

Exploring lecturers' perspectives on enhancing student employability in English education: Curriculum, pedagogy, and departmental support

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ABSTRACT

While graduate employability has gained traction in higher education, its interpretation and operationalization in specific disciplines such as English Education have yet to be extensively examined. This study explored the lecturers' perception of ways in which English Education Department can build the students' employability through the curriculum, pedagogy and department support along with opportunities and challenges faced when embedding employability-oriented practices into the curriculum. This research used a qualitative design with multiple sites by interviewing ten lecturers of ten English Education Departments in Yogyakarta. Data were collected by conducting semi-structured interviews, which were then analyzed thematically. The results reveal that lecture staff see employability as something for the whole department to teach rather than an adjunct. The report highlights the need to diversify pathways through education, clarify and enhance the professional value of current learning activities, strengthen communication skills and soft skills cultivation, foster authentic and digitally mediated learning experiences, and invest in stronger external partnerships. But these efforts are limited by curriculum congestion, heterogeneous lecturer readiness, sparse institutional networks and tensions between labour-market pressures and disciplinary identity. The paper ends by arguing that in order to improve employability of English Education, coherent program-level co-ordination with sustained commitment at the department level is required.



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1. Introduction

Graduate employability has become a central concern in higher education because universities are increasingly expected to prepare graduates not only for academic success but also for meaningful participation in rapidly changing labour markets (Cheng et al., 2022; Eimer & Bohndick, 2023; Scandurra et al., 2024). Contemporary employability scholarship no longer treats employability as a narrow matter of immediate job placement. It is more commonly understood as a multidimensional capacity that includes disciplinary knowledge, transferable skills, reflective judgement, career development, adaptability, and the ability to translate learning into different professional contexts (Cheng et al., 2022; Eimer & Bohndick, 2023; Otermans et al., 2024). From this perspective, employability is most effectively developed when it is embedded across the curriculum, assessment, work-integrated learning, and career support rather than delivered as an optional or final-year add-on (Ferns et al., 2025; Kosedá et al., 2025; Scandurra et al., 2024).

These debates are especially relevant for English Education. English Education Departments have traditionally prepared students for careers in school teaching by emphasizing language knowledge, pedagogy, literature, assessment, and school-based teaching practice. However, graduates of English-related and teacher-education programs increasingly enter more diverse professional pathways, including private tutoring, curriculum and materials development, educational media, translation, digital content creation, language services, communication-based work, and education technology (Ali et al., 2022; Chea & Lo, 2022; Harding et al., 2024). In such contexts, English Education Departments face a dual responsibility: they must retain their pedagogical and disciplinary foundations while also helping students recognize how their language, communication, pedagogical, and digital capabilities can travel across professional settings.

Employability nevertheless remains a contested educational agenda. On one hand, universities are expected to demonstrate that graduates can make successful transitions to work. On the other hand, lecturers may be concerned that employability discourse can reduce higher education to vocational training or push disciplines too far toward short-term labour-market demands (Cheng et al., 2022; Daubney, 2022; Hooley et al., 2023). This tension is pronounced in English Education because the field is not merely a skills-training site. It also involves intellectual, linguistic, pedagogical, ethical, and reflective purposes. Therefore, the question is not whether English Education should address employability, but how employability can be interpreted in ways that enrich rather than weaken disciplinary learning.

Despite growing attention to employability in higher education, several gaps remain. First, much existing research discusses employability at a generic institutional level and gives less attention to how it is understood within specific disciplines such as English Education (Hooley et al., 2023; Otermans et al., 2024). Second, studies frequently examine employability policies, graduate outcomes, or employer expectations, while fewer qualitative studies investigate how lecturers themselves interpret and enact employability through everyday curriculum and pedagogy (Otermans et al., 2025; Pitan & Muller, 2020). Third, limited research has explained how departments can balance labour-market relevance with the broader educational identity of English Education. These gaps matter because lecturers are key actors in translating employability from institutional discourse into course outcomes, assignments, feedback, mentoring, and students' understanding of their future professional possibilities.

