



Career Choice and Transition of Professional Interests among English Education Students

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ABSTRACT

Purpose of the study: The division of elective tracks in undergraduate education programs continues to raise concerns regarding the alignment between students' chosen specializations and subsequent career transitions. So far, studies on career choice and professional interests transitions among English education students in elective-based classes are deficient. This study aims to identify: (1) students' initial elective class choices, (2) their preferences across elective tracks, (3) their tendency to shift to other professions, (4) the underlying reasons for such transitions, and (5) the adequacy of credit allocation for elective courses offered.

Methodology: This descriptive study involved 142 students enrolled in elective tracks. Data were collected through Google Forms and semi-structured interviews. Questionnaire data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, while interview data were examined qualitatively.

Main Findings: The findings indicate that students predominantly prefer electives in tourism (47.9%) and education (42.3%), with relatively low interest in research-oriented tracks. Career choice consistency is relatively high (64.7%); however, transitions are influenced by personal, social, and professional development factors. The adequacy of credit allocation for elective courses is generally perceived positively.

Novelty/Originality of this study: This study reveals a developed theoretical basis on career choice and professional interest transitions among education students in elective-based classes in non-vocational higher education. Nevertheless, gender, as one of the determining factors, has not been explored in this study.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Vision of the English Language Education Study Program, Undergraduate Program, FKIP, University of Mataram, "To become a superior and internationally competitive study program in the fields of English Language Education, edupreneurship, and research based on English for Specific Purposes has gone through a long formulation process. However, according to the 'Independent Accreditation Institute of Education' assessor, the Vision does not reflect the scientific vision of the study program. Therefore, the assessor

recommends that the Vision of the English Language Education Study Program, Undergraduate Program, FKIP, University of Mataram be revised immediately. This is the background to this research.

So far, with reference to the Vision, Mission, Goals, and Targets (VMTS), the applicable curriculum, study program profile, and CPL of the Undergraduate Program of the English Language Education FKIP, University of Mataram is divided into four elective-based interests, namely: Teacher Candidates (TC), Tourism Practitioners (TP), Translation and Interpretation (TI), Teacher Researchers (TR), and which start in semester 5. Even though it has been divided according to the specialization, problems still arise regarding the 'suitability of the choice of specialization and the transition from the specialization they chose themselves.' This is one of the problems for both students and study programs.

In relation VMTS, career choice and shifts, several studies have been conducted as a reference for formulating the VMTS, Study Program Profile, and CPL for the English Language Education Study Program, including English students' career shift [1], student interest in choosing an English language study program [2], and career shift in higher education [3]-[6].

Students' career interests and career shifts are crucial in career choice and preparation [7]. Mismatches between existing skills and career aspirations are common [8], which need to be aligned with the curriculum [9]. Career choices are influenced by various factors, including gender, norms, family history, public opinion, the curriculum, and student and parental expectations [11], as well as those of parents [12]. Institutions must design supportive policies to create a prospective job market and create strong links and matches between higher education and the workplace [14]. Generally, students majoring in English are aiming to improve their English language skills for career preparation [15]-[17]. It has been found that the interests and career choices of English students in West Nusa Tenggara can change during their studies [18].

Several studies have shown that elective courses for specialization help provide direction and planning for relevant career choices [19]-[24]. However, no research has yet focused on the "variety of career choices and shifts among undergraduate English language study program students based on 'elective-based classes' divided according to their chosen professional interests." This constitutes the 'gap' compared to previous studies. Internal factors that influence the career choices of FBS Unesa students include interests, attitudes, skills, life principles, hobbies, talents, personality, career insight, experience, IQ, achievements, use of free time, physical appearance, psychological condition and socialization skills. External factors include: well-being, family and environment [25].

Based on the results, the researcher also stated that the motives of the alumni to pursue a profession in the field of music were due to the following factors: (1) family support, parents who are teachers; (2) environmental influence, because of the environment of playing and socializing with musicians; (3) the amount of salary from work, so the core problem is why there are graduates of music arts education who change professions because of the size of the salary factor and determine the choice to become bank employees [26].

Young people's career development paths are influenced by a variety of background and personality factors [27] and institutions should examine their resources to ensure that students can easily find jobs [28] and implement specific curriculum policies necessary to prepare work-ready graduates or alumni. Higher education should design policies that support the labor market and graduate employment prospects [29] and provide higher linkages and matches between universities and companies [30]. Focused on tourism sector, studies on English education for tourism have demonstrated that English competence should be developed in accordance with the communicative needs of the tourism industry because professional language competence significantly contributes to graduate employability [31]. Effective English for Tourism instruction requires learning experiences that closely reflect authentic workplace communication and professional practices. Such curriculum relevance improves students' readiness for employment in the tourism sector [32]. A curriculum should be adaptive, meaning that its implementation enables higher education institutions to respond more effectively to students' learning needs and changing labour-market demands through continuous curriculum evaluation [33].

