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ABSTRACT

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This study investigated the perceptions of students from the English Education Department at UIN Ar-Raniry regarding their learning outcomes and employability. The research aimed to identify students' perceptions of their learning outcomes in the English Education Department at UIN Ar-Raniry and analyze the factors that influenced their perceptions. Employing a qualitative phenomenological approach, data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with seven students from 2019 batch of the English Education Department of UIN Ar-Raniry who had just graduated in 2023-2024 and had not become civil servants or contract workers. Thematic analysis was used to explore key themes, supported by document analysis of the KKNI curriculum. The findings revealed that students perceived significant improvements in English proficiency and professional teaching skills, facilitated by practical applications such as micro-teaching and internships. However, challenges remained, including the optimization of language laboratory facilities and the need for better support for entrepreneurship courses. Factors that influenced students' perceptions included teaching quality, curriculum relevance, learning environment, and extracurricular opportunities. Overall, the KKNI-based curriculum was found to align with industry demands, but continuous improvements were needed to ensure graduates were well-prepared for evolving professional challenges. This study highlighted the importance of bridging the gap between academic learning and practical application, offering insights to enhance curriculum design and graduate employability.

**Students' Perceptions of Learning Outcomes: An Insight from the English Education
Department Students of UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh**

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Abstract

This study investigated the perceptions of students from the English Education Department at UIN Ar-Raniry regarding their learning outcomes and employability. The research aimed to identify students' perceptions of their learning outcomes in the English Education Department at UIN Ar-Raniry and analyze the factors that influenced their perceptions. Employing a qualitative phenomenological approach, data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with seven students from 2019 batch of the English Education Department of UIN Ar-Raniry who had just graduated in 2023-2024 and had not become civil servants or contract workers. Thematic analysis was used to explore key themes, supported by document analysis of the KKNI curriculum. The findings revealed that students perceived significant improvements in English proficiency and professional teaching skills, facilitated by practical applications such as micro-teaching and internships. However, challenges remained, including the optimization of language laboratory facilities and the need for better support for entrepreneurship courses. Factors that influenced students' perceptions included teaching quality, curriculum relevance, learning environment, and extracurricular opportunities. Overall, the KKNI-based curriculum was found to align with industry demands, but continuous improvements were needed to ensure graduates were well-prepared for evolving professional challenges. This study highlighted the importance of bridging the gap between academic learning and practical application, offering insights to enhance curriculum design and graduate employability.

Keywords: Students' Perception, Learning Outcomes, KKNI-Based Curriculum.

INTRODUCTION

Graduate employability is increasingly recognized as a key indicator of higher education institutions' effectiveness in preparing students for the workforce. In Indonesia, the Kerangka Kualifikasi Nasional Indonesia (KKNI), or Indonesian National Qualification Framework, aims to ensure that university graduates possess the competencies and qualifications required for success in diverse professional settings (Ministry of Education and

Culture of the Republic of Indonesia, 2013). The English Education Study Program at UIN Ar-Raniry has implemented a KKNI-based curriculum to equip students with essential skills, including effective communication, critical thinking, and pedagogical expertise. However, despite these efforts, challenges persist, as some graduates struggle to secure employment. This raises questions about students' perceptions of their learning outcomes and whether these perceptions align with job market demands after graduation.

In the context of education, perception refers to how students interpret their learning experiences, including their views on the knowledge and skills they have acquired and their relevance to professional life (Zhang & Zhang, 2020). Students' perceptions, in particular, provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of an educational program in preparing them for real-world challenges. As key stakeholders with firsthand experience, alumni reflect on teaching quality, curriculum relevance, and the application of acquired skills in the workplace (Wang, Zhang, & Liu, 2021). Students' perceptions significantly influence their satisfaction with their education and their overall career outcomes (Aslam & Babar, 2020). Additionally, these perceptions are shaped by various factors, including university support, faculty engagement, and the practical application of theoretical knowledge (Zhang & Zhang, 2020).

