Communication Management Model of Alumni Tracking at Boarding University

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Abstract—**Tracer study is an important thing that every university should do to find out the information on graduates, tracer study data as material to improve the quality of higher education management. The implementation of the tracer study at the University of Darussalam Gontor is not following the design standards and methodology set by the Directorate General of Learning and Student Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia. Starting in 2020, the Alumni Bureau of the University of Darussalam Gontor strives to run tracer studies with the right standards. The implementation of a tracer study with various adjustments to this standard certainly requires communication management. This study aims to find the communication management model of tracer study at the University of Darussalam Gontor as a boarding university. Data collection techniques are carried out through observation, interviews, and documentation. Data analysis was carried out by data reduction, data presentation, and verification or concluding. This research found a communication management model of tracer study at the University of Darussalam Gontor. The model includes elements of communication management. It consists of adjustment, communication planning, action, and evaluation. This research contributes to a communication management model of tracer study in the boarding university.**

Keywords—boarding university, communication management model, tracer study.

I. INTRODUCTION

One of the efforts that can be made by universities in providing alumni and graduate data is by conducting a tracer study. With the vision of 'Being a Quality and Meaningful Islamic Boarding University System, as a Center for the Development of Science Oriented to the Islamization of Contemporary Science and as a Center for the Study of Al-Qur'an Language for the Welfare of Humanity [1], University of Darussalam Gontor seeks to carry out the sound and quality management practices. In line with that, every university is expected to have an alumni tracking system in the form of tracer studies [2]. With the tracer study, the University of Darussalam Gontor will have data on alumni and graduates for the benefit of improving the quality of higher education management.

Tracer study data can be a source of information for institutional development, evaluate the relevance of higher education, provide data for the accreditation process, and provide various information for stakeholders about University of Darussalam Gontor graduates. An important function of this tracer study is the feedback provided by alumni to evaluate management achievements of the learning process carried out by universities and also as a means to exchange information about alumni, providing feedback for the improvement of education graduates, mapping the dynamic job market from the point of view of the views of job seekers, planning curriculum development following the feedback provided by respondents, and carrying out activities to prepare students to enter the world of work.

Previously, the University of Darussalam Gontor has conducted alumni tracking which is done manually and separately in each faculty and study program. Before 2020, the implementation of the tracer study at UNIDA Gontor was not following the design standards, methodology, and tracer study questionnaire set by the Indonesia Directorate General of Learning and Student Affairs. The tracer study at the University of Darussalam Gontor has not been carried out at the tertiary level, the target population of the tracer study has not met the standard, which is two years after graduation, besides that the implementation

methodology and questionnaires also do not have standardization. Each study program has a different questionnaire, implementation methodology, and even standardization of the target population of the tracer study.

Starting in 2020 the University of Darussalam Gontor established the SADC (Student and Alumni Development Center) under the coordination of the Alumni and Cooperation Bureau which focuses on the development of students and alumni. SADC seeks to conduct tracer studies following standardized designs, methodologies, and questionnaires even though the implementation is still using the google form. This effort is carried out to a standardized tracer study. This is following Circular No. 313/B/SE/2016 concerning the implementation of tracer studies at the university level, there are several provisions set by the Indonesia Directorate General of Learning and Student Affairs related to career centers and tracer studies. This is to ensure the standardization of instruments for compilation and comparison of national data [3].

Tracer study needs to be done with proper communication management. Communication management aims to manage communication activities so that they run and achieve results effectively [4]. The research on the communication management model of the Alumni and Cooperation Bureau at the University of Darussalam Gontor is important to do to dig deeper into the management of the tracer study. With communication management, the implementation of tracer studies conducted by the Alumni and Cooperation Bureau is expected to achieve optimal results. This study aims to find the communication management model of tracer study in the boarding university, University of Darussalam Gontor.

II. Research Methods

This study uses a qualitative descriptive method to find a communication management model of tracer study at the boarding university. The data in this study were obtained through direct observation and in-depth interviews. Observations are made by direct observation of several coordination and communication activities in carrying out the tracer study process at the University of Darussalam Gontor. Interviews were conducted with the head of the Student and Alumni Development Center. Interviews were conducted in-depth about communication management of the alumni tracking.

After conducting in-depth observations and interviews, the researcher constructed the messages obtained from the informants and mapped the communication management in the implementation of the study tracer. The data analysis technique was carried out based on the theory of Miles and Huberman, there were three stages of data analysis: 1) data reduction, 2) data display, and 3) data conclusion according to the researcher's interpretation [5].

Reduction is done by summarizing, choosing the main things, and focusing on the important things. Presentation of data in the form of brief descriptions, charts, relationships between categories, flowcharts, and the like. Conclusion drawing/verification is the third line in the data analysis technique after data reduction and presentation.

