

Survey for Workplace English in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT: *The present study uses survey to investigate the use of English in Indonesian workplaces. Thirty-six respondents who are polytechnic alumni who already work and managers in four different companies were asked to complete the questionnaire. The study found that over 80% of the respondents suggested that English was one of the requirements to obtain a job. This can be seen from the time they applied for a job in which English was used either as 'complete language' or language mixed (code mixing) with Indonesian. English also helps respondents to be promoted to higher level. In addition, the survey uncovers the frequency of use of sub skills of English used for listening, speaking, reading and writing in Indonesian workplaces and how the alumni coped with those skills.*

KEY WORDS: Survey, workplaces, English, Indonesia

INTRODUCTION

Like most other countries in the world, Indonesia is now flooded with equipment and software programs that require English for the users to optimise the use of hardware that is not just used in business and industry but also in daily lives to meet daily needs including entertainment.

From an employment aspect, Ting (2002) states that English in Malaysia is a requirement for entry and promotion and English language skills are deemed important and necessary in the world of work (Lamb & Coleman 2008). Although it may not be used in daily communication at work (Deneire 2008; Kuiper 2007), many job vacancies require their applicants to know English. In fact, English use as a foreign language has been featured with the use of code switching (Choi and Leung, 2017; Setiawan, 2016).

Some job vacancies are even written in English in Indonesia. In a local newspaper like *Pikiran Rakyat* based in Bandung city, Indonesia, around 10 per cent of the job vacancies are written in English, while a national newspaper like *Kompas*, the amount of the total vacancies may exceed 25 per cent – on a par with the job vacancies advertised on the internet (www.lowongan-pekerjaan.net 2011; Kompas 2011).

The present study would like to see the role of English in Indonesian workplaces so research question are formulated as follows:

- In what condition is English used by alumni workers?
- Why do alumni workers need English?
- What sub skills of English language are required in the workplaces.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Workplace English refers to the English used at the workplace or industry; this terminology differs from that of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) such as ‘English for Specific Purposes A learning-centred approach’ (Huchinson & Waters 1987) and ‘ESP - English for Specific Purposes’(Robinson 1980). On the other hand, there are terminologies such as English for Occupational Purposes (EOP), English for Economics, English for Secretaries, English for Technicians, and English for Teaching; Widdowson (1983) specifically identifies EOP in terms such as English for Airline Pilots, for Waitress, for Secretaries, and so on. Thus, Workplace English is used interchangeably with English for Occupational Purposes.

Using the model for English Language Teaching (ELT) of Huchinson and Waters (1987), it can be seen that terminologies such as ‘English for Economics’ and ‘English for Secretaries’ are found under the branch of EOP which is a counterpart of EAP.

According to the ‘tree diagram’, EAP and EOP are branches deriving from ESS (English for Social Sciences), EBE (English for Business and Economics), and EST (English for Science and Technology); all under ESP as opposed to General English (GE) which together form English as a Foreign Language (EFL); EFL comprises a large part of English Language Teaching and differs from English as a Second Language (ESL)’ and EMT English as a Mother Tongue (EMT). Kachru’s division of English use (Kachru 1992) points out that EFL is mostly located in the domain of the ‘expanding circle’, while ESL can be found either in the outer or inner circle, especially for non-native English speakers living in an English speaking community.

Workplace English competency is required, particularly, when non-English speaking people join foreign or multinational companies. In the English speaking community, the ‘inner circle’ – using Kachru’s terminology (1992), the terminology of ‘workplace English competency’ is interchangeable with ‘workplace literacy’, as identified in the research of Castleton (2002) which concerned workers performance in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and Australia. Castleton’s research built on that of Baylis and Thomas (1994) who identified three workplace contexts:

English in the Workplace Framework describes language and literacy competencies in three differing workplace contexts, namely the job specific context, the enterprise context and the broad industry and training context.

In non-English speaking countries, extensive research has been conducted to see how English language skills are used or what skills are required in the workplace.

A study investigating English language needs by graduates of Qatar University in the workplace was undertaken by Al-Buainain, Hassan and Madani (2010). The study claimed to be able to provide educational policy makers with reliable information about the needs of vocational English. Aune, Huglen and Lim (2000) investigated the difficulties of English language use encountered in the industry by interviewing pilots and foreign flight instructors. They found that register, speed of communication, written designs and non-native English

comprehension are considered the most difficult entities; as well, they found that poor learner attitude and lack of practice become impediments to successful language learning.