This study addresses these gaps by exploring lecturers' perspectives on how English Education Departments can enhance student employability through curriculum, pedagogy, and departmental support. Rather than approaching employability as a general policy slogan, the study examines how it is negotiated within a discipline-specific context by lecturers who are directly involved in teaching, curriculum interpretation, student mentoring, and departmental practice. The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. How do lecturers perceive the ways in which English Education Departments can enhance student employability through curriculum, pedagogy, and departmental support?

2. What opportunities and challenges do lecturers identify in embedding employability-oriented practices into the English Education curriculum?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Embedded employability in higher education

A major debate in employability scholarship concerns whether employability should be embedded in disciplinary learning or treated as a separate support activity. Embedded employability refers to the intentional integration of career-relevant learning, transferable skill development, reflective practice, and professional preparation into normal teaching, learning, and assessment (Daubney, 2022; Koseda et al., 2025; Scandurra et al., 2024). In this approach, employability is not an additional subject that competes with disciplinary content. It is a way of helping students understand the professional value of disciplinary learning and develop the capacity to use that learning beyond the classroom.

Systematic reviews show that employability initiatives are more sustainable when they are connected to curriculum structures, assessment design, feedback processes, and institutional support systems (Cheng et al., 2022; Eimer & Bohndick, 2023; Otermans et al., 2024). Students are more likely to develop employability when they repeatedly encounter opportunities to practise, reflect on, document, and communicate their capabilities. This means that employability depends not only on whether students possess particular skills, but also on whether programs make those skills visible and meaningful across the student learning journey. For English Education, this insight is important because many course activities, such as lesson planning, presentations, peer feedback, microteaching, project work, and reflective writing, may already build employability-related capabilities even when they are not explicitly labelled as such.

2.2. Some common mistakes

Research on graduate employability in language and teacher education suggests that graduate futures are increasingly diverse. Although school teaching remains an important destination, graduates may also work in language services, private education, publishing, digital learning, content production, translation, and communication-related sectors (Ali et al., 2022; Bengmark et al., 2025; Chea & Lo, 2022; Harding et al., 2024). Employer-oriented studies similarly indicate that communication, adaptability, teamwork, lifelong learning, problem solving, and the practical use of language competence remain highly valued in contemporary workplaces (Tran et al., 2024; Tushar & Sooraksa, 2023).

This literature suggests that English Education Departments need a broader conception of student preparation. The aim is not to abandon teacher education but to make visible the wider mobility of the competencies developed through the field. Language proficiency, pedagogical reasoning, classroom communication, materials design, assessment literacy, intercultural awareness, and reflective practice can be relevant not only to schools but also to a wider education and communication ecosystem. However, if curricula continue to represent teaching as the only legitimate professional endpoint, students may struggle to recognize and articulate the transferability of their learning.

2.3. Authentic pedagogy, work-integrated learning, and career support

Another strand of employability research focuses on pedagogical mechanisms that connect university learning with professional practice. Authentic assessment and work-integrated learning are particularly important because they require students to perform tasks that resemble, simulate, or contribute to real professional contexts. Recent studies show that authentic assessment can increase students' sense of relevance, support career readiness, and make graduate capabilities more visible to students and external audiences (Harris-Reeves et al., 2024; Vlachopoulos & Makri, 2024). Work-integrated learning, mentoring, and career coaching can also help students translate academic experiences into professional language and action (Ferns et al., 2025; Nabi et al., 2025; van der Baan et al., 2024).

Portfolio and e-Portfolio practices extend this process by enabling students to curate evidence of their learning, reflect on their development, and present their capabilities to future employers or professional communities (Roberts et al., 2024). In English Education, these pedagogical approaches may include teaching demonstrations, lesson and materials portfolios, digital teaching videos, community-based projects, tutoring practice, classroom observation, and reflective accounts of professional learning. Such practices are valuable because they move employability beyond abstract claims and provide students with concrete evidence of what they can do.