Recent studies suggest that a strong alignment between students' learning experiences and their perceptions of these experiences is crucial for professional success. Positive perceptions of the educational process are linked to higher levels of graduate employability, as students who clearly understand their competencies tend to feel more confident in transitioning to the workforce (Jackson & Chapman, 2022).

Learning outcomes represented the knowledge, skills, and abilities that students were expected to achieve upon completing their studies. These outcomes were typically defined by educational institutions and were intended to guide both teaching practices and assessment methods (Tung & Zhang, 2023). In the English Education Department at UIN Ar-Raniry, learning outcomes were aligned with the goals of the KKNI framework, focusing on the development of critical thinking, pedagogical knowledge, and language proficiency, which were essential for success in educational and professional settings (Harrison & Wang, 2022).

However, despite these clear learning outcomes, there remained a gap between what was taught in the classroom and what was expected in the professional world (Clarke, 2018). The disconnect between academic learning outcomes and industry needs had been a consistent issue in higher education, with many graduates finding that their academic training did not fully prepare them for the challenges they faced in the workforce (Liu, Zhang, & Zhang, 2022). Aligning the curriculum with industry expectations was key to improving learning outcomes, ensuring that students graduated with the competencies needed to succeed in their chosen professions (Gulikers, Bastiaens, & Kirschner, 2019).

Students' perceptions of learning outcomes often revealed this gap, as they reflected on whether their education had adequately prepared them for their careers. Research suggested that graduates who perceived their education as relevant to their professional needs were more likely to report higher levels of employability and job satisfaction (Salim, Nguyen, & Barata, 2022). Therefore, understanding how students perceived the alignment between their learning outcomes and the requirements of the job market was essential for improving curriculum design and enhancing graduate employability.

Several factors influenced how students perceived their learning outcomes, including the quality of teaching, curriculum design, and opportunities for practical application. Teaching quality played a pivotal role in shaping perceptions of learning outcomes. Effective teaching

practices that incorporated interactive and student-centered approaches led to better learning experiences and more positive perceptions among students (Aslam & Babar, 2020). Additionally, curriculum design that integrated real-world applications, such as internships, teaching practice, and collaborative projects, had been shown to improve perceptions of learning outcomes (Tung & Zhang, 2023).

The integration of practical learning opportunities was particularly important in preparing students for the demands of the workforce. Students who had participated in internships or other practical experiences tended to have more favorable perceptions of their learning outcomes, as these experiences allowed them to apply theoretical knowledge in real-world contexts (Kurniawan, 2021). Furthermore, the support provided by institutions, such as career services, mentoring, and students' networks, also played a significant role in shaping perceptions of graduate employability (Miller, Clarke, & Jensen, 2020).

In the case of the English Education Department at UIN Ar-Raniry, understanding these factors was crucial for identifying areas of improvement in curriculum design. By enhancing the relevance of the curriculum and ensuring that students gained practical skills, the department could better prepare graduates for the challenges of the job market. This study sought to explore how students perceived their learning outcomes and to identify the factors that influenced these perceptions, ultimately providing actionable recommendations for improving curriculum relevance and graduate employability.

METHODS

This study used a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach. This method was chosen because it was suitable for exploring students' subjective experiences regarding their learning outcomes (Moustakas, 1994). The phenomenological approach allowed researchers to understand the perceptions of students from their point of view. The research subjects were 2019 batch students from the English Education Department of UIN Ar-Raniry who had just graduated in 2023-2024 and had not become civil servants or contract workers. Purposive sampling was used to ensure that the participants had sufficient experience in the learning process (Creswell, 2014). The data collection method used in this study was semi-structured interviews. This type of interview allowed the participants to express their views on the effectiveness of the curriculum in their learning outcomes while still focusing on the core topic of the study (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009). The interviews lasted for 5-30 minutes and were recorded and transcribed for analysis. In addition to the interviews, relevant documents such as the academic guidebook of the KKNI curriculum syllabus were also analyzed to provide additional context to the data obtained from the interviews. Data collected through interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis (Sugiyono, 2011). Thematic analysis involved several stages: Transcription of interviews, Coding of data to identify key themes, Classification of themes based on topics relevant to the research questions, and Interpretation of data to understand students' perceptions of the effectiveness of the learning outcomes of the KKNI curriculum. Document analysis was also conducted to assess the alignment between the written curriculum objectives and its implementation in the field.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Students Felt Improvement During Their Studies in the English Education Department.