Currently, there are indicators of a mismatch between students' career choices and their expected careers. To meet students' expectations, education must improve the quality and relevance of the curriculum and provide graduates with better preparedness for their expected careers [34], [35]. In our society where the division of labor is based on gender, men usually appear to have greater roles and leadership than women, and women tend to be socially sanctioned [36]. Thus, a bias in career fit can be attributed to whether men or women work in that career [37]. This can also lead to a shift in career choices.

The following is the research problem formulation: 1) When first choosing classes based on 'interest', which classes do students choose? 2) What are students' preferences for each interest? 3) What is the tendency for students to switch to other professions? 4) What are students' reasons for switching to other professions? 5) What is the "adequacy" of the credits for the "interest" (elective) courses offered? Therefore, this study aims to: 1) determine class choices based on 'elective-based classes', which classes do students choose; 2) determine students' preferences for each elective-based classes; 3) determine the tendency for students to switch to other professions; 4) explore students' reasons for switching to other professions; and 5) determine the 'adequacy' of the credits for the elective-based courses offered.

This research will provide a profile of the suitability of interest choices and shifts in specialization in students of specialization classes as a reference for revising the Scientific Vision of the English Language Education study program, Undergraduate Program, University of Mataram, which is more relevant to the profile of the study program and CPL which are globally oriented. The results of this study will also be very useful for the preparation of international accreditation which requires a Scientific Vision that is relevant to the profile of the study program and CPL and is based on 'outputs'. In addition, this study reveals a developed theoretical basis on career choice and professional interest transitions among education students in elective-based classes in non-vocational higher education, as its 'novelty.' That is why this research is absolutely 'urgent' for career choice and development in the English department.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a mixed-methods design integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches to achieve a comprehensive understanding of students' career choice and shifts. The research design adopted was ex-post-facto, as the study examined variables that were already present without manipulation. Quantitative data in the form of percentages dealing with students' preference to certain professional careers, their tendency to career shift, reasons for career shift and credits course totals, the alignment of career choices and credit courses, and their satisfaction displayed through diagrams were described and analysed. Besides, data collected with interview were described and analysed qualitatively.

There are 142 undergraduate English Language Education students, divided into four specializations or elective-based classes: TC, TP, TI, and TR. To fill out the Google Form, all students were involved, total population sampling. For the interview, twenty students participated. This interview aimed at obtaining further information based on quantitative data on their choices and carer shifts.

Google Form, The items (or questions) asked in the Google form were formulated by the researchers themselves. All students of the elective-based classess filled out the online Google Forms. Their responses were directly presented (or recorded) dan displayed through diagram and pie charts. Interview, A semi-structured interview was conducted with 20 randomly selected participants, ignoring gender. The interviews aimed to delve deeper into the specific factors affecting the students' preference to particular career choices and their tendency to shift their careers. The guide was aligned with the questionnaire items and refined through expert validation.

The data obtained from the questionnaire and semi-structured interviews were analyzed using an explanatory mixed-methods approach, integrating quantitative descriptive statistics with qualitative thematic analysis. The combination of these analytical procedures was intended to provide a comprehensive understanding of students' professional interest preferences, career transition tendencies, and perceptions of the elective-based curriculum.

The questionnaire data collected through Google Forms were exported into Microsoft Excel for cleaning, coding, tabulation, and descriptive statistical analysis. Before analysis, all responses were screened for completeness, duplication, and consistency. Incomplete responses were excluded to ensure data quality. Because the objectives of this study were to describe students' career preferences and perceptions rather than to test causal relationships, descriptive statistical analysis was employed. The analysis included: Frequency distribution (f) to identify the number of respondents selecting each response category; Percentage (%) to determine the proportion of respondents for each variable; Cross-tabulation, where necessary, to compare responses among the four elective-based classes (Teacher Candidate, Tourism Practitioner, Translation and Interpretation, and Teacher Researcher); Graphs and pie charts to visualize the distribution of responses and facilitate interpretation of findings.

Percentages presented in those charts were automatically calculated by Google Form., not manual calculation. using the following formula: The descriptive statistical results were interpreted according to the research objectives, namely: identifying students' initial choices of elective-based classes; examining students' preferences for each professional interest; determining students' tendencies to shift to other professions; identifying the major reasons for career transitions; evaluating students' perceptions regarding the adequacy of elective-course credits; examining the alignment between elective-course materials and professional interests; evaluating the suitability of learning tasks with elective courses; identifying the frequency of assignments; assessing students' satisfaction with elective courses; and assessing students' satisfaction with course assessment practices. The quantitative findings were then interpreted descriptively by relating the statistical patterns to the research questions and relevant theories on career choice, professional interests, curriculum relevance, and higher education.