Communication needs in a more specific working place of textile and clothing merchandisers in Hong Kong were researched by Li and Mead (2000). The results showed that the greatest influence of the content of the communication courses involved the use of English in dealing with the following: customers; written activities; and the use of authentic materials.

A study by Al-Khatib (2010) analysed the communication needs of tourism and banking personnel in Jordan. The study, which also used a range of methods, found that travel agency workers used much more English than did their banking counterparts.

What I can learn from the review of the related literature on workplace English above are studies on the use of English in various workplaces with emphasis on communication skills needs. The present study uses survey to find out how English is used by polytechnic alumni in searching for work as well as role of English while they are on their work.

METHODOLOGY

The main research method used is survey with questionnaire as a tool to collect data. My questionnaire sought demographic information about the respondents and data regarding the English language use and skills needed in Indonesian workplaces. It also included data related to the impacts on the answers to the questions or the area of the research such as study program and companies where the respondents work.

The demographic data show that the respondents have varied background in terms of study programs and company types although many of the respondents come from state own companies (42%) followed by private company (28%), foreign company (28%) and multinational company (8%)

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This chapter discusses the result of the survey which is mainly related to the survey on workplace English in Indonesia together with discussions.

English as a job requirement

The data contained in Table 4 shows the respondents' answers to the question whether English was one of the requirements to apply for the job as stated in the job advertisement to which they responded. Over 80 percent indicated that English was one of the requirements to apply for a job in the companies where they work. From this, I conclude that English is a requirement to apply for a significant number of positions—regardless whether or not it is stated in the advertisement; applicants would be well-advised to be prepared.

Table 3: English as A Requirement

Serial	English as requirement	Number	Percentage
1	Yes	29	81
2	No	6	17
3	No information	1	3
	Total	36	100

Job application in English

When asked whether or not the respondents had to apply for a job in English, nearly two-thirds, as shown in Table 4 responded 'Yes'. The job application documentation usually included a cover letter, CV or resume, recommendation letter and other supporting documents. In some cases their ID card had to be translated into English.

When applying for a job, applicants—in order to be successful—mostly have to be ready to write their job application in English.

Table 4: Job Application in English

Serial	Job application in English	Number	Percentage
1	Yes	23	64
2	No	12	33
3	No information	1	3
	Total	36	100

Interview in English

The data contained in Table 5 indicates that more than four-fifths of respondents were involved in a job interview that used some English. While only one-seventh of these were involved in an interview conducted entirely in English, over two-thirds experienced a mixture of English and Indonesian in their interviews - requiring either a code switch or the use of English terminology. Applicants may also voluntarily have chosen to use English in part of the interview—as at FC, where this was seen to be an advantage in gaining the position.

Table 5: Interview in English

Serial	Interview in English	Number	Percentage
1	Yes	5	14
2	No	5	14
3	Mixture	25	69
4	No information	1	3
	Total	36	100

Reasons for job promotion

The data contained in Table 6 report reasons why alumni thought they were promoted to higher positions in their companies. Three-quarters of respondents reported, generally, that they were promoted because of their performance; additionally, a small percentage linked this performance to their ability in English.

Table 6: Reasons for Job Promotion

Serial	Reason for job promotion	Number	Percentage
1	Performance	27	75
3	Performance and English	2	5
2	Seniority	1	3
5	Other reason	1	3
4	No answer	5	14
	Total	36	100

From the findings, I can see that English is used in workplaces from beginning stage as of searching for employment and through to job promotion. Apart from the company's needs English has been the reason why the respondents were first employed. English has been used when writing their job application documents and in the interview.

Language skills in writing documents for job applications

The data in Table 7 relates to the level of use and mastery of the sub-skills of writing documents for job applications.