During their studies in the English Education Department, many students' experienced significant academic, personal, and professional growth. The structured curriculum, which

integrated theoretical knowledge with practical teaching skills, contributed to the development of students. For example, courses focusing on English language proficiency helped students improve their academic abilities, while teaching practicums and micro-teaching sessions fostered teaching confidence and competence (Larsen-Freeman, 2018). Students' often highlighted the importance of a supportive learning environment in fostering their growth. These experiences prepared them not only for a teaching career but also for other workplace roles.

How would you rate the achievement of your learning outcomes in the English Education Department?

7 Respondent

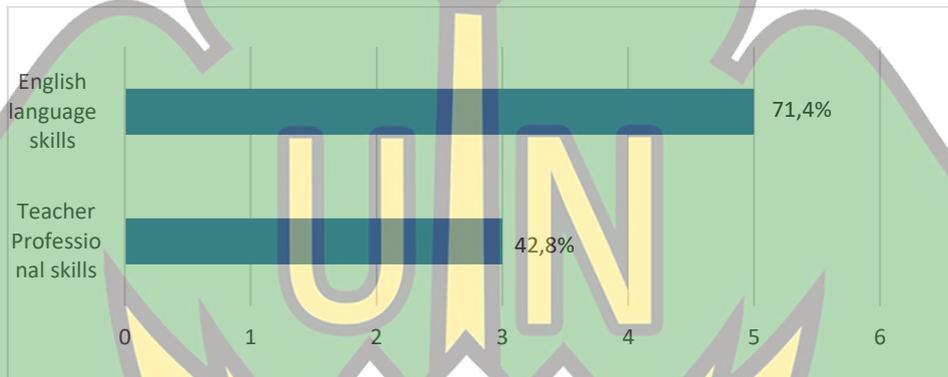


Table 1. Table of Improvements Felt by Students

From the table above, it could be seen that five respondents reported that their English language skills had improved, while the rest felt that their professional skills as teachers had improved during their studies in the English Teaching Department. This finding was in line with research by Harmer (2018), which stated that practice-based language education programs not only improved students' linguistic competence but also supported their professional development as teachers through an experiential approach. This was important given the increasingly urgent needs of the workforce for individuals who had good English language skills. As stated by Nofianti (2021), English proficiency had become one of the main competencies required by companies and educational institutions in the era of globalization, where international communication and mastery of foreign languages were among the keys to obtaining wider career opportunities. Therefore, a curriculum that integrated English language teaching with practical experience was highly relevant to preparing graduates who were ready to face professional challenges in the global job market.

2. Factors That Shaped the Students' Perceptions of English Education Department.

Students of the English Education Department at UIN Ar-Raniry experienced notable growth in their professional teaching skills and English language proficiency throughout their studies. This study not only examined their perceptions of learning outcomes but also explored the key factors shaping these perceptions. Understanding these factors is essential for evaluating the quality of educational programs and assessing the curriculum's relevance to workforce demands. According to Fitria (2020), students' perceptions reflect the extent to which higher education institutions successfully achieve their learning objectives, particularly in equipping graduates with professional competencies. Several key factors influencing students' perceptions are outlined below:

a. Educator

Students consistently emphasized the crucial role of lecturers in shaping their learning outcomes. Interviews with seven respondents revealed that their academic success was significantly influenced by lecturers' roles in teaching, mentoring, and providing academic guidance. Lecturers were not only content providers but also mentors who facilitated deeper conceptual understanding. This aligns with Arifin (2020), who asserts that effective lecturers do more than master subject matter—they also offer strategic guidance to support students' academic success.