The interview data were analyzed using the following thematic analysis, which consists of three interconnected stages: Data Reduction, Interview recordings were transcribed verbatim before analysis. The transcripts were read repeatedly to obtain familiarity with the data. Irrelevant information was removed, while meaningful statements related to students' career choices, professional interests, curriculum experiences, and career transitions were highlighted. Initial coding was then conducted to identify important concepts emerging

from participants' responses. Data Display, The coded data were organized into thematic categories using matrices and narrative summaries. Similar codes were grouped into broader themes representing students' perceptions, motivations, career aspirations, curriculum experiences, and factors influencing career transitions. This organization enabled systematic comparison among participants from different elective-based classes. Conclusion Drawing and Verification, After identifying recurring themes, interpretations were developed by connecting qualitative findings with quantitative results. Themes were continuously reviewed to ensure consistency and to avoid researcher bias. The final interpretations focused on explaining why students preferred certain professional interests, why some intended to change careers, and how they perceived the implementation of the elective-based curriculum.

Following separate analyses, the quantitative and qualitative findings were integrated during the interpretation stage. The interview data served to explain and enrich the questionnaire results by providing deeper insights into students' responses. This integration strengthened the overall interpretation of the findings and provided a more comprehensive understanding of career choice and professional interest transitions among English Education students.

To enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, several verification techniques were employed: Method triangulation, by comparing questionnaire findings with interview results; Data source triangulation, by involving participants from all four elective-based classes; Peer debriefing, whereby fellow researchers reviewed the coding process and thematic interpretations; Member checking (respondent validation), in which several interview participants confirmed that the interpretations accurately represented their views; Audit trail, documenting the analytical procedures from data coding through interpretation to ensure transparency and dependability.

These procedures enhanced the validity, credibility, consistency, and confirmability of the study findings while minimizing researcher bias.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Students Preference to each professional interest

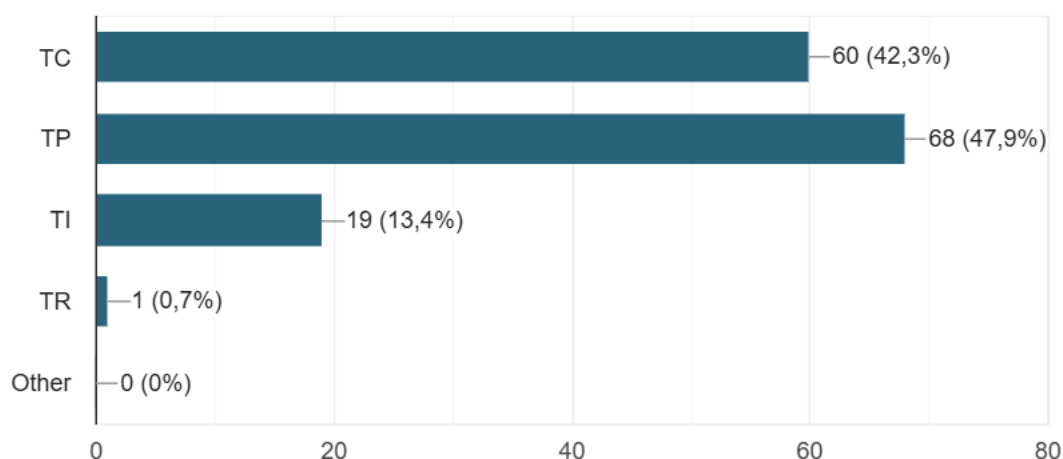


Figure 1. Preference to professional interest classes

Based on Figure 1, there is a wide range of student interest in the elective-based classes in professional interests. The majority of respondents chose Tourism Practitioners (TP) with 47.9%, followed by Teacher Candidate (TC) with 42.3%, both indicating a high level of interest in the tourism and education sectors. Translation and Interpretation (TI) attracted 13.4% of students, while Teacher Researcher (TR) only attracted 0.7%, indicating low interest in this field. No other categories were selected (0%). These findings reflect the concentration of interest in tourism and education, providing guidance for educational institutions in designing curricula relevant to job market needs.

Students tendency to switch to other professions

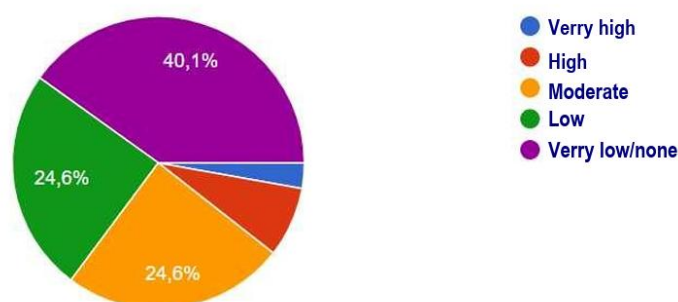


Figure 2. Tendency to switch to other professions

Based on Figure 2, students' propensity to switch careers is divided into five categories. The majority of students (40.1%) are in the very low/none category, reflecting consistency in their academic interests. The low and medium categories, each with 24.6%, indicate that some students are still open to switching careers, although not dominantly. The high (7.7%) and very high (2.8%) categories include a small number of students, indicating that a strong desire to switch careers is rare. Overall, 64.7% of students tend to remain in their chosen careers, while 35.1% have the potential to switch careers. This finding aligns with the choice stability theory, where career choice consistency is influenced by intrinsic motivation and the relevance of career interests to job prospects. Career uncertainty can be caused by external factors such as job market dynamics and exposure to career prospects.