Table 7: Value Difference of Frequency of Use and Skill Mastery on Writing Documents for Job Application

Frequency of Use	Av	Ability to Use	Av	Need
• How often do you have to write a letter of application in English?	3.93	• How able are you at writing a letter of application in English?	3.52	+0.41
• How often do you have to write letter of resume/CV in English?	3.57	• How able are you at writing a letter of resume/CV in English?	3.64	-0.07
• How often do you draft a letter of recommendation/reference in English?	3.17	• How able are you at drafting a letter of recommendation/reference in English?	3.36	-0.19

I note that respondents often write letters of application and personal resumes and that only sometimes do they have to draft letters of recommendation; while they have above average sub-skills in writing resumes and letters of application in English, they only have average ability to draft letters of recommendation.

My interpretation of these data is as follows:

- Alumni often write a letter of application in English and sometimes draft letters of recommendation. Since the discrepancy is positive – particularly in the sub-skill of writing letters of application – there is a need to improve both sub-skills in polytechnic courses.
- Alumni are often required to write resumes in English. Since the discrepancy is negative there is no need to improve this sub-skill in polytechnic courses.

Language skills in job interviews

Table 8 relates to the level of use and mastery of the sub- skills of language skills in job interviews. I note that all of these the sub-skills are used often, and that the respondents rate their mastery level as ‘above average’.

My interpretation of these data is as follows:

- Alumni are often required to perform the sub-skills to explain the identity background in job interview in English, to explain the reason why they are applying for the job, to explain their educational backgrounds in job interview, and to explain enthusiasm on the job applied. Although there is self-rating of ‘above average’ of mastery on these sub-skills, a positive discrepancy is revealed between level of use and mastery; therefore, there is a need to improve the mastery of these sub- skills in polytechnic courses.

TABLE 8: Value Difference of Frequency of Use and Skill Mastery on Job Interview

Frequency of Use	Av	Ability to Use	Av	Need
• How often do you have to explain your identity background in job interview?	4.00	• How able are you at explaining your identity background in job interview?	3.93	+0.03
• How often do you have to explain why you are applying for the job?	3.90	• How able are you at explaining why you are applying for the job?	3.79	+0.21
• How often do you explain your educational backgrounds?	3.97	• How able are you at explaining your educational backgrounds?	3.90	+0.07
• How often do you have to explain skills in relation to the job applied?	3.68	• How able are you at explaining skills in relation to the job applied?	3.82	-0.14
• How often do you have to explain work experience?	3.71	• How able are you at explaining work experience?	3.69	-0.02
• How often do you have to explain your enthusiasm on the job applied?	3.73	• How able are you at explaining your enthusiasm on the job applied?	3.62	+0.11

Scale:

Frequency: 0-1.5= never; 1.51-2.5 very seldom; 2.51-3.5 sometimes; 3.51-4.5 often; 4.51-5 very often

Ability: 0-1.5=very low; 1.51-2.5=low; 2.51-3.5=average; 3.51-4.5=above average; 4.51-5=exceptional

	Positive discrepancy = need for curriculum action
	Negative discrepancy = no need for curriculum action

- Alumni are often required to perform the sub-skills of explaining skills in relation to the job applied and explaining work experience in a job interview. While, again, there is a self-rating of above average on these sub-skills, a negative discrepancy is revealed between the level of use and mastery – i.e., ‘ability to use’ is greater than ‘frequency of use’.

In writing documents to apply for jobs, writing a letter of application and writing a letter that contains a resume/CV are skills which are frequently used. While the latter skill was manageable, the minor skill on writing letter of application seems to be a problem for respondents. In job interview skills, the three most frequently used skills were explaining their identity background in job interviews, explaining their educational backgrounds, and explaining the reasons for applying for the job. Those skills seem to be a problem for respondents as their mastery level was below the skill level required by respondents.

Specific listening skills

The data in Table 9 show the frequency of use and the level of mastery of the English listening skills. I note that all of the listening skills were used ‘sometimes’, and that the skill mastery of all the listening skills ranges from ‘average’ to ‘above average’.