2.4. Digital and AI-related employability

Employability is also being reshaped by digital transformation. In education and communication-related work, graduates are increasingly expected to operate in technology-mediated environments, communicate through multiple modes, use digital platforms, evaluate online resources, and engage critically with emerging technologies. Recent studies on AI literacy and employability argue that students need not only technical familiarity but also critical, ethical, and pedagogical judgement in using AI-supported tools (Dilek et al., 2025; Wut et al., 2025).

For English Education, digital and AI-related employability has particular significance. Future graduates may teach with digital resources, design online learning materials, facilitate blended learning, produce educational media, or use AI tools to support feedback, writing, translation, and materials development. However, digital innovation can remain superficial if it is treated as a trend rather than as part of purposeful pedagogy. Departments therefore need to help students ask not only what technologies can be used, but also why, when, and how they should be used responsibly in language learning and professional communication.

2.5. Digital and AI-related employability

Drawing on the literature above, this study approaches employability in English Education through three interconnected dimensions: curriculum alignment, pedagogical framing, and departmental ecosystem. Curriculum alignment refers to the extent to which program outcomes, course structures, assessment, and graduate attributes make employability a coherent part of disciplinary learning. Pedagogical framing refers to how lecturers make the professional value of classroom activities visible, helping students interpret tasks such as presentations, lesson planning, feedback, and projects as evidence of transferable capability. Departmental ecosystem refers to the broader support structures that sustain employability, including mentoring, alumni engagement, external partnerships, career guidance, lecturer development, and institutional coordination.

This framing is used not as a fixed model imposed on the data but as a sensitizing lens for examining how lecturers make sense of employability in context. It allows the study to move beyond asking whether employability skills are present and instead examine how employability becomes meaningful, visible, and sustainable within English Education Departments.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research design

This study employed a qualitative multi-site interview design to explore lecturers' perspectives on employability in English Education. Following Maxwell's (2013) interactive view of qualitative research design, the study aligned its purpose, conceptual framing, research questions, participant selection, data collection, and analysis. A qualitative approach was appropriate because the study sought to understand how lecturers interpret curriculum, pedagogy, and departmental support in context, rather than measuring predetermined variables. The multi-site design enabled the researchers to capture variation across institutions while maintaining a shared disciplinary focus on English Education (Hughes et al., 2020; O'Brien et al., 2014; Scantlebury & Adamson, 2022).

3.2. Setting and participants

The study was conducted in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, a region with a strong higher education environment and multiple universities offering English Education programs. Purposive sampling was used to recruit ten lecturers representing ten English Education Departments. Participants were

selected because they taught in English Education and had experience relevant to curriculum, pedagogy, student development, teaching practicum, or departmental activities. These criteria ensured that participants were positioned to comment on how employability is understood and enacted at the program level.

The sample size was considered appropriate for the purpose of the study because qualitative adequacy depends on the richness and relevance of information rather than statistical representation. The participants provided sufficient information power because they shared a common disciplinary context while also representing different institutional settings (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022; Malterud et al., 2016). To protect confidentiality, participants are referred to as L1 to L10, and institutional identities are not disclosed.

3.3. Data collection

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews. This method was chosen because it allowed the researchers to ask comparable questions across participants while also following up on examples, tensions, and meanings that emerged in each conversation (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019; Kallio et al., 2016). Each interview followed a common protocol and lasted approximately 45-60 minutes, depending on participant availability and the depth of discussion. Interviews were audio-recorded with participants' permission and transcribed for analysis.

The interview guide was developed from the research questions and the conceptual framing of employability. Sample questions included: (1) How do you understand employability in relation to English Education? (2) In what ways does the current curriculum prepare students for future work? (3) What kinds of classroom activities or assessments help students develop employability-related capabilities? (4) What forms of departmental support are needed to strengthen student employability? and (5) What opportunities and challenges do you see in embedding employability-oriented practices into the curriculum? Follow-up questions invited participants to provide examples from their teaching, curriculum experience, or departmental practices.