Students reasons for career switch



Figure 3. Reasons for career switch

Based on Figure 3, students switch professions due to a complex set of motivating factors. Only 7.1% of respondents stated that their previous profession was irrelevant, and 1.6% considered misalignment with their major courses to be less influential. 14.3% considered developments in the world of work, indicating a significant influence of field needs. Competition with classmates was highlighted by 4% of respondents. The majority (73%) chose the "other" category, reflecting the predominance of personal, social, and psychological reasons, including personal interests and intrinsic motivation, that drove their career change.

Researcher: Is Baiq still consistent with her previous choice of specialization or profession?

Baiq M.S.A.: No, sir, it's changed.

Researcher: Why?

Bai Meisya S.A.: Still confused, sir.

Researcher: Why is it so unclear?

Baiq M.S.A.: It's normal, sir. My motivation often changes.

Researcher: Oh yes.

Overall, these data illustrate that the shift in professional interests in students is not only influenced by academic and structural factors, but is also greatly influenced by developments in the world of work and personal, intrinsic factors, which are more individualistic and contextual.

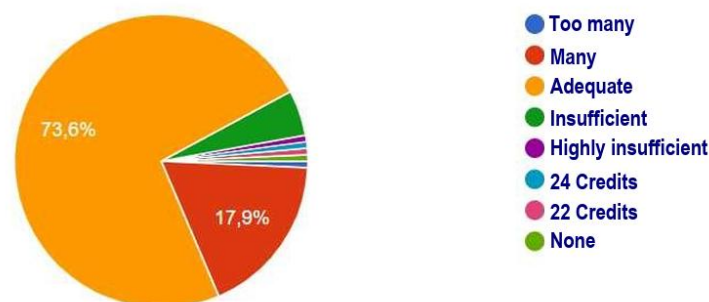
Total credits of professional interest classes for each semester

Figure 4. Total course credits offered

Based on Figure 4, the majority of respondents rated the study load as “moderately sufficient” (73.6%). This finding indicates that most students feel the number of credits offered is within reasonable limits and can be completed without causing significant academic stress.

However, some students held differing perceptions. 17.9% of respondents stated the course load was “too many,” while 0.7% considered it “too many.” This can be interpreted as a result of varying academic experiences, with some students finding it difficult to balance the demands of the credits with their abilities or study time. Meanwhile, 5% of respondents rated the number of credits as “insufficient/little,” and 0.7% rated it “very insufficient/little,” indicating a need for enrichment or an additional study load to meet their academic expectations.

Interestingly, a small percentage of students (0.7% each) considered “24 credits” and “22 credits” to be ideal. Furthermore, 5% of respondents reiterated the “moderately sufficient” option in the context of alternatives, indicating a tendency for the majority to remain consistent in this category.

Theoretically, the variation in student perceptions can be explained through the concept of “academic workload perception” [38], where the study load is influenced by individual factors (motivation, learning strategies, cognitive capacity) and external factors (curriculum, learning system, academic support). The majority who feel “quite adequate” indicates a balance between the curriculum and student capacity, while the minority who feel “too much” or “not enough” reflect the need for differentiation or flexibility in compiling the credit workload.

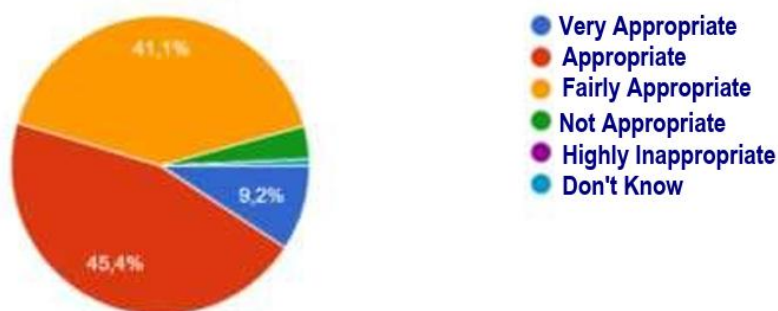
The alignment between the materials the elective courses

Figure 5. The alignment of elective course materials

Figure 5 shows that the majority of students assessed the course material as being suitable for their chosen elective courses. The data shows that 45.4% of respondents stated “Appropriate” and 9.2% stated “Very suitable,” indicating that more than half (54.6%) of students felt the relevance between the course material and their elective courses was well maintained. The following interview results support this survey finding.