Furthermore, respondents highlighted that lecturers who motivated and inspired them had a major impact on their passion for learning. Four out of seven respondents specifically stated that lecturers with inspiring characters were able to build confidence and provided long-term motivation that had a positive impact on their achievements. Susanto and Wahyudi's (2021) study supported this view, stating that lecturers who had empathy, good communication skills, and a supportive personal approach could significantly increase students' learning motivation. This approach created a conducive learning climate, where students felt supported to develop their potential optimally.

Not only that, students also highlighted the importance of innovative teaching methods in encouraging the achievement of better learning outcomes. Some lecturers were considered to excel in using various learning methods, such as interactive discussions, simulations, and case studies, which made learning more interesting and relevant to the challenges of the working world. Research by Setiawan and Lestari (2022) showed that learning methods oriented towards practical experience helped students understand concepts in an applicable manner while improving critical and collaborative thinking skills. This was important to ensure students' readiness to face future professional challenges.

In addition, students also recognized that the personalized guidance provided by lecturers was very helpful in overcoming various academic and non-academic obstacles. Lecturers who actively built communication with students were able to create close interpersonal relationships, which not only increased student engagement in learning but also helped them develop soft skills, such as time management and problem-solving. Wahyuni (2020) asserted that the role of lecturers as humanist mentors had a significant impact on student character development, especially in building independence and a sense of responsibility.

The role of lecturers as motivators, facilitators, and inspirers not only supported the achievement of learning outcomes but also shaped the mindset of students to continue learning throughout life. Students noted that inspiring lecturers often became role models who encouraged them to adopt professionalism and ethical attitudes in their daily lives. Research by Halim and Yusra (2021) underlined that lecturers who instilled positive values and provided a broad view of the world of work had a long-term impact on students' career development. Thus, the success of the KKNI-based curriculum at UIN Ar-Raniry could not be separated from the significant contribution of lecturers in supporting students, both in terms of academic and holistic self-development.

b. Facilities

Educational facilities play a significant role in shaping students' perceptions of learning quality. Research by Rahmawati et al. (2020) indicates that well-maintained facilities—such as laboratories, libraries, and technology-enhanced learning spaces—positively correlate with students' perceptions of academic quality. Similarly, Saputra and Wijaya (2021) found that

optimal utilization of educational resources enhances learning outcomes, as students feel more engaged and motivated to participate actively in the learning process.

Are campus facilities, such as language laboratories or libraries, sufficient to support the learning process?

7 Respondent

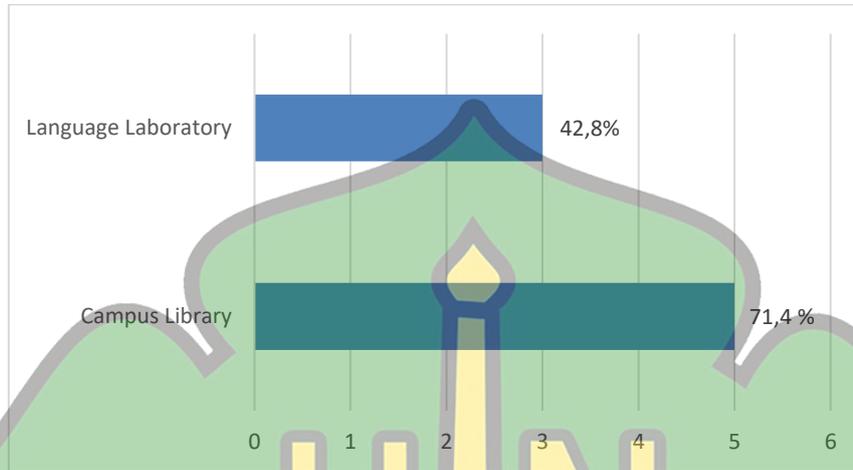


Table 3. Table Of Contribution Of Campus Facilities In Supporting Student Learning Outcomes.

