accreditation requirements but also to reflect the responsibility and service of IAIN Syekh Nurjati, Cirebon, to its new graduates in particular and students in general as prospective graduates.

The benefits of tracer studies are not limited to universities alone; they extend further to provide crucial information about the link between higher education and the workforce. Tracer studies can offer in-depth and detailed information regarding job suitability/match, both horizontally (across various fields of study) and vertically (across different levels/strata of education). Therefore, tracer studies can help address issues of job opportunity disparities and efforts to rectify them. Information about competencies relevant to the workforce can assist in curriculum improvement efforts and learning system enhancements for universities. On the other hand, the industry and the workforce can gain insights into higher education institutions through tracer studies, thus preparing themselves

by providing more relevant training for new job-seeking graduates. Syafiq and Fikawati (2017: 7) state that the objectives of implementation are related to information regarding the relevance of graduates' performances with the needs at workplaces, evaluation of applied curriculum at the campus, accountability for parents and other stakeholders, fulfilment of accreditation requirements and transition on situations and work dynamics.

One key aspect of Tracer studies is examining graduates' employment rates and job placements in various sectors, including education, publishing, translation, and international business (Nunan, 2003). Overall, Tracer studies provide valuable data for assessing the outcomes and impacts of ELT programs, informing strategic planning and continuous improvement efforts, and ensuring that graduates are well-equipped for success in the rapidly evolving field of language teaching (Farrell, 2016).

METHOD

According to Schomburg, as cited in Syafiq and Fikawati (2017), ten critical elements in Tracer Study design must be considered: geographic scope, field of study, type of educational institution, reputation and quality of higher education institutions, variety of academic degrees, number of educational institutions, number of cohorts, period after graduation, length of questionnaire, data collection method, census or sampling, and online or interview. In this research, the researcher considers several relevant key aspects to adjust the focus and locus to the needs and interests.

The alumni of ELTD IAIN Syekh Nurjati Cirebon are traced using questionnaires. The target respondents can be determined based on a population survey that traces alumni studies. Determining which alumni to survey is crucial in conducting a Tracer Study. Alumni samples are obtained through Convenience Sampling or Accidental Sampling techniques. This technique emphasizes solely selecting whoever can be

reached at the time the survey is conducted as respondents.

In this Tracer Study research, the respondents are all alumni of the S1 English Language Teaching Department from 2015 to 2018. The respondents involved in this research are graduates between 2015 and 2019. The collected data consists of qualitative and quantitative data. Qualitative data consists of a collection of descriptions in the form of words, which are responses and opinions from alumni and users regarding the developed instrument. This study's data is obtained using an online questionnaire (Google Form).

The collection through the questionnaire includes two critical pieces of Information from ELTD alumni. First, information related to comprehensive alumni data is needed. Second, information about job types and the match between educational backgrounds and job types. This part is explored using two types of questions: open-ended and closed-ended questions.

In addition to the questionnaire, the researcher also conducted direct interviews with some alumni who could be contacted and were willing to provide further information to validate the data obtained from the questionnaire. Furthermore, to strengthen the data obtained from alumni through the questionnaire and interviews, the researcher also cross-checked the data with ELTD alumni users (Stakeholders) by distributing a questionnaire related to stakeholders' feedback and responses regarding the abilities and competencies of alumni when working in the workplace.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Alumni of ELTD Responses

One of the key factors for a tracer study's success is the alumni participation level. The tracer study research conducted by the ELTD at IAIN Syekh Nurjati Cirebon aimed to involve all alumni between 2015 and 2019. However, the alumni engagement in the 2019 Tracer Study has not exceeded 50%. The highest participation is from the 2016 graduates with 42%, followed by the 2018 graduates with 37%. The lowest

participation is from the 2019 graduates, with only 17%.

Regarding the waiting period for employment, distribution of workplaces, and alignment, the data revealed both vertically (matching between job positions and educational level) and horizontally (between academic disciplines and job types). Additionally, information regarding the acquisition and utilization of competencies is critical for policy-making regarding career development and improving input and learning processes.

The survey data results indicate that 96.4% of ELTD IAIN Syekh Nurjati alumni have already obtained employment—furthermore, 48% of alumni received information about their jobs from friends. The average waiting period for alumni is three months. This issue is known based on the table above, which shows that 54% of alumni found employment within 3 months after graduation, and 46% were already working before they graduated. A total of 52% of alumni obtained their jobs through tests, and 17% got jobs through recommendations. Below is the table of survey results regarding obstacles in finding employment.

