CERTIFICATE

The International Council for Open and Distance Education (ICDE)
awards this to

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Universitas Terbuka
as a Poster Presenter

at the 24th ICDE World Conference in Indonesia on "Expanding Horizon – New Approaches
to ODL"
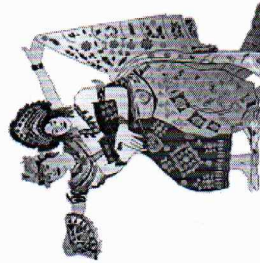
Bali, 2-5 October 2011

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UNIVERSITAS TERBUKA

INTERNATIONAL
COUNCIL FOR OPEN AND
DISTANCE EDUCATION

24th **ICDE World Conference on Open & Distance Learning**
"Expanding Horizons–New Approaches to Open and Distance Learning (ODL)"

Problems and Solutions
in Issuing Student Examination Result
at Universitas Terbuka, Indonesia:

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Subtheme: Management and Strategic Development of ODL

Abstract

Final examination result is one of the most expected feedbacks by students after completing a series of learning processes in one semester. Students need this feedback not only to determine whether they have successfully passed the subjects but also to know their level of learning achievement throughout the course. Yet, there are a number of students' final examination results that could not be issued smoothly by Universitas Terbuka (UT). Sara, D.V., et al (2011) stated that in the second semester of 2008, the percentage of unissued final examination results in Primary Teacher Program of UT Bogor Regional Office is considerably high (2,49 %). The percentage increased even more (2.61 %) in the subsequent semester (first semester of 2009). This is mainly due to few reasons: administration issues, identity errors, and UT punishment. UT, in this case, has to deal with students' complaints which are obviously time-consuming. In other words, it simply means that there is still a gap between UT services and students expectations.

This paper starts by reviewing the number of students and the needs to conduct final examination in UT Bogor Regional Office. Subsequently, this paper analyzes the statistical figures and the type of errors related to the unissued students' examination results occurred in UT Bogor Regional Office in 2010. Solutions in dealing with these problems are discussed at the end of this paper.

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

Overview

Purwanto (1984) states that final examination result is one of the performance tools to measure students' learning achievements in one semester with regards to the subject they enrolled in. Students need this feedback to determine whether they passed the subject and also to know their level of learning achievement throughout the course.

In Universitas Terbuka (UT)'s system, final examination result is the main instrument to assess the learning progress of the students. Final examination result contributes to at least 50% of total score of related subject while other learning processes (such as from practicum and tutorials activities) contribute to

less than 50% of the semester final grade. Yet, there are a number of students' final examination results that could not be issued smoothly by UT in almost every semester. The students, in this case, complain to UT on why they are unable to get their exam results. As a consequence, UT has to face these students' complaints which are obviously time-consuming. From the year 2008 to 2009, these complaints have become a quite prominent issue faced by UT. UT staffs may get frustrated over these recurring problems. The students, on the other hand, are disappointed and not satisfied with UT student support services. The students feel upset knowing that they have already paid/registered for the exams but receive no feedback at all. With all these issues, it seems to indicate that there is still a gap between UT as an institution and its students. UT procedures and policies still do not meet students' expectations and even worse, the credibility of UT in the future may be at risk.

This paper analyzes the problems of issuing final examination result at UT especially those that occur during Primary Teacher Program at Regional Office Bogor (one of UT's Regional Offices). Then, the number of students and the needs to conduct final examination are reviewed. Moreover, the statistical figures and the type of errors related to the unissued students' examination results in 2010 are also shown. Several alternative solutions to deal with these problems are discussed at the end of this paper.

Primary Teacher Program at Universitas Terbuka

Universitas Terbuka (UT) is a state institution of higher education in Indonesia which implements a distance and open learning system. UT has four Faculties and one Graduate Program that offer more than 30 study programs at various levels including: Master, Bachelor, Diploma, and Certificate. 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. To manage the courses offered by four faculties, UT classifies the courses into Primary Teacher Program and Non-Primary Teacher Program.