3.4. Data analysis

The interview transcripts were analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021; Byrne, 2022). The analysis combined deductive and inductive elements. Deductively, the researchers were sensitized by the concepts of embedded employability, authentic learning, digital capability, and departmental support discussed in the literature. Inductively, coding remained open to participants' own meanings, examples, and concerns.

The analysis proceeded in several stages. First, the researchers read the transcripts repeatedly to become familiar with the data and wrote analytic memos on emerging ideas. Second, meaningful units related to the research questions were coded. Initial codes included, for example, alternative career pathways, visibility of transferable skills, communication confidence, authentic assessment, digital learning, alumni networks, curriculum overload, lecturer readiness, and disciplinary identity. Third, related codes were compared across interviews and grouped into broader categories. Fourth, categories were refined into themes by examining how they explained patterned meanings across participants. Finally, the themes were reviewed against the transcripts and the conceptual framing to ensure that they were coherent, grounded in the data, and analytically relevant to the research questions.

3.5. Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness was supported through reflexive notetaking, an audit trail of coding decisions, repeated checking of themes against transcript data, and discussion among the authors. The researchers also attended to negative or complicating examples, particularly when participants expressed caution about labour-market demands or uneven lecturer readiness. Reporting was guided by principles associated with the Standards for Reporting Qualitative Research (SRQR) and the Consolidated Criteria for Reporting Qualitative Research (COREQ) to strengthen transparency (O'Brien et al., 2014; Tong et al., 2007).

Researcher positionality was also considered. The researchers are involved in English Education and higher education practice, which provided contextual familiarity with curriculum, teaching, and student employability issues. At the same time, this insider position could create assumptions about what English Education should prioritize. To reduce this risk, the researchers used reflexive memos, compared interpretations across interviews, and treated participants' tensions and disagreements as analytically important rather than as problems to be smoothed over (Goundar, 2025). The purpose of the study was not statistical generalization but a grounded understanding of how lecturers in one regional context interpret and negotiate employability in English Education.

4. Findings and Discussion

The findings show that lecturers understood employability not as a separate course or a short-term career program, but as a department-wide educational project. Their accounts suggest that employability in English Education emerges from the interaction of curriculum alignment, pedagogical framing, and the departmental ecosystem. Curriculum alignment concerns how the program imagines graduate futures and connects learning outcomes with those futures. Pedagogical framing concerns how lecturers help students recognize the professional value of everyday classroom tasks. The departmental ecosystem concerns the wider support, partnerships, mentoring, and coordination that sustain employability beyond individual courses. This three-part interpretation is important because it moves employability beyond a list of skills and positions it as a disciplinary and organizational practice.

4.1. Enhancing Students' Employability through Curriculum, Pedagogy, and Departmental Support

4.1.1. Curriculum alignment: Broadening career pathways without abandoning teacher education

The first major finding was that lecturers considered curriculum alignment essential for enhancing student employability. Many participants argued that English Education curricula often still communicate, explicitly or implicitly, that graduates are expected to become school teachers. While participants did not reject this traditional pathway, they emphasized that graduates increasingly move into a wider range of language-, education-, and communication-related work. One lecturer stated, "We're still teaching a lot of courses as if everyone there is going to be school teachers, which they aren't" (L3).

This finding extends existing employability literature by showing that curriculum alignment in English Education is not only about matching courses to labour-market skills. It is also about how a department narrates legitimate graduate futures. When a curriculum presents one pathway as dominant, students may fail to see the broader professional meaning of competencies they are already developing. In this sense, curriculum functions as a map of possibility. It tells students not only what they study but also what kinds of futures their study can lead to.

