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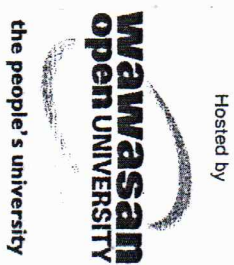present this

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An Effort to Minimize Student Mistakes in Filling up Their Identities on Examination Sheet at Universitas Terbuka

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Abstract

Universitas Terbuka (UT) in Indonesia has thousands of students with a wide-range of diversity in terms of background, age, place of living, lifestyle, etc. These differences influence the student way or condition in facing their final examination. In UT system, the most frequent test being applied for administering final examination is objective test. The answers for objective test need to be written on a special examination sheet that is readable by computer system. The students are required to fill their identity details manually, and darken the circle available on the sheet by using special pencil. This process has to be done properly and supported by related documents such as: student examination list, student identity card, student examination card, registration decision, and UT invoice receipt. Any technical mistake in filling up the form or incomplete identity detail on the sheet would result in failure of issuing student's final examination result. The huge number of failures, as happened in 2008-2009, became quite prominent cases faced by UT and the students. The failure of issuing this examination result would further affect students' motivation or willingness to complete their study at UT. This paper will describe the number and the type of students' mistakes in filling up their identities on the examination sheet. Moreover, the reason of why they did their mistakes will also be reviewed. Several efforts to minimize the students' mistakes in order to maintain UT's credibility in the future will be given at the end of this paper.

Key words: Distant Education, Examination, Student Assessment, Student Support
Services

Background of the Study

Universitas Terbuka (UT), or literally translated as Open University, is Indonesia's only university which implements distant learning system. Currently, UT has more than six hundred thousands of students who are scattered all over the provinces. They come from different backgrounds with a wide range of age levels. Some live in remote areas, while others in big cities. Some lives in a traditional way, while others enjoy modern lifestyle. Their way of life can range from a very simple to a much more complicated one. This diversity would definitely influence the students' condition and mindset in facing their final examination at UT. Since UT system is different from the conventional ones, both UT and the students have to adapt to the system.

In UT, there are several ways to assess students' learning process. Some of them are from the assessment in student activities such as in tutorial, practicum, and final

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examination. In conducting final examination, UT applies objective test as the most frequent test. The students have to write their answers on a special answer sheet, which is readable by computer system. The students are required to write their particulars manually, and then darken the circle available on the sheet by using special pencil. This process has to be done properly and supported by some related documents such as: student examination list, student identity card, student examination card, registration decision, and UT invoice receipt. Any technical mistake in filling up or incomplete identity detail on the sheet would result in failure of issuing student's final examination result. It may seem that filling out one's particulars on the answer sheet is easy and simple, but in fact, in almost every semester, there were numbers of errors occurred that has made the sheets unable to be processed. As a consequence, students could not get their examination result at all. In 2008-2009, these failures in issuing student examination result at UT were quite significant. These have become prominent cases faced by UT and the students, especially as they would further affect students' motivation or willingness to complete their study at UT. The level of UT services, at that time, did not meet the students' expectation. It simply means that there is still a gap to fill between UT and its students.

This paper will describe the statistical figures and the type of students' mistakes in filling up their particulars on the answer sheet especially those that occur during Primary Teacher Program in UT regional office in Bogor. Moreover, the reason why they made the mistakes will also be reviewed. In order to maintain UT's credibility in the future, several recommendations to minimize the students' mistakes will also be provided at the end of this paper.

Universitas Terbuka

UT has four faculties and one graduate program. The faculties are: Faculty of Teacher Training and Educational Sciences; Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences; Faculty of Economics; and Faculty of Social and Political Sciences. Each of the faculty offers a number of courses. In order to manage these courses offered by the four faculties, UT classifies them into Primary Teacher Program and Non-Primary Teacher Program.

Primary Teacher Program is specially designed for the courses of Elementary School Teacher Education, and Early Childhood Teacher Education. This program is managed by the Faculty of Teacher Training and Educational Sciences. Meanwhile, Non-Primary Teacher Program refers to any other courses beside Primary Teacher program. The non-Primary Teacher Programs are spread out across four faculties of UT. Both programs have their own registration systems, learning processes and examination schedules.

In each semester, the non-Primary Teacher program offers all of its courses individually, while Primary Teacher Program offers its courses in packages. Registration process, classes and final examination of both programs are carried out in UT Regional Offices. Semester refers to the registration or examination period. Every registration or examination period is coded according to the year of registration or examination period, i.e. code 10.1 (2010.1) indicates the 1st period of registration/ examination for the year 2010, and 10.2 (2010.2) indicates the 2nd period of registration/ examination for the year 2010.