I also present the value difference of the frequency of use and skill mastery followed by a discussion of these differences. My interpretation of these data is as follows:

Table 9: Value Difference of Frequency of Use and Skill Mastery On Listening

Frequency of Use	Av	Ability to Use	Av	Need
• How often do you listen to people speaking English through phone including mobile?	3.00	• How able are you at listening to people speaking English through phone including mobile?	3.88	-0.88
• How often do you listen to people speaking English through people speaking at meetings?	3.57	• How able do you listen to people speaking English through people speaking at meetings?	3.79	-0.22
• How often do you listen to people speaking English through speech or presentation?	3.33	• How able do you listen to people speaking English through speech or presentation?	3.73	-0.40
• How often do you listen to people speaking English through TV?	3.10	• How able do you listen to people speaking English through TV?	3.43	-0.33
• How often do you listen to people speaking English through announcements from loud speakers?	2.81	• How able do you listen to people speaking English through announcements from loud speakers?	3.30	-0.49
• How often do you listen to people speaking English through the radio?	2.88	• How able do you listen to people speaking English through the radio?	3.21	-0.33

Scale:

Frequency: 0-1.5= never; 1.51-2.5 very seldom; 2.51-3.5 sometimes; 3.51-4.5 often; 4.51-5 very often

Ability: 0-1.5=very low; 1.51-2.5=low; 2.51-3.5=average; 3.51-4.5=above average; 4.51-5=exceptional

	Positive discrepancy = need for curriculum action
	Negative discrepancy = no need for curriculum action

- Alumni showed an above average mastery of the sub-skills of listening to people speaking English by phone or mobiles, speaking at meetings, or when making a speech or presentation.
- Alumni showed an average mastery of the sub-skills of listening to people speaking English through TV, speaking English through announcements from loud speakers, and speaking English through the radio.
- The most frequent use of listening sub-skills occurred with people speaking English at meetings, followed by people making a speech or presentation.
- In all cases, the level of mastery was greater than that required for the particular listening task; thus at this stage, there is no immediate need to improve listening skills in polytechnic courses.

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Specific speaking skills

The data in Table 10 relate to the level of use and mastery of speaking sub-skills.

I note, with one exception, a close balance between speaking skills use and the level of skill mastery. In the Table, I also have compared the value difference of the frequency of use and skill mastery. My interpretation of these data is as follows:

- Alumni showed the highest level of mastery of speaking English as tourists or guides, at meetings, when speaking at meetings, and when speaking to customers and when making a speech or presentation.
- An average level of mastery was shown when speaking English to people on TV, speaking on the phone or mobile, making announcements from loud speakers and speaking on the radio.
- English speaking skills were most frequently used at meetings, with customers, making speeches or presentations and when being a tourist or tourist guide.
- Low frequency of use occurred when speaking as a radio or TV announcer, on the radio or TV, or making loudspeaker announcements.
- As with listening cases, the level of speaking mastery was greater than that required for the particular speaking task; thus at this stage, there is no immediate need to improve speaking skills in polytechnic courses.

Table 10: Value Difference of Frequency of Use and Skill Mastery On Speaking

Frequency of Use	Av	Ability to Use	Av	Need
• How often do you speak English as tourists or guides?	2.90	• How able are you at speaking English as tourists or guides?	4.06	-1.16
• How often do you speak English to people at meetings?	3.29	• How able are you at speaking English to people speaking at meetings?	3.67	-0.38
• How often do you speak English as customers?	3.00	• How able are you at speaking English as customers?	3.58	-0.58
• How often do you speak English on speech or presentation?	2.94	• How able are you at speaking English on speech or presentation?	3.56	-0.62
• How often do you have to speak English through phone including mobile?	2.75	• How able are you at speaking English through phone including mobile?	3.40	-0.65
• How often do you speak English to people on TV?	2.39	• How able are you at speaking English to people on TV?	3.35	-0.96
• How often do you have to speak English through announcements from loud speakers?	2.13	• How able are you at speaking English through announcements from loud speakers?	3.05	-0.92
• How often do you have to speak English to people on the radio?	2.04	• How able are you at speaking English to people on the radio?	3.05	-1.01

Scale:

Frequency: 0-1.5= never; 1.51-2.5 very seldom; 2.51-3.5 sometimes; 3.51-4.5 often; 4.51-5 very often

Ability: 0-1.5=very low; 1.51-2.5=low; 2.51-3.5=average; 3.51-4.5=above average; 4.51-5=exceptional

	Positive discrepancy = need for curriculum action
	Negative discrepancy = no need for curriculum action

Specific reading skills

The data in Table 11 show the level of use and mastery of reading sub-skills. I note that reading skills were, in the main, used 'often'; in the main their level of mastery was above average. I also present the value difference of the frequency of use and the skill mastery followed by a discussion of these differences. My interpretation of these data is as follows:

- There were two reading sub-skills in which the reading skills need to be improved: reading emails and web pages written in English. These skills were required 'often'– they had the highest use ratings; however, there was a small positive discrepancy indicating that mastery in these areas needs to be improved. The need, in fact, is at both a high level of use and of mastery.