Findings from the exploration of students in the English Education Department at UIN Ar-Raniry revealed that three out of seven respondents considered the language laboratory adequate for supporting their learning process. Language laboratories play a crucial role in developing language skills, particularly in English education programs. According to Rahman (2019), the optimal use of language laboratories enhances students' listening, speaking, and phonetic mastery. Additionally, Harsono and Kurnia (2020) emphasize that language laboratories facilitate interactive learning through audio-visual technology, increasing the effectiveness of practice-based instruction. However, this study highlights the need for greater utilization of laboratory facilities to maximize learning outcomes in alignment with the KKNI curriculum requirements.

Similarly, most students acknowledged that library facilities were beneficial to their learning experience. Research by Wibowo and Santosa (2021) indicates that university libraries play a strategic role in supporting research-based learning by providing access to relevant and up-to-date academic resources. This aligns with the perspectives of UIN Ar-Raniry students, who recognized that the library's academic reference collection and digital services significantly contributed to the quality of their assignments and research. Moreover, Rahman (2020) concludes that the effective utilization of library facilities enhances students' information literacy—an essential competency in professional settings.

c. Experience

Out-of-class experiences, such as seminars, student organizations, and teaching practice, played an important role in supporting student learning outcomes. According to Raharjo (2019), out-of-class activities provided students with opportunities to develop soft skills, such as communication, time management, and leadership, which were difficult to acquire from classroom learning alone. Seminars, for example, allowed students to broaden their horizons and professional networks, while involvement in student organizations helped them learn to work in teams and manage responsibilities.

In addition, teaching practice provided in-depth hands-on experience, allowing students to apply educational theory to real situations in the classroom. This was in line with research by Suryani and Lestari (2020), who found that students who were active in practical activities tended to have better adaptation and problem-solving skills, which were highly needed in the world of work. This combination of formal learning and non-formal experience significantly improved the quality of graduates in facing professional challenges.

How was your experience during activities outside the classroom, such as teaching practice, seminars, or organizations? Did these activities support your learning outcomes?
7 Respondent

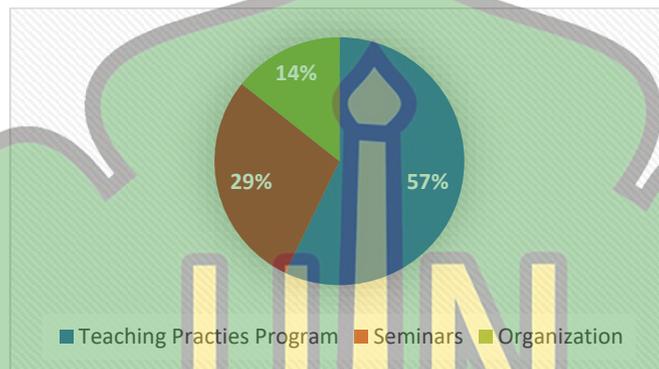


Table 3. Table of activities that support students.

The diagram above illustrates the research findings, highlighting that most students of the English Education Department at UIN Ar-Raniry acknowledged the significant role of teaching practices, such as Professional Teaching Practices and Community Service (Praktik Profesi Keguruan dan Pengabdian Masyarakat, PPKPM) and Micro Teaching, in supporting their learning outcomes. These programs provided direct experience in educational settings, refining students' teaching skills. Previous research by Smith (2018) also demonstrated that integrating teaching practices into the curriculum, such as PPKPM and Micro Teaching, played a crucial role in preparing graduates for the workforce. According to Darling-Hammond et al. (2017), such teaching practices offered students practical experiences that deepened their understanding of theoretical concepts while simultaneously enhancing their interpersonal and pedagogical skills. Therefore, these programs were recognized as key components in equipping graduates to navigate the dynamic field of education.