In terms of the number of students, UT has managed more than five hundred thousands of students. In 2009.2, for example, UT managed 622,705 'active' students. Out of said amount, 504,530 students (81.02%) are students of Primary Teacher program (*Source*: **Rustam, 2010**). Those students are scattered in various UT Regional Offices in Indonesia. With this huge number of students, UT is within the top ten of mega universities in the world.

UT Regional Office

UT regional office is UT technical unit which provides various administrative and academic services. The academic services are provided through tutorials and practical works. Administrative services emphasize in providing assistance to students in registration, obtaining study materials, and addressing other matters that can influence students' learning process.

Overall, UT has 37 regional offices which spread all over the provinces in Indonesia. One of them is located in the city of Bogor. Regional Office is responsible for organizing examination, in addition to its role as UT's information center, registration counters, modules distributor, study group or tutorial coordinator and other roles in technical fields. Therefore, regional office acts as UT's extension at a very strategic position as it deals directly with the students. To execute these duties and responsibilities, regional office does not work alone. It works with several partnerships instead, including the partnership with public and private educational institutions.

The number of students managed by each regional office varies. In regional office in Bogor, for instance, the number is more than 10,000 persons. Most of the students (more than 80 %) are the students of Primary Teacher Program. For example, in 2009.1, there was 11,177 students of Primary Teacher Program out of the total of 12,331 students, and in 2009.2, there was 11,586 students of Primary Teacher and 1,139 students of non-Primary Teacher Program. From the source of regional office Bogor, the number of the students can be seen in the following data.

Table 1: The Number of Students in Regional Office Bogor

| No. | Period | Number of Students | | Total |
		Primary Teacher Program (ppl)	Non-Primary Teacher Program (ppl)	
1.	2008.2	9,615	1,155	10,770
2.	2009.1	11,177	1,154	12,331
3.	2009.2	11,586	1,139	12,725

Source: SRS of Regional Office Bogor

The operational activities such as registration, classes and examination are carried out by UT regional office, while the instruments and policies are determined by UT head office. Any student who has registered for courses is automatically registered as candidate for final examination participants.

Final Examination

Final Examination is a very important activity in the overall learning process at UT, since its result is the main instrument to evaluate the learning progress of the student. Final examination result contributes to at least 50 % of the semester final grade of a related subject. Final examination result becomes the main quality control tool to show academic credibility of UT. To maintain its performance, UT puts a high concern on final examination management service level, from preparing final examination to issuing final examination result. This commitment is not easy to be executed as **Belawati (2000)** stated that organizing final examination is a very challenging activity at UT in term of managing the students, the schedule, and the location.

UT conducts final examinations at the end of every semester, twice a year. Final examination is held for both programs: Primary Teacher and Non-Primary Teacher. Since the examination schedule for both programs are different, UT conducts final examination 4 (four) times in a year, twice for Primary Teacher Program and twice for Non-Primary Teacher Program.

The execution of final examination at Primary Teacher Program is a very large, important and complex process. It is **large** because final examination of Primary Teacher Program has the most number of participants. It is **important** because final examination is main quality control for UT to demonstrate its credibility of academic accountability. It is **complex** because final examination is held simultaneously for three consecutive days involving significant number of human resources. Final examination is held in locations which have been determined by UT.

At each location, there are one or several examination sites, and at every site there are one or several final examination rooms. The number of examination rooms depends on the number of registered students in one examination period (semester). Each room may only be filled by maximum 20 participants. Each examination room is overseen by one proctor, and every five proctors are facilitated by one mobile supervisor. Mobile supervisor acts as liaison between the proctors and its site supervisor. One site supervisor is assisted by one or more mobile supervisors. One or more sites are joining under the coordination of location coordinator.

In terms of quality assurance, UT has obtained both national and international accreditations. Internationally, UT has been awarded the *International Accreditation* and *Certificate of Quality* by the International Council for Open and Distance Education (ICDE) Standard Agency (ISA), and ISO 9001:2000 by the certification bodies i.e. SAI Global and SGS. As explained by **Suparman and Zuhairi** (2004): the quality assurance is not an effort to create a quality; instead, an effort to improve the quality comprehensively, systematically and sustainably.

The existence of the UT Quality Assurance System Guidelines called Simintas indicates that UT already has an internal quality assurance mechanism, whereby the implementation of quality assurance system becomes a shared responsibility of management and staffs, both at UT central and all its Regional Offices. The focus of this quality assurance is to adequately fulfill students' needs for study materials, class management and other services so that the graduates possess the expected

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competencies.