Table 11: Value Difference of Frequency of Use and Skill Mastery on Reading

Frequency of Use	Av	Ability to Use	Av	Need
• How often do you read emails written in English?	3.77	• How able are you at reading emails written in English?	3.57	+
• How often do you read web pages written in English?	3.71	• How able are you at reading web pages written in English?	3.65	+
• How often do you read signs and instructions written in English?	3.48	• How able are you at reading signs and instructions written in English?	3.60	-
• How often do you read minutes of meetings written in English?	3.43	• How able are you at reading minutes of meetings written in English?	3.60	-
• How often do you read manuals written in English?	3.57	• How able are you at reading manuals written in English?	3.59	-
• How often do you read forms written in English?	• 3.63	• How able are you at reading forms written in English?	3.56	-
• How often do you read news articles written in English?	• 3.42	• How able are you at reading news articles written in English?	3.54	-
• How often do you read newspapers written in English?	• 3.42	• How able are you at reading newspapers written in English?	3.54	-
• How often do you read magazines written in English?	• 3.38	• How able are you at reading magazines written in English?	3.50	-
• How often do you read contracts or legal documents written in English?	• 3.39	• How able are you at reading contracts/legal documents written in English?	3.48	-
• How often do you read advertisements written in English?	3.08	• How able are you at reading advertisements written in English?	3.46	-
• How often do you read catalogues/booklets written in English?	• 3.43	• How able are you at reading catalogues/booklets written in English?	3.46	-
• How often do you read textbooks written in English?	• 3.44	• How able are you at reading textbooks written in English?	3.39	+

Scale:

Frequency: 0-1.5= never; 1.51-2.5 very seldom; 2.51-3.5 sometimes; 3.51-4.5 often; 4.51-5 very often

Ability: 0-1.5=very low; 1.51-2.5=low; 2.51-3.5=average; 3.51-4.5=above average; 4.51-5=exceptional

	Positive discrepancy = need for curriculum action
	Negative discrepancy = no need for curriculum action

- There is a cluster of sub-skills that are used often, where the mastery level is above average, but where the discrepancy is negative: reading signs and instructions, minutes, manuals, forms, news articles and newspapers. These areas need to be sustained without any special attention being given.

- Finally, there is a cluster of sub-skills in which the mastery level is above average, but the use is average so that the discrepancy is clearly negative: reading magazines, contracts and legal documents, advertisements, catalogues and booklets, and text books that are written in English. These areas do not require any additional attention in polytechnic courses.

Overall, the ability of the respondents to handle the reading specific tasks is above average indicating that, in general, they have no problems in reading skills in general.

Specific writing skills

The data in Table 12 show the frequency of use and the level of mastery of the writing sub-skills. I note that all of the sub-skills are used 'sometimes' and that the skill mastery of the majority lies in the range of 'above average' with two that are 'average'.

I also have compared the value difference of the frequency of use and skill mastery. My interpretation of these data is as follows:

- There are two writing ability sub-skills where there is a positive discrepancy between mastery and usage: in writing advertisements in English (a significant need) and writing emails (a very low need).
- The alumni use a number of writing sub-skills 'sometimes': contracts and legal documents, manuals, minutes, forms, signs and instructions, catalogues and booklets, textbooks and news articles, but in all of these the mastery level is mostly 'above average'; consequently, the discrepancy is negative and there is no need for any adjustment to present courses.
- Finally there is a small number of writing sub-skills – news, newspaper and magazine articles – that have a 'low' use and for which alumni have 'average' mastery; again, the discrepancy is negative and there is no need for any adjustment to present courses.

It would appear that the writing component of English courses in Polytechnics is adequate, except in the writing of advertisements that might well be linked to emerging areas of web page writing and complex emails.