Researcher: Chintya is very diligent in attending elective courses, right?

C.D.A.: Yes, sir, I'm happy.

Researcher: Why?

C.D.A.: I feel it's important to me.

Researcher: How well does the course fit your interests?

C.D.A.: Appropriate, sir.

Researcher: Oh, that's good then. Thank you?

C.D.A.: Yes, you're welcome, sir.

This indicates that the curriculum has been quite successful in meeting students' academic needs according to their chosen elective courses [39], [40] Meanwhile, 41.1% of students stated "Moderately suitable," indicating that a large proportion of students felt the connection between course material and their specialization was still partial. This condition can be understood as a gap between students' expectations for the depth of the material and the content presented in the lectures. In line with the constructive alignment theory [41], the alignment between learning objectives, processes, and assessments must be strengthened so that students can feel a more complete cohesion in their specialization learning.

Only 3.5% of respondents stated "Unsuitable," and none stated "Very suitable." This confirms that the mismatch between material and specialization is not a dominant issue, but rather a minority issue. 0.7% of respondents answered "No idea," which may reflect students' lack of understanding of the curriculum structure or limited learning experiences.

Overall, these data indicate that the alignment of course material with specialization is relatively high, but there is still room for improvement in integrating course content with the specific needs of the specialization field. Increasing relevance can be done through adaptive curriculum development strategies, aligning material with the latest scientific trends, and increasing student involvement in the academic planning process [42].

The alignment between tasks and elective courses



Figure 6. The alignment between the tasks and the elective courses

As seen in Figure 6, students' perceptions of the assignments' suitability to their chosen elective courses varied, although they generally tended to be positive. Fifty percent of respondents stated that the assignments were very relevant to their elective courses, while 33% considered them suitable. More than half (54.6%) considered the assignments somewhat suitable, indicating some relevance, but not yet optimal in supporting elective competencies. On the other hand, 5% of students considered the assignments unsuitable, while other small groups (0.7% each) stated that they were very unsuitable, never attended, and didn't know much. These small proportions indicate that assignment irrelevance is not a dominant issue, but it still needs to be addressed in learning evaluations.

Theoretically, this finding aligns with [40]'s view on constructive alignment, which emphasizes the need for alignment between learning objectives, teaching methods, and assignments/assessments for effective learning. The dominance of the somewhat 'suitable' category (54.6%) may indicate that there is still a gap between the assignment design and students' expectations regarding elective competencies. This also implies the need for improvements in curriculum design based on student-centered learning [43], so that assignments are more contextual, applicable, and truly reflect the intended professional competencies.

Thus, these data reflect that although the majority of students perceive a match, there is a need to optimize assignment strategies to be more specific, relevant, and based on interest needs, thereby strengthening the connection between theory, practice, and students' career readiness.

The Sufficiency of Credits of Elective Courses

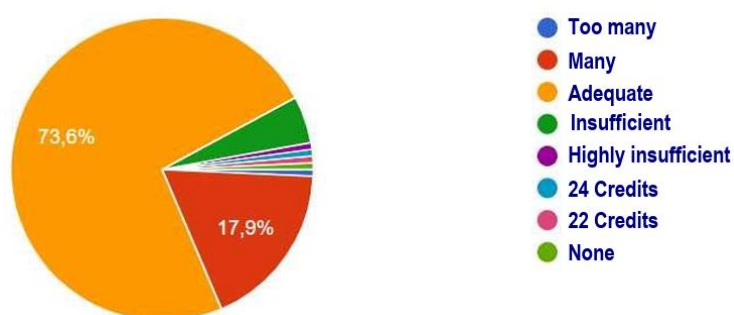


Figure 7. Sufficiency of semester credits

Figure 7 shows that most respondents considered the number of available credits to be adequate, with 73.6% stating “Moderately sufficient” and 17.9% stating “Many.” However, 5% felt it was insufficient, and 0.7% felt it was so little. Another 0.7% felt it was too much, and several cited specific numbers. Overall, these findings indicate that the majority of students feel the number of credits is adequate, although there is minor variation in assessments, indicating the need for further evaluation of elective courses.