The success of conducting final examination in UT relies heavily on the discipline to respect and comply with standard procedure contained in the UT Quality Assurance System Guidelines. In 'Proctor Working Guidelines at Examination Room', there are 24 points consisting the duties and responsibilities, including:

1) guiding the examination participants filling their particulars on the answer sheet and to re-check its accuracy;
2) circulating the attendance list to be signed by participants attending final exam;
3) signing the result form of examination participants

Problems

Sembiring (2009) presented that the failure in issuing final examination result in UT has become a major issue in 2008.2 registration period. Out of 1,993,569 examination sheets processed, there are only 1,892,967 sheets (95%) that can be issued within the time window. The remaining of 100,602 sheets (5%) has administrative issues.

Internal documents of Regional Office Bogor (2008.2 and 2009.1) show that in 2008.2, there are 921 cases of examination sheet/examination grade issuance failure. This represents 2.49% of total 36,961 Primary Teacher Program examination sheet processed. In 2009.1, such case was even increased to 1,220 cases (2.61%) out of total 46,699 examination sheets processed. This is mostly caused by the technical error in filling up the form or incomplete identity detail in the examination sheet. The other causes are: (1) the student or proctor does not sign on the examination sheet/book; (2) the student's signatures on examination sheet/book is not the same with the signature shown on the attendance list/presence form, or (3) Subject code/name on the attendance list is different from the one on examination sheet. The details of the type and number of errors in filling up the examination sheet are reflected in the following table, from the student ID error to the date of birth error.

Table 2: Type and Number of Errors in 2008.2 and 2009.1

Type of Error	Period 2008.2		Period 2009.1	
	Number of Error	%	Number of Error	%
Student ID	97	10.53	228	18.69
Subject code/name	174	18.89	331	27.13
Date of birth	617	66.99	461	37.79
Others	33	3.59	200	16.39
Total	921	100.00	1,220	100.00

In reference to Regional Office Bogor target to ensure minimum 95% success of examination process, or maximum 5% error (Doc. Simintas JKOP JJ00, 2009), the above result is, in fact, within the target. However, it is still considered an issue in Regional Office Bogor, since it is associated with a large number of students the Primary Teacher Program in Regional Office Bogor has.

The impact of the large number of examination sheet errors is the increase of complaints from students, Regional Office Bogor, and UT itself. The students feel that they do not

receive excellent service because their examination grade is not released on time, even though they have already paid for and done the examination. In other words, the students do not receive the feedback of their learning process only because of technical error. Similarly, Regional Office and UT staffs complained of their extra working hours to serve the students' complaints. For students, this complaint could decrease their motivation to study and their willingness to do re-registration. As for Regional Office staffs, it could cause saturated working condition as they face repetitive issues without effective solutions.

Sara, D.V. (2009) revealed that the cause of such cases originated from the activities that occur in the examination room. Both students and proctor in the examination room have contributed greatly to the examination sheet error. Many complaints issued by students and UT/Regional Office staffs indicated that the information or commitment to the rules and regulations of examination is still poorly understood by the examination committee and especially by the students.

For example, there are several proctors who did not carry out properly the task to fill up examination sheet based on proctor working guideline. In such case, proctor does not understand the condition of UT students which is diverse in ages, habits, experiences, and so forth. He/she assumed that filling up one's particulars on the examination sheet is a simple task that can easily be done by the students without any assistance. Such negligence may increase the chance of error in filling up the examination sheet. This fact proves that the room supervisor is not aware of his/her strategic role in the success of the examination process (**Sara, et al, 2009**). Meanwhile, the students reasoned that the errors in filling up examination sheet are partly because he/she: (1) lacks of concentration, nervous, forgets or in doubt (2) does not re-check the data on student examination card, (3) does not re-check all the items required on examination sheet; and (4) is not used to fill it out.

Improvement Efforts

In fact, UT has made various efforts to solve such error on filling up examination sheet. **Indriasih (2001)** suggested the improvement of proctors' performance. **Setiawati (2002)** suggested the improvement of certain points on the guideline. While **Sudirah, et al (2005)** suggested that the description, duties and responsibilities of proctors needs to be more socialized. However, even though the suggestions have been implemented, the execution is not easy and still requires a lot of attention and comprehension. Therefore, **Tampubolon, J.K., and Kurniawati, Y (2005)** suggested that UT regional office intensively gives clear direction to proctors and socialize the procedure of filling up examination sheet and administration to UT students in every learning activity.