The language skills used at work include all the major language skills – listening, speaking, reading and writing – and related communicative events. They also apply to skills which may occur outside of work such as listening to radio, listening to TV, speaking to people on the radio, speaking to people on TV, reading textbooks, reading magazines, reading newspapers, and many writing sub-skills. The average of the value of frequency of those skills is above 2, which mean in the range of very seldom and sometimes, the average ability of those sub-skills is also similar.

Table 12: Value Difference of Frequency of Use and Skill Mastery in Writing

Frequency of Use	Av	Ability to Use	Av	Need
• How often do you write advertisements in English?	• 4.00	• How able are you at writing advertisements in English?	• 3.30	• +0.30
• How often do you write emails in English?	• 3.57	• How able are you at writing emails in English?	• 3.50	• +0.07
• How often do you write newspaper articles in English?	• 2.20	• How able are you at writing newspaper articles in English?	• 3.06	• -0.86
• How often do you write catalogues/booklets in English?	• 2.48	• How able are you at writing catalogues/booklets in English?	• 3.29	• -0.81
• How often do you write magazine articles in English?	• 2.15	• How able are you at writing magazine articles in English?	• 2.94	• -0.79
• How often do you write textbooks in English?	• 2.43	• How able are you at writing textbooks in English?	• 3.06	• -0.63
• How often do you write news articles in English?	• 2.41	• How able are you at writing news articles in English?	• 3.10	• -0.62
• How often do you write web pages in English?	• 2.96	• How able are you at writing web pages in English?	• 3.38	• -0.42
• How often do you write signs and instructions in English?	• 3.00	• How able are you at writing signs and instructions in English?	• 3.38	• -0.38
• How often do you write minutes of meetings in English?	• 3.24	• How able are you at writing minutes of meetings in English?	• 3.59	• -0.34
• How often do you write forms in English?	• 3.23	• How able are you to write forms in English?	• 3.35	• -0.12
• How often do you write manuals in English?	• 3.32	• How able are you at writing manuals in English?	• 3.39	• -0.07
• How often do you write contracts or legal documents in English?	• 3.40	• How able are you to write write/legal documents in English?	• 3.47	• -0.07

Scale:

Frequency: 0-1.5= never; 1.51-2.5 very seldom; 2.51-3.5 sometimes; 3.51-4.5 often; 4.51-5 very often

Ability: 0-1.5=very low; 1.51-2.5=low; 2.51-3.5=average; 3.51-4.5=above average; 4.51-5=exceptional

	Positive discrepancy = need for curriculum action
	Negative discrepancy = no need for curriculum action

For the listening skill, the average value of the ability of the listening sub-skills is above that of the frequency, which means that there is no need of inclusion in the curriculum because of their ability. The average value of the ability is also higher than that of the frequency, suggesting that there is no need for curriculum action. The average of measure of ability in speaking sub- skills is variable, however: some are higher and some are lower. Since the average of the sub-skills of reading manuals, reading emails and reading webpages is slightly lower than that of the frequency of use, curriculum action is required.

Similarly, the average of the writing skills ability is variable. Writing emails and writing advertisements have a positive discrepancy, which indicates a need for curriculum action. Other skills such as writing manuals, writing web pages and writing catalogues have a negative discrepancy, which means they do not require curriculum action.

CONCLUSION

The findings obtained from this quantitative input have provided me with detailed information about the use of English in Indonesian workplaces. The data have indicated a variety of responses in terms of the study programs and the types of company where the alumni work. It also shows more enriching input for those concerned in the area of English learning in Indonesian tertiary education.

With a significant majority indicating that English is a requirement to apply for jobs, more than half of the respondents stating that job application was written in English and claiming that the job interviews involved an English switch code and Indonesian language, I assume that English is an essential requisite for all tertiary graduates when they apply for jobs.

At the same time, again with more than half of all respondents affirming that English is required for job promotion and with more than half stating that they were able to improve their English while at work, I conclude that English is either required by employees to do their jobs, or that they will be advantaged if they have better than average skills even if English is not formally required by the company.

These findings from a moderately sized sample of respondents who represent polytechnic alumni regarding the use of English in their world of work in Indonesia, yield information that is enlightening for those of us involved in English teaching and learning in tertiary education.

Further research to investigate the details about the linguistic analysis of English language use in Indonesian workplaces is needed. This can be done through either quantitative or qualitative approach or mixed methods involving all methods of investigation such as observation, interviews and even document analysis.

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