Frequency of Tasks for Elective Courses



Figure 8. Frequency of tasks

Based on Figure 8, the frequency of assignments in interest courses shows a high intensity, with 99% of students perceiving a consistent pattern. The highest percentage was in the Frequent category (40.7%), followed by Very Often (29%) and Fairly Often (29.3%). Conversely, only 7.9% of respondents reported Rarely, and 0.7% for Very Rarely and Never. A small number of respondents (0.7%) admitted they could not yet assess because the lecturer had not yet taught. These findings indicate that assignments are given regularly and intensively, serving as a learning strategy that stimulates understanding of the material. This practice is expected to increase student engagement, encourage independent learning, and allow for ongoing evaluation by lecturers of students' progress in understanding. However, it is important to remember that high intensity must be balanced with student workload, to avoid creating demotivating pressure. Absenteeism in the low category (9.3%) may reflect variations in experience, which may depend on the lecturer's teaching style. Overall, high assignment frequency has the potential to strengthen student-centered learning if accompanied by relevant assignment design and constructive feedback.

Students Satisfaction for Elective Courses

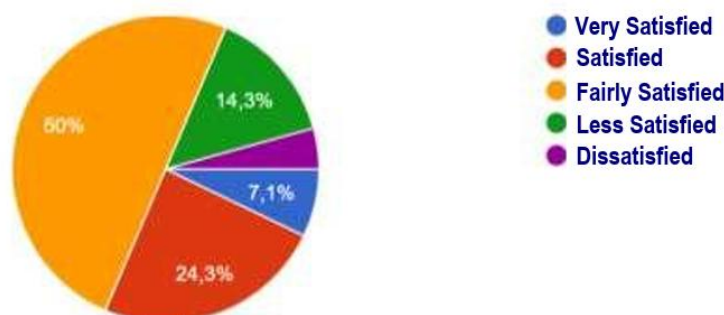


Figure 9. Students satisfaction for elective courses

Based on Figure 9, student satisfaction with the elective courses varied, with 50% feeling Very satisfied, indicating that expectations were met, although there was room for improvement. Another 24.3% were satisfied and 7.1% were very satisfied, indicating a positive experience but a small proportion. On the other hand, 14.3% were less satisfied and 4.3% were dissatisfied, indicating challenges in the delivery of the courses. Overall, the level of satisfaction was mostly in the middle category, requiring evaluation of the quality of the material, teaching methods, and the relevance of the elective courses to students' career needs.

Satisfaction for the Assessment of Elective Courses

Figure 10. Satisfaction for the assessment of elective courses

Figure 10 shows that student satisfaction with the assessment varied. 49.3% of respondents were somewhat satisfied, while 27.1% were satisfied, and 3.6% were very satisfied. 15% were somewhat dissatisfied, 2.1% dissatisfied, and 0.7% felt unclear. Although the majority gave positive assessments, the proportion of those with very high satisfaction remained small. This indicates the need for increased transparency and consistency in procedures to shift the satisfaction category to a higher level.

To complement the questionnaire findings, semi-structured interviews were conducted with students representing different elective tracks. The interview data suggested that students' career choices were influenced by multiple personal, academic, and professional considerations.

Most interviewees stated that they selected their elective track because it matched their personal interests and prior experiences.

Interviewer: "Mengapa memilih peminatan tertentu?" [Why do you choose a particular career interest?]

Interviewee: "Karena saya punya pengetahuan awal tentang minat itu." [Because I have prior knowledge appropriate for my choice.]

Many students believed that choosing a specialization aligned with their interests would improve both their academic performance developed.

Interviewer: "Mengapa memilih peminatan ini?" [Why do you choose this career interest?]

Interviewee: "Karena saya merasa kemampuan saya lebih berkembang di bidang ini. Selain itu, karena ingin mengembangkan kemampuan profesional." [Because I feel that I'll be more developed in this area. Besides, I wish to develop my professional skills.]

Several participants also considered employment prospects, particularly in tourism and English language teaching, as important determinants of their choices.

Interviewer: Mengapa memilih peminatan tersebut? [Why do you choose the career interest?]

Interviewee: Karena saya ingin memiliki kompetensi khusus setelah lulus. [Because I want to have a special competency after graduation.]

Interviewer: Selain itu? [What else?]

Interviewee: Saya melihat prospek kariernya cukup baik. [I'm sure, this is a prospectful career].

Although many participants expressed satisfaction with their current specialization, several admitted that they had considered changing to another professional track. Their hesitation was mainly related to uncertainty about their own abilities, changing career aspirations, and perceptions of future employment opportunities rather than dissatisfaction with the curriculum itself.

Regarding course implementation, most interviewees considered the course contents generally relevant to their chosen specialization. Nevertheless, several participants suggested that some courses were still too theoretical and recommended incorporating more practical activities, internships, simulations, and field-based learning experiences. Overall, the interview findings indicate that students' professional interests remain dynamic throughout their study period. Career preferences are continuously shaped by personal motivation, self-confidence, perceived employability, and learning experiences.

The interview findings generally support the quantitative results obtained from the Google Form. Students who selected Tourism Practitioners frequently emphasized broader employment opportunities, communication with international visitors, and opportunities to work abroad. Those choosing Teacher Candidates mainly expressed a passion for teaching and contributing to society, although some admitted concerns regarding professional income and workload.