This advice is raised as UT regional office has very strategic position to avoid/eliminate the activities/processes during examination implementation that does not comply with the regulation. By being ISO 9001:2000 certified, it is indicated that deviation from regulation should not occur and should be anticipated as UT regional office is considered capable of performing work procedures in accordance with standard guidelines. In other words, UT regional office is considered capable to maintain the commitment to service at UT based on the regulation, standard and ethics.

The major effort that has been done was issuing a decree from Rector of UT about breach of examination discipline. This decree was then disseminated by Vice of Rector III. This decree imposed a condition that since the examination period 2009.1, examination sheets that are on case cannot or will not be processed by UT. This regulation acts as a shock treatment or punishment for undisciplined students. The aim is to train the students to be more aware of the accuracy in filling up the examination sheet.

Prior to the issuance of above decree, the errors of filling up examination sheet will still be processed and solved by UT if the student can show supporting evidence such as registration form, tuition fee receipt, student examination card, and student ID. However, even since the enactment of the decree, there are still plenty of cases occurred. The students exposed to the above rules, must re-pay and re-register for the examination at the next registration period. Significant number of such error is inspiring UT to seek other ways to reduce the level of these errors.

Another idea that might be used as an alternative solution is by using New Student Orientation activity and tutorials. The campaign about the importance of accuracy and precision of the registration, tutorials, and examinations administration can be conducted in these activities, i.e. to check the accuracy and validity of proof of registration and examination participant ID card immediately upon receipt. This is to anticipate the discrepancy between real facts with the data keyed in UT database. In addition, the original form of examination sheet should be introduced and the technical steps to fill it out should be clearly explained. This explanation should not only be conveyed orally or by pictures, but also be given as on-hand experience to students. New students need to be trained to fill out the examination sheet so that they are familiar with UT system. Students can also be asked to simulate filling out their particulars on examination sheet sample provided by the tutor/course coordinator before every tutorial test. This opportunity can be deemed as a strategy for the success on the final examination. In fact, the success of UT students' is not only determined by the ability to absorb the theoretical concepts and answer the questions, but also by performing administrative discipline and technical accuracy in taking examination (including the process of filling up the particulars on examination sheet).

In 2010.1, UT recruited High School students as assistant of room supervisor to assist the execution of supervisory duties. However, this effort is still not satisfying in reducing the occurrence of examination sheet error. The result of this effort is shown in following table.

Table 3: Type and Number of Errors in 2010.1 and 2010.2

Type of Error	Period 2010.1		Period 2010.2	
	Number of Errors	%	Number of Errors	%
Student ID	87	12.12	82	13.81
Subject code/name	218	30.36	243	40.91
Date of birth	194	27.02	179	30.13
Others	219	30.50	90	15.15
Total	718	100.00	594	100.00

In terms of the percentage of errors, the results are shown in following table.

Table 4: The Percentage of Errors in UT Regional Office Bogor in 4 Periods

| Period | Number of | | % of Errors |
	Errors	Students	
2008.2	921	9,615	9.6
2009.1	1,220	11,177	10.92
2010.1	718	11,894	6.04
2010.2	594	11,578	5.13

One significant breakthrough that should be considered is empowering UT alumni to supervise examination administration. They have good examination experience, sense of belonging, responsibility and sense of togetherness on the success of examination execution. This breakthrough has been disclosed by Suparman in a Leadership and Motivation Training for UT regional office employee in Bogor 2010. Until now, this solution, in fact, is still not fully implemented.

Another effort that has been discussed is by using examination sheet digital printing with computerized student ID that has been filled up. This examination sheet is provided as one package with the computerized final examination script. This effort is being piloted in UT regional office Bogor in semester 2011.1. Although it still faces several technical challenges in its execution, however, this effort gets positive feedback as it is more efficient and accurate. In the future, having better system to satisfy both UT and its students is expected.

Conclusion

As an institution of distant higher education provider with a vision to be one of a center of excellence in Asia by 2010, and in the world by 2020, UT should continue to improve itself and work hard to find best practices. UT needs to prioritize its services in order to have good image and be one considerable option. UT has to be aware and understand the student's needs and wisely responds their complaints/issues. As the expected outcome of this effort, both UT and students will be equally satisfied: UT will be satisfied for its success to bring their students up to obtaining their learning results, and students will be satisfied because they receive excellent service from UT. This will maintain the credibility of UT; and the vision to be one of center of excellence amongst distant higher education institution in Asia by 2010, and in the world by 2020 can be hopefully realized.

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