Lecturers therefore proposed a broader curriculum imagination that retains pedagogical depth while making alternative pathways more visible. These pathways included private education, educational media, language services, curriculum and materials development, digital content creation, translation, educational entrepreneurship, and education technology. This does not mean replacing teacher education with generic workplace training. Rather, it means recognizing that the communicative, pedagogical, analytical, and digital capabilities developed in English Education can move across multiple professional contexts. This finding supports studies showing that graduates of English-related programs often circulate across diverse work spaces (Ali et al., 2022; Chea & Lo, 2022; Harding et al., 2024), but it adds a discipline-specific insight: employability reform requires departments to make these pathways institutionally visible within the curriculum.

4.1.2 Pedagogical framing: Making transferable capabilities visible

The second finding was that employability-related learning was already present in many courses, but often remained implicit. Lecturers mentioned presentations, lesson planning, peer teaching, collaborative projects, reflective journals, classroom discussion, microteaching, and feedback

activities as examples of tasks that develop transferable capabilities. However, students did not always understand these activities as employability-related. One participant explained that students "already practice many useful skills in our courses ... but sometimes they don't connect the idea that these are employability skills" (L7).

This finding is theoretically significant because it shows that employability does not emerge automatically from activity. Students may perform a task successfully for assessment purposes but remain unable to name the professional capabilities developed through that task. Pedagogical framing therefore performs an interpretive function. It helps students translate classroom experience into professional self-understanding. For example, a presentation is not only a speaking assignment; it can also become evidence of audience awareness, public communication, confidence, and professional presence. Peer feedback is not only a classroom technique; it can become evidence of evaluative judgement, collaboration, and responsibility. Lesson planning is not only a pedagogical requirement; it can become evidence of design thinking, sequencing, creativity, and decision-making.

This interpretation extends Daubney's (2022) argument that employability can be drawn from within the curriculum. In English Education, the issue is not simply whether employability is embedded, but whether lecturers explicitly mediate the meaning of embedded activities. Employability is therefore a process of meaning-making as much as skill development. Students need opportunities to identify what they can do, explain why it matters, and document evidence that can be used in interviews, portfolios, practicum reflections, or professional conversations. This aligns with research on employability-focused assessment and e-Portfolios, which emphasizes the importance of helping students recognize and communicate their capabilities (Harris-Reeves et al., 2024; Roberts et al., 2024).

4.1.3. Communication, soft skills, and professional identity formation

Lecturers repeatedly emphasized communication, soft skills, and professional confidence as central to employability. They argued that English Education graduates need more than language knowledge and teaching theory. They also need confidence, teamwork, adaptability, initiative, problem solving, and the ability to communicate professionally in English. One lecturer observed that some students are academically capable but still unprepared when asked to "talk in public, work with teams, or respond to unexpected situations" (L4).

A descriptive reading of this finding would simply confirm that communication skills are important for employability. A deeper interpretation, however, suggests that communication competence in English Education is not merely a linguistic outcome. It is also a form of professional identity construction. Students become more employable when they learn to see themselves as capable participants in professional interaction: people who can speak, negotiate, collaborate, explain ideas, handle feedback, and respond to uncertain situations. For English Education students, this is especially important because their future work often requires them to mediate meaning for others, whether in classrooms, learning platforms, communities, or communication-based workplaces.

This finding supports broader studies that identify communication, adaptability, collaboration, and problem solving as important graduate attributes (Tran et al., 2024; Tushar & Sooraksa, 2023). However, the study also adds that such attributes must be cultivated through repeated, supported practice. English Education programs cannot assume that communication confidence will naturally develop simply because students study English. Lecturers suggested that discussion-based learning, teamwork, problem-based tasks, performance-oriented activities, project presentations, peer mentoring, and constructive feedback can help students take intellectual and professional risks. Employability, in this sense, is not only readiness for work; it is also the development of professional agency.

4.1.4. Authentic and digitally mediated learning as evidence of competence

The fourth finding concerned the value of authentic, future-oriented learning experiences. Lecturers believed that students become more employable when they engage with tasks that resemble real professional work. Examples included teaching demonstrations, project-based outputs, teaching

videos, lesson and materials portfolios, classroom observation tasks, digital learning resources, and materials designed for real users or audiences. One lecturer noted that teaching practicum remains important, but "it can't be the only professional exposure" (L5).