Furthermore, on-campus seminars were also perceived as a vital factor in preparing students for professional challenges. Research by Jones (2020) highlighted that seminars and workshops, particularly those fostering discussions between academics and industry professionals, served as a bridge between students' theoretical knowledge and current job market trends. These events also provided students with opportunities to establish professional networks and gain firsthand insight into the latest developments in education and teaching.

Additionally, involvement in student organizations, though considered less influential than teaching practice and seminars, still contributed positively to students' personal and professional growth. As noted by Lee & Kim (2019), participation in student organizations helped cultivate leadership, managerial, and teamwork skills—competencies valuable not only in education but also across various industries. Organizational activities encouraged students to develop time management, decision-making, and problem-solving skills, which are highly sought after by employers (Robinson, 2015).

These experiences were valuable assets for students in securing employment after graduation, aligning with the success of the KKNi Curriculum in adapting to industry needs. Mulyadi (2021) emphasized that the Indonesian National Qualifications Framework (KKNi)-based curriculum provided more relevant and applicable education, integrating theory and practice optimally to prepare graduates for the workforce. In this context, KKNi focused not only on mastering subject matter but also on developing the technical and non-technical skills needed by various industries, including the education sector. Additionally, the integration of the academic curriculum with practical experiences gained during the study period proved effective in facilitating students' transition to the professional world (Kumar, 2019).

d. Learning Environment

During their studies at the English Education Department of UIN Ar-Raniry, students recognized that the learning environment had a significant influence on their learning outcomes, ranging from classmates and the learning atmosphere to campus support. They emphasized the importance of the support system formed by the learning atmosphere in shaping their learning outcomes. A supportive learning environment not only provided intrinsic motivation but also increased student engagement in the learning process, leading to optimal learning outcomes.

This was reinforced by recent research. According to Liu et al. (2021), a conducive learning environment included three main components, namely social support, adequate learning resources, and an atmosphere that encouraged collaboration. These three factors had a positive correlation with student academic achievement. In addition, the results of a study by Wang et al. (2020) showed that students who were in a learning environment with high levels of social interaction and emotional support tended to have better levels of learning motivation and higher academic results.

Peer support was also a significant factor. According to Rahman et al. (2022), harmonious relationships among classmates provided a sense of mutual support and helped students cope with academic pressure. This was in line with research from Zhang et al. (2023), who found that classmate support could increase student engagement in group-based learning, thus accelerating understanding of the material and development of collaboration skills.

Apart from social support, the role of educational institutions was also very important. Research by Smith and Brown (2021) showed that supportive campus policies, such as the provision of adequate learning facilities and academic counseling programs, contributed to increased student satisfaction with the learning process. Optimal campus support created an environment that encouraged students to thrive academically and personally.

Based on these findings, it could be concluded that a supportive learning environment, both from social and institutional aspects, played a crucial role in determining students' academic success. Therefore, it was important for educational institutions to continuously improve the quality of the learning environment to support students' holistic development.

CONCLUSION

This study highlighted the perceptions of students from the English Education Department at UIN Ar-Raniry regarding their learning outcomes and employability. Key factors that influenced students' perceptions included the quality of teaching, relevance of curriculum content, availability of practical experience, and a supportive learning environment.

Students reported significant improvements in English language proficiency and professional teaching skills, which were supported by interactive teaching methods and practical applications such as micro-teaching and internships. However, there were still some areas for improvement, such as optimizing the use of language labs and increasing support for entrepreneurship courses. In addition, fostering a more conducive campus environment and strengthening students' networks could help align educational outcomes with market needs.

These insights underscored the importance of continuous curriculum evaluation and institutional support to ensure graduates were well-prepared to meet the challenges of an evolving job market. Future studies should extend these findings to explore students' outcomes longitudinally and further refine strategies to improve graduate employability.

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