Primary Teacher Program is specially designed for the courses of Elementary School Teachers Education, and Early Childhood Teacher Education. This program is managed by the Faculty of Teacher Training and Educational Sciences. Meanwhile, Non-Primary Teaher Program is 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, classes and examination schedule.

In every semester, Non-Primary Teacher Program offers all its courses individually, while Primary Teacher Program offers the 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 are coded according to the year of registration or exam period, i.e: Code 09.1 (2009.1) means the 1st period of registration/examination for the year 2009 and 09.2 (2009.2) means the 2nd period of registration/examination for the year 2009.

The Number of Students in Bogor Regional Office

Bogor Regional Office is one of 37 UT regional offices, which is located in the province of West Java, Indonesia. This regional office manages six locations as its working areas. It consists of four districts and two cities in West Java. Those are Bogor City, Bogor District, Cianjur District, Depok City, Sukabumi City, and Sukabumi District.

Bogor Regional Office provides UT's various administrative and academic services. The academic services are provided through tutorials and practical works; and administrative services emphasizes in providing assistance to students in registering for subjects/courses, obtaining study materials and addressing other matters for the success of students' learning process.

Bogor Regional Office is responsible for organizing student examination, in addition to its role as UT's information center, registration center, modules distributor, study group or tutorial coordinator and some other technical roles. 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, Bogor Regional Office does not work alone. It builds several partnerships instead, including the partnership with public and private educational institutions.

The number of students managed by Bogor Regional Office in every semester varies. It mainly depends on the number of student registered for courses in the Regional Office. The data for semester 2008.2 to 2011.1, for example, are shown in the following table (*table-1*):

Table 1: The Number of Students in Bogor Regional Office

No.	Registration Period	Number of Students				
		Primary Teacher Program		Non-Primary Teacher Program		Total
		$\sum$ (ppl)	%	$\sum$ (ppl)	%	$\sum$ (ppl)
1.	2008.2	9,615	89.28	1,155	10.72	10,770
2.	2009.1	11,177	90.64	1,154	9.36	12,331
3.	2009.2	11,586	91.05	1,139	8.95	12,725
4.	2010.1	11,894	91.11	1,161	8.89	13,055
5.	2010.2	11,578	90.43	1,225	9.57	12,803
6.	2011.1	11,253	90.42	1,192	9.58	12,445

Source: Internal Data of Bogor Regional Office

While the operational activities, such as registration, conducting classes and examination, are carried out by UT regional office, the high-level 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.

Conducting Final Examination

Final Examination is a very important activity in learning process at UT, since its result serves as the main quality control tool of UT academic credibility. To maintain its performance, UT puts a high concern on final examination management service level, from preparing final examination activity 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 terms of managing the students, the schedule, and the location.

UT administers final examinations at the end of every semester or twice a year. Final examination is conducted for both Primary Teacher Program and Non-Primary Teacher Program. Since the exam schedules for both program are different, UT eventually needs to execute 4 (four) final in a year, twice for Primary Teacher Program and twice for Non-Primary Teacher Program.

Organizing final examination for Primary Teacher Program is a very large, important and complex process. It is **large** because final examination for Primary Education Program has the most number of participants. It is **important** because final examination is the 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 (Day-1, Day-2, and Day-3) involving significant number of human resources. Final examination is held in locations which have been determined by UT.