This finding suggests that authentic pedagogy enables students to produce visible evidence of competence. In traditional coursework, students may receive grades without necessarily building artifacts that communicate their abilities to external audiences. In contrast, authentic assignments can generate lesson plans, teaching media, videos, portfolios, digital materials, reflective records, or community-based outputs that students can later use to demonstrate their professional development. This supports research showing that authentic assessment and work-integrated learning connect university learning with future practice (Ferns et al., 2025; Nabi et al., 2025; van der Baan et al., 2024; Vlachopoulos & Makri, 2024).

Digital and AI-related learning added another layer to this theme. Lecturers believed that students need digital confidence, multimodal communication skills, and responsible awareness of AI because education and language-related work are increasingly technology mediated. One participant stated, "Students need to be able not just to use technology, but to understand how and when it should best be used for learning and work" (L1). This view aligns with studies that position AI literacy and digital capability as growing components of employability (Dilek et al., 2025; Wut et al., 2025). Yet lecturers also warned that technology use should not become superficial. The professional value of digital learning depends on whether students can evaluate tools pedagogically, communicate ethically, and use technology to solve real learning or communication problems. Thus, digital employability in English Education is not only technical; it is pedagogical, ethical, and reflective.

4.1.5. Departmental ecosystem: Partnerships, mentoring, and career support

Lecturers also emphasized that employability cannot depend solely on individual lecturers or isolated classroom activities. They described the need for a stronger departmental ecosystem that connects students with alumni, schools, language centers, publishers, digital learning platforms, community partners, and other professional networks. These connections were seen as important for expanding students' career imagination and exposing them to professional expectations. Guest lectures, internships, alumni sharing sessions, career mentoring, CV and interview workshops, project collaboration, and portfolio guidance were repeatedly mentioned as possible forms of support.

This finding contributes to employability scholarship by showing that departmental support is not merely administrative. It functions as a bridge between disciplinary learning and professional opportunity. When partnerships and mentoring are stable, students can see how their academic experiences connect with actual work contexts. When they are informal or dependent only on personal lecturer networks, employability support becomes uneven and fragile. The lecturers' accounts therefore support the view that employability initiatives are most effective when career development is integrated with students' academic and disciplinary journeys rather than offered as occasional events (Ferns et al., 2025; Nabi et al., 2025; van der Baan et al., 2024).

The idea of a departmental ecosystem also reframes responsibility. Employability is not the duty of a single course, a practicum coordinator, or a university career center alone. It requires coordination among curriculum designers, lecturers, practicum supervisors, alumni, external partners, and student support units. This is why participants repeatedly described employability as a shared departmental project.

4.2. Opportunities and challenges in embedding employability-oriented practices

Although lecturers supported the idea of embedded employability, they also described implementation as complex. Their accounts revealed four major tensions: flexibility versus curriculum congestion, lecturer initiative versus program-level consistency, digital innovation versus pedagogical readiness, and labour-market relevance versus disciplinary identity.

The first tension concerned curriculum flexibility and curriculum congestion. Lecturers observed that many courses already contain employability-relevant activities, so departments do not always

need to add new subjects. They can revise learning outcomes, redesign assignments, sequence professional experiences more deliberately, and make the relevance of existing learning clearer. However, participants also noted that English Education curricula are already crowded with required content. As one lecturer put it, "If we add something, we must remove or revise something else" (L4). This suggests that employability reform may be more realistic when departments work through alignment and reframing rather than endless curricular expansion. Such an approach is consistent with embedded employability literature, which emphasizes coherence over addition (Daubney, 2022; Koseda et al., 2025).