The validity of the research data was carried out by triangulation. Triangulation is a way of getting data that is completely invalid by using multiple methods [6]. Data collection techniques that combine various techniques and existing data sources. Triangulation of data in this study is a triangulation method that is done by combining observation and interview techniques and combining data sources from several research subjects.

III. Research Result

This study found a communication management model of tracer study at the boarding university. To realize good communication management, it should have four stages of communication management which consist of defining problems or opportunities, planning and programming, taking action and communicating, and evaluating programs [7].

A. Defining Problems or Opportunities

This step includes investigating and monitoring the knowledge, opinions, attitudes, and behavior of the parties related to the existence of actions influenced by an organizational policy. This function is to provide or solve a problem by determining what is currently happening. defining the problem is something that must be done by every agency, namely by exploring the problems that are happening, this can be done by knowing the background of the implementation of a program in an agency. Based on the results of interviews with the Chair of the SADC (Student and Alumni Development Center) related to the tracer study at the University of Darussalam Gontor.

Based on the results of observations, it is also known that the background of the implementation of the tracer study at the university level at the University of Darussalam Gontor is because of the need for an adjustment. The population and tracer study questionnaires that are not following the standard need to be adjusted. Based on the Decree of the Indonesia Directorate General of Learning and Student Affairs No. 313/B/SE/2016 it is stated that the tracer study is carried out at the tertiary level to ensure that the designs, methodologies, and questionnaires used are standardized to allow compilation and comparison of data between faculties/study programs in higher education at the national level. In addition, tracer studies carried out by universities refer to the design standards and methodology of the Indonesia Directorate General of Learning and Student Affairs, which must be targeted at the entire population and not at a pre-selected sample group two years earlier.

This research is in line with previous research which states that tracer study at every university is very important because, with a tracer study or alumni tracking carried out, campuses can find out what graduates are doing and know whether the knowledge learned in lectures is used in the outside world by students after graduating from the university [8].

The adjustment step is carried out through identifying public needs through meetings and focus group discussions, involving university leaders and those in charge of tracer studies from each study program. Identification of public needs is also carried out based on data needs by specifying the required variables in the form of a questionnaire. Based on the results of the documentation, it is known that several questions included in the questionnaire as a form of identification of public needs include the waiting period for graduates, suitability in the field of work, including the type of work, and the scope of work of alumni.

By conducting a tracer study, universities can find out what the public wants. This is an evaluation material for management improvement. The results of the tracer study will be analyzed as an evaluation material which will then be used as the basis for improving the management of higher education.

These findings are in line with findings in previous studies which stated that the main objectives of tracer study activities were to determine or identify the quality of graduates in the world of work, while the specific objectives of tracer studies were: to identify the competency and skill profiles of graduates; knowing the relevance of the implementation of the curriculum that has been applied in universities with the needs of the labor market and professional development in the competence of the department; to evaluate the relationship of curriculum and study in the department as scientific development, as a contribution to the department's accreditation process [9].

Tracer study is also a material for quality improvement. This is following the results of previous research which states that tracer studies are useful for knowing how graduates perform in the industrial world. Tracer studies have other important roles, namely providing important information for higher education development, improving the quality of study programs, student satisfaction with study programs, acting as a tool to evaluate the relevance of higher education to the world of work, can provide useful input for lecturers and administrators to improve performance, as well as input for parents in monitoring their children's education.

B. Planning and Programming

Communication planning includes communication objectives, identification of target publics, message planning, and action and communication strategies. This step is a consideration in making organizational policies and programs. Communication planning in designing alumni tracking is carried out together with university leaders and the person in charge of the study tracer of each study program.

The results of this study are in line with the planning carried out by STMIK AMIKOM Purwokerto in preparing a tracer study, namely by designing an online tracer study system. From the results of the design and manufacture of the online tracer study system, it can be concluded that a.) The system can be used to manage the results of tracer studies conducted online properly because the data is centralized on one server and can be searched at any time when needed. b.) The system can make it easier for alumni to provide information about the alumni concerned so that the data will then become very valuable data to determine the policies that will be taken by management to improve the quality of graduates [10].

If in previous studies the implementation of the tracer study was planned online through the system, then at the University of Darussalam Gontor the implementation of the tracer study was planned to be carried out through the google form. This is because the website-based online system designed for the University of Darussalam Gontor tracer study is not ready for use. In planning the tracer study 2020, SADC has carried out various communication processes both to the leader and person in charge of the tracer study of each study program to equalize perceptions related to the implementation of the tracer study, although the results are not optimal.