Several interviewees explained that career preferences changed during their study because they discovered new interests after attending elective courses or participating in internships. Others stated that they remained in their specialization despite planning different careers after graduation because changing tracks would delay their study completion. A recurring theme emerging from the interviews was the need for more

practice-oriented learning. Students appreciated the theoretical foundation provided in elective courses but expected more authentic learning experiences directly related to their intended professions. These findings suggest that career decisions among English Education students are not static but evolve through continuous interaction between personal aspirations, educational experiences, and perceptions of labour market opportunities.

The results of this study on student major choices reveal interesting dynamics related to career orientation, consistency of choice, and satisfaction with the curriculum. The quantitative data obtained, combined with a theoretical framework and previous research findings, provide a comprehensive overview of this phenomenon. When initially choosing a major, the majority of students preferred Tourism Practitioners (TP) (47.9%), followed by Teacher Candidates (TC) (42.3%). Meanwhile, Translation and Interpretation (TI) was only of interest to 13.4%, and Teacher Researcher (TR) was very low (0.7%). These findings indicate students' initial orientation is more pragmatic, choosing fields perceived as offering high job prospects in the tourism sector and practical education. This phenomenon aligns with findings [44], which indicate that students tend to choose majors based on job market demand rather than purely research-based fields. Meanwhile, research in an international context [45] also shows a similar trend, with students preferring fields perceived as applicable and providing immediate career benefits. Other factors driving the choice of a particular profession include well-being, family, and the environment [27]. It indicates that career decisions among university students are strongly influenced by the relevance between curriculum experiences, professional competencies, and perceived employment opportunities. A curriculum that reflects students' career expectations contributes to stronger professional commitment [1].

Student preferences were strongest in two areas, namely Tourism and Tourism Studies (TP) and Tourism and Tourism Studies (TC), reflecting regional and national job market needs. The high interest in Tourism and Tourism Studies (TP) indicates the strategic role of the tourism industry as a leading sector that continues to grow [28]. Interest in Tourism and Tourism Studies (TC) demonstrates the continued relevance of the teaching profession in the context of human resource development in Indonesia. Meanwhile, the low interest in Tourism and Tourism Studies (TR) indicates a significant challenge in building a research culture among students. According to [46], the low interest in research among students is often influenced by a lack of career incentives and a lack of research integration into learning. Therefore, the curriculum needs to encourage the integration of applied research to make this field more attractive.

Data shows that 64.7% of students are in the very low to low category in their tendency to switch professions, while 35.1% are still open to the possibility of switching. This means that the majority of students are quite consistent with their initial choice of specialization. It was found that the interests and career choices of English language students in West Nusa Tenggara can change during their studies [20]. This finding aligns with Social Cognitive Career Theory [44], which emphasizes the importance of intrinsic motivation, self-efficacy, and environmental support in maintaining stable career choices. However, the presence of a group of students with the potential to change professions indicates a natural exploration phase during the transition period of higher education [48]. Recent research [35] also confirms that students' career flexibility is increasing with the dynamics of the digital job market. Similarly, students' career preferences are dynamic and may change throughout their university studies as they gain new learning experiences, develop professional competencies, and become more aware of employment opportunities [1].

Reasons for switching professions were quite diverse, with the dominant factor coming from the "other" category (73%), which included personal interest, intrinsic motivation, and the influence of the social environment. External factors, such as developments in the world of work (14.3%) and competition with peers (4%), were also considered. Formal academic factors, however, had a relatively small influence (1.6%). Therefore, it is necessary to create a strong link and match between higher education and the job market [35]. These results support research [49], which found that changes in students' career aspirations are more influenced by psychosocial factors than curricular factors. Globally, survey results [50] also show that students are increasingly considering industry trends and entrepreneurial opportunities over traditional academic pathways. Young people's career development pathways are influenced by various background and personality factors [29].

The majority of students (73.6%) assessed the number of credit hours for specialization courses offered as "sufficient," although a minority felt the credit load was too high (17.9%) or too low (5.7%). This variation in perception can be explained through the concept of academic workload perception [35], where perceptions of study load are influenced by individual factors (learning strategies, cognitive capacity) and external factors (curriculum, learning systems). To increase the relevance of education and career choices, elective courses should be provided to help guide interests and plan for relevant career choices [19]-[24]. This finding implies that in general the credit load of elective courses is balanced, but curriculum flexibility is still needed. In line with the suggestion [39], the elective curriculum needs to provide room for differentiation so that students can adjust to their respective career needs.