The second tension concerned lecturer initiative and program-level consistency. Many participants described using project work, presentations, peer teaching, material design, and collaborative tasks to build students' confidence and professional competence. Yet they also acknowledged that employability-oriented pedagogy is not consistently institutionalized. Some lecturers actively redesign tasks for employability, whereas others prioritize content coverage or syllabus completion. This unevenness means that students' exposure to employability development may depend on which lecturer teaches them. The finding therefore points to the need for shared departmental planning, lecturer development, and cross-course coordination (Jackson et al., 2024; Otermans et al., 2025).

The third tension concerned digital innovation and pedagogical readiness. Lecturers recognized digital and AI-related capabilities as important opportunities, but they also expressed concern about unequal lecturer readiness, limited training, and the possibility of adopting tools because they are fashionable rather than pedagogically meaningful. This tension shows that digital employability cannot be separated from lecturer development and critical pedagogy. Departments need to support lecturers in designing technology-rich learning that is ethical, reflective, and relevant to the professional futures of English Education graduates.

The fourth tension concerned labour-market relevance and disciplinary identity. Lecturers welcomed stronger preparation for students' future careers, but they resisted the idea that English Education should become a narrow training institute. One participant summarized this clearly: "We should not make the department only a training institute. But we also can't ignore what students will face after graduation" (L7). This tension echoes broader debates about employability in higher education (Cheng et al., 2022; Daubney, 2022; Hooley et al., 2023). However, the present study adds a discipline-specific interpretation: in English Education, employability is acceptable when it strengthens students' ability to use language, pedagogy, reflection, ethics, and digital tools in meaningful professional contexts. It becomes problematic only when it narrows the field to short-term labour-market training.

Taken together, the findings suggest a conceptual model of employability in English Education. Student employability is strengthened when curriculum alignment broadens and clarifies graduate pathways, pedagogical framing helps students interpret and evidence transferable capabilities, and the departmental ecosystem provides sustained support through partnerships, mentoring, and professional exposure. The model also recognizes that these dimensions operate within tensions related to curriculum density, lecturer readiness, external networks, and disciplinary identity. This model is the main theoretical contribution of the study because it explains employability as a situated educational practice rather than a generic set of graduate skills.

5. Conclusion

This study explored how lecturers in English Education Departments perceive the enhancement of student employability through curriculum, pedagogy, and departmental support, and how they understand the opportunities and challenges of embedding employability-oriented practices into the curriculum. The findings show that lecturers do not view employability as a separate agenda. Instead, they interpret it as a department-wide educational project that should be woven through curriculum alignment, pedagogical framing, authentic and digital learning, professional confidence building, and sustained departmental support.

The study contributes to employability scholarship by offering a discipline-specific account of how employability is interpreted and enacted in English Education. It shows that employability development in this field is not only about adding workplace skills to the curriculum. It is also about helping students understand the professional value of disciplinary learning, broadening their imagination of possible futures, and creating departmental conditions that make those futures visible and attainable. The proposed model of curriculum alignment, pedagogical framing, and departmental ecosystem may be useful for other teacher-education and language-education contexts that face similar tensions between disciplinary identity and labour-market relevance.

Several practical implications follow. First, English Education Departments should review curricula not only in terms of content coverage but also in terms of how graduate pathways and transferable capabilities are communicated to students. Second, employability-oriented pedagogy should be supported systematically so that good practices are not fragmented across individual classrooms. Third, departments should strengthen partnerships with alumni, schools, language centers, publishers, digital learning sectors, and other professional communities. Fourth, mentoring, portfolio development, and career coaching should be integrated more intentionally so that students learn to document and communicate their capabilities. Finally, digital and AI-related capability building should be approached critically and pedagogically, not merely as a response to technological trends.

The study has limitations. It focused on lecturers from one regional context and did not include student, alumni, employer, or policy-maker perspectives. Future research could involve multiple stakeholder groups, compare English Education Departments across regions, or examine how employability-oriented practices are experienced by students in specific courses, practicum settings, or digital learning projects. Such work would further clarify how English Education can prepare graduates for diverse futures while preserving the intellectual and ethical purposes of the discipline.

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