In carrying out the tracer study at the University of Darussalam Gontor, messages in the form of questions are conveyed to alumni via a google form, the questionnaire is prepared according to the standards of the Indonesia Directorate General of Learning and Student Affairs. The questions compiled for tracking alumni are adjusted to existing standards, namely according to the Directorate General of Higher Education Circular No. 313/B/SE/2016 concerning tracer study, tracer study statements relating to the suitability of the graduate work field, waiting period for graduates, and various matters regarding graduate of. All questions are collected in the form of a questionnaire which is uploaded in the google form.

In line with the previous research, the question data were collected in the form of a questionnaire although the message distribution method used was different. In the tracer study of the Islamic Banking Department, Faculty of Economics and Islamic Business IAIN Walisongo, the required data was collected using a questionnaire that was sent directly to the addresses of graduates and graduate users. Graduate addresses are tracked by looking for information on the list of alumni addresses filled out at graduation. The method used is online and offline. Alumni whose email addresses can be tracked will be sent a questionnaire via email (online) and confirmed by telephone or short message services. For the offline method, alumni who come

directly are asked to fill in or visit directly to the alumni's workplace [11].

The Student and Alumni Development Center have attempted to carry out action and communication strategies related to the preparation and implementation of the tracer study in 2020, starting from socialization, appointing the person in charge of the tracer study of each study program to the technical implementation of the tracer study. In the conditions of the covid-19 pandemic, SADC uses an online socialization strategy.

C. Taking Action and Communicating

In this step, SADC has prepared the instrument in the form of a questionnaire, while the tracer study is assisted by the person in charge of each study program. The tracer study at the University of Darussalam Gontor is carried out through filling out google forms by alumni. On the other hand, Mobile Web Technology has facilitated and provided convenience to the needs of users in accessing the internet via mobile devices, previously web media users could only be used via computers, so with mobile web technology, a web can be accessed via mobile devices. the web display will adjust to the device that the user will use. Due to the University of Darussalam Gontor tracer study website system which is not ready to be used, the 2020 and 2021 tracer study implementation is carried out through the google form. The google form link is shared by the person in charge of the tracer study of each study program to the alumni population (2 years after graduation) via WhatsApp group or email.

Another thing to do is communication, communication with stakeholders of the tracer study is carried out as an effort to equalize perceptions related to the implementation of the tracer study according to the standards of the Indonesia Directorate General of Learning and Student Affairs. Equalization of perceptions is important because the implementation of the previous tracer study was not up to standard either from the instrument, methodology, or population that was used as the target of the tracer study.

The supporting factor for tracer study at the University of Darussalam Gontor in the form of a person in charge of tracer study in each study program makes it easier for SADC to track alumni. This is because the study program has more intense contact with its alumni than SADC. The obstacle in the form of loss of alumni contacts is a problem that arises so that the tracer study process is less than optimal.

Another inhibiting factor is the unpreparedness of the website-based tracer study system that has been designed. The web has facilitated and provided convenience to the needs of users in accessing the internet through mobile devices.

D. Evaluating Programs

The final step is to assess the preparation, implementation, and results of the program.

Adjustments will be made when implementing the implemented program and based on the evaluation whether it is successful or not. This has to do with how we are now or how well we should do. Evaluation activities carried out in communication include real claims (judgmental assessment), communication output (communication output), evaluation of awareness level, evaluation of acceptance level, and evaluation of participation level.

Evaluation activities have been carried out internally at SADC, but the dissemination of the results of the 2020 tracer study has not been presented to the study program in detail. Based on the results of observations, the study program must submit a letter of application to SADC if it wants to obtain data from the tracer study results of its alumni.

On the other hand, by knowing the level of alumni satisfaction, program managers can make policies, actions, and supporting facilities and facilities that can improve the implementation of study programs in the future. As a study program that has produced graduates, it is necessary to research to evaluate the level of satisfaction of its alumni, this is intended so that universities know the extent of the quality of service that has been provided to alumni (when they were students) to improve the implementation of study programs, especially in service quality and learning [12].

Based on the results of the analysis, the communication management model of tracer study in the boarding university is found which is presented in Figure 1.

Fig. 1. The communication management model of tracer study at the boarding university

Figure 1 is a tracer communication management model for studies at a boarding university. The communication management model carried out consists of 4 steps, namely adjustment, communication planning, action, and evaluation. This model is the result of an analysis of Cutlip, Center, and Broom's theories about communication management practices.

IV. Conclusion

This study found a communication model of tracer study at the boarding university, University of Darussalam Gontor. The model includes elements of communication management. It consists of adjustment, communication planning, action, and evaluation. Adjustment step is made based on design standards and methodologies of tracer study set by the Indonesia Directorate General of Learning and Student Affairs. Communication planning in designing alumni tracking is carried out together with university leaders and the person in charge of the study tracer of each study program. At the action step, tracer study implementation is carried out through the google form. Evaluation activities have been carried out internally at SADC, but the dissemination of the results of the 2020 tracer study has not been presented to the study program in detail.

Acknowledgment

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