One of the crucial aspects to be examined in this study is the alignment between the field of research and educational background—the results of the survey conducted with 140 alumni of the ELTD at IAIN Syekh Nurjati. The results shown indicate alignment between each other. As many as 76.4% of alumni stated that they work in the field of education and feel aligned with their educational background. However, approximately 76.4% of graduates work in line with their field of study, while around 23.6% of graduates work outside their field of study. Furthermore, 45% of graduates stated that they have participated in training for innovative learning models to equip their skills.

Based on the survey results, only 24% of graduates stated that the material they acquired during their education at ELTD was highly adequate for their job needs. 43% of graduates stated it was adequate. The Teaching Practicum Program (PPL) was rated by graduates, with 45%

finding it adequate and 24% finding it highly adequate.

Based on alumni responses regarding the academic activities they experienced during their studies at ELTD, it is evident that the majority of alumni express positive feedback. A total of 16% of graduates expressed satisfaction by rating it as very good, while 62% provided positive feedback regarding the academic activities they experienced. The remaining approximately 20% felt dissatisfied with the academic activities on campus.

The abilities and competencies of lecturers in an academic environment significantly influence the campus learning climate and atmosphere. Therefore, exploring alumni responses and feedback regarding the competence of lecturers is crucial for evaluating improvements in the quality of lecturers at the English Language Education Department. The graph indicates that alumni acknowledge the competence of TBI department lecturers as either very good or highly competent in classroom teaching. A total of 61.4% rated them as very good, 24.3% as good, and the remaining less than 13.6% considered them to be fairly competent.

Regarding the guidance provided by lecturers to students, the majority of students, approximately 78%, stated that the guidance process was either very good or good. However, less than 20% of alumni still express dissatisfaction with the guidance they received from lecturers. In term of the quality of learning, both practical courses and content, as well as the assessment process inside and outside the classroom, the alumni responses show a generally positive trend. Most alumni, over 75-80%, express that the quality of learning in practical courses and content is very good or good. However, less than 20% of alumni still respond negatively regarding the quality of education.

Stakeholder Responses

The response among ELTD IAIN Syekh Nurjati Cirebon alumni users is still not maximal and does not exceed 30% of the total users who participated in this survey. The data illustrates the alignment between the respondents' work areas

and their positions or roles. 77.8% of respondents stated that they work in the field of education and two other fields, namely the social field at 11.1% and the finance sector.

A total of 55.6% of users consider the alumni to be good in terms of professionalism. Another portion, 44% of users, regard the professionalism of alumni as very good. This issue means that regarding professionalism, the user responses regarding alumni are very positive, with no opinions expressing adequacy or inadequacy.

In work settings, communication is one of the crucial factors determining a person's success. Users provide positive responses regarding alumni communication skills. 44.4% stated that the communication skills of alumni are good, while the remaining 55.6% consider the communication skills of alumni to be very good. In addition to communication skills, leadership and teamwork abilities are also key factors in success. Regarding leadership, 55.6% stated that the leadership skills of alumni are good, while 44.4% expressed them to be very good. The same results apply to teamwork abilities or collaboration within teams.

Regarding readiness for self-development, 88.9% believe that alumni are prepared to develop their abilities and potentials. Furthermore, only 11.1% consider that alumni are not prepared for self-development.

CONCLUSION

A Tracer Study is crucial for understanding how workforce needs and trends shift over time to meet current demands. As such, it should be regularly conducted to capture these evolving dynamics. The programs and accreditation standards should consistently require Tracer Study data, focusing on metrics regarding time to employment after graduation, pathways to jobs, and the proportion of graduates already employed.

Based on the available data, alumni of IAIN Syekh Nurjati typically secure employment within 3-6 months. Generally, information about job opportunities is obtained through friends. Assessments of the academic atmosphere,

including teaching processes, are positive. The same sentiment is echoed in surveys conducted with stakeholders. Questions regarding graduates' performance, IT literacy, and communication skills are rated positively.

The data and information obtained from the tracer study are beneficial for ELTD, the students in planning their futures, especially considering the increasingly competitive job market, including for alumni pursuing further studies. Therefore, information regarding the transition from education to employment will greatly assist students and prospective alumni in better prepare themselves. ELTD IAIN Syekh Nurjati's success is closely linked to its alumni's successful careers.

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