The interview findings enrich the quantitative results by providing a deeper understanding of the reasons behind students' career preferences and professional shifts. While questionnaire data indicate that nearly two-thirds of students intend to remain in their chosen professional pathway, the interviews reveal that such consistency is influenced not only by commitment but also by pragmatic considerations, including academic progress and graduation planning. Another important finding concerns students' expectations regarding curriculum implementation. Although most participants considered the elective courses relevant, many expected greater emphasis on experiential learning. This observation supports the concept of constructive alignment that emphasizes that intended learning outcomes, learning activities, and assessments should be closely aligned to develop professional competence [40]. Meaningful learning experiences, authentic practice, and curriculum implementation that are connected with future professions significantly strengthen students' confidence in their chosen careers [1].

Furthermore, interview participants consistently highlighted employment opportunities as an important determinant of career choice. This finding is consistent with Social Cognitive Career Theory that explains that career decisions are shaped by the interaction between self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and environmental influences [47]. Students tended to evaluate future professions not only according to personal interests but also according to perceived labour market demands and long-term career prospects. Finally, the interviews indicate that career development should be viewed as a dynamic process rather than a fixed decision. Exposure to elective courses, practical learning experiences, internships, and interaction with professionals continuously reshaped students' career aspirations throughout their university studies. Therefore, English Education programmes should provide greater curricular flexibility, stronger industry partnerships, and more authentic professional experiences to facilitate informed and sustainable career choices.

The interview findings complement the questionnaire results by providing deeper insights into students' career decision-making processes. Overall, students' career choices were primarily influenced by personal interests, prior knowledge, and perceived employment opportunities rather than by curricular factors alone. Although most participants remained generally committed to their chosen elective tracks, several expressed uncertainty about pursuing their initial career plans due to changing personal aspirations and self-perceived competencies. The interviews also revealed that students generally considered the elective courses relevant to their professional interests; however, they expected more practical, field-based learning experiences to strengthen their professional competencies and career readiness. These findings suggest that career preferences among English Education students are dynamic and continuously shaped by the interaction between individual motivation, educational experiences, and labour market expectations.

4. CONCLUSION

The findings indicate that students' initial choice of majors is primarily oriented toward becoming Tourism Practitioners (47.9%) and Teacher Candidates (42.3%), while Translation and Interpretation (13.4%) and especially Teacher Researchers (0.7%) are considerably less preferred. This pattern suggests that students tend to make pragmatic decisions based on career prospects, particularly in the tourism sector and the teaching profession. Their preferences are concentrated on majors that are perceived as practical and responsive to labor market demands. Tourism, in particular, is viewed as a promising field due to the continued growth of the global tourism industry, whereas teaching remains an attractive and stable career option. In contrast, the very low interest in becoming teacher researchers reflects the continuing challenge of fostering a stronger research culture among university students. Furthermore, the results reveal that most students demonstrate consistency in their career aspirations, with 64.7% indicating that they intend to pursue careers aligned with their chosen majors. Nevertheless, 35.1% remain open to changing professions, suggesting that while career stability is dominant, a degree of flexibility is necessary to adapt to the evolving demands of the labor market. Among those considering a career change, the reasons vary considerably. The largest proportion falls under the "other" category (73%), highlighting the importance of personal and social factors such as individual interests, intrinsic motivation, and family influence. External factors, including changes in labor market conditions (14.3%) and increasing job competition (4%), also contribute to career shifts, whereas academic-related factors appear to have a relatively limited influence.

In terms of curriculum design, the majority of students (73.6%) perceive the number of elective course credits as quite adequate, indicating that the current curriculum generally provides a balanced academic workload. However, a small proportion of students consider the credit allocation to be either excessive or insufficient. These findings suggest that, although the elective curriculum is broadly appropriate, greater flexibility in curriculum design and credit distribution may further accommodate the diverse learning preferences and academic needs of students. Overall, those findings reinforce the quantitative results by revealing that students' career decisions are shaped by a combination of personal interests, prior experiences, self-confidence, and perceived employment opportunities. Although most students remain committed to their chosen elective tracks, their career aspirations continue to evolve throughout their studies. It also indicates that students expect

elective courses to provide more authentic, practice-oriented learning experiences that better prepare them for future professional careers. Therefore, strengthening experiential learning, industry engagement, and curriculum relevance is essential to support students' long-term career development.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

All author contribute to Conceptualization; Methodology; Software; Validation; Investigation; Data Curation; Writing – Original Draft Preparation; Writing – Review & Editing; Visualization.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The author(s) declare no conflict of interest.

INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT

Informed consent was obtained verbally from all subjects involved in the study. Prior to participation, each subject was provided with a detailed explanation of the study's objectives, procedures, potential risks, and benefits. All participants voluntarily agreed to participate in the research. All images in this article have been authorized and are the property of the authors.

USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)-ASSISTED TECHNOLOGY

The authors declare that no artificial intelligence (AI) tools were used in the generation, analysis, or writing of this manuscript. All aspects of the research, including data collection, interpretation, and manuscript preparation, were carried out entirely by the authors without the assistance of AI-based technologies.

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