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

The need for resources to conduct final examination in Bogor Regional Office in every examination period varies depending on the number of student registered. In period 2010.1, the resources required to conduct final examination for 11,894 students in 2 cities and 4 districts can be seen in *table-2*

Table 2: The Needs for Conducting Final Examination in Bogor Regional Office in 2010.1

Location	No. of Students	No. of Sites			No. of Rooms		
		Day-1	Day-2	Day-3	Day-1	Day-2	Day-3
Bogor City	1409	2	3	1	37	46	21
Bogor District	4432	5	8	4	106	154	85
Cianjur District	3706	6	6	2	113	120	41
Depok City	512	1	1	1	10	19	13
Sukabumi City	394	1	1	1	24	25	25
Sukabumi District	1441	3	3	0	30	36	-
		18	22	9	318	399	185
Total	11894	49			902		

Source: Internal Data of Bogor Regional Office

For three consecutive days in this examination period (June 26th to 28th, 2010), Bogor Regional Office needed 15 location coordinators, 49 site coordinators, 181 mobile proctors, and 902 proctors to conduct the examination. In this period, a new policy was introduced, stating that every proctor must be assisted by one high school student. This would mean that Bogor Regional Office had to hire 902 more additional human resources.

In the subsequent period, which is of 2010.2, the required resources to conduct final examination are almost the same as those in the period of 2010.1. For three consecutive days in examination period of 2010.2 (December 4th to 6th, 2010), Bogor Regional Office needs 18 location coordinators, 53 site coordinators, 186 mobile proctors, and 946 proctors, and 946 senior high school students to conduct final examination. The detailed data for this period is shown in the following table (table-3).

Table 3: The Needs for Conducting Final Examination in Bogor Regional Office in 2010.2

Location	No. of Students	No. of Sites			No. of Rooms		
		Day-1	Day-2	Day-3	Day-1	Day-2	Day-3
Bogor City	1377	2	4	2	37	52	22
Bogor District	4600	5	9	6	95	168	108
Cianjur District	3455	3	4	3	89	111	68
Depok City	421	1	1	1	11	18	12
Sukabumi City	386	1	1	1	14	15	5
Sukabumi District	1339	2	4	3	22	52	47
		14	23	16	268	416	262
Total	11.578	53			946		

Source: Internal Data of Bogor Regional Office

Quality Assurrance

Bogor Regional Office has obtained both national and international accreditations. Internationally, Bogor regional office 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, it is an effort to improve the quality comprehensively, systematically and sustainably.

As UT already has an internal quality assurance mechanism, the implementation of quality assurance system becomes a shared responsibility of management and staffs, not only at UT head office but also at 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 can eventually possess the expected competencies.

With regards to the success of conducting final examination, 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 describing the duties and responsibilities of proctors, which include:
1) guiding the students in filling up their particulars on the examination answer sheet
2) reminding the students to re-check the accuracy of their particulars on the examination sheet
3) circulating the students attendance list in order to be signed by the students who attend the examination
4) signing the examination sheet that has already filled out by the students, either identity or the test answer.

Problems

Sara, D.V., et al (2011) revealed that internal documents of Regional Office Bogor (2008.2 and 2009.1) shows the fact 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, the number increased to 1,220 cases (2.61%) out of total 46,699 examination sheets processed. The problem is mostly caused by *technical error in filling up the form* as well as incomplete details in writing the particulars on the examination sheet. Some cases are due to *administrative* reasons, such as: (1) the student or proctor does not sign on the examination sheet/book; (2) the student's signature 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 remaining of the cases is actually related to the penalty given to the students who violate UT regulation/code of conduct. Examination result will not be released for such students, as a form of *punishment.*

Table-4 reflects the details of the errors in terms of types and numbers in 2010.1 which are scattered in 2 cities and 4 districts in Bogor regional office area/location.

The type of errors students made in each location in Bogor regional office in period of 2010.1 and 2010.2 can be classified as shown in the following tables.

Table 4: The Distribution of Errors in the Period of 2010.1

Location	No. of Students	No. of Errors			
		Administration	Identity	Punishment	Total
Bogor City	1,409	0	38	12	50
Bogor District	4,432	17	237	75	329
Cianjur District	3,706	12	94	69	175
Depok City	512	0	24	1	25
Sukabumi City	394	3	23	5	31
Sukabumi District	1,441	8	84	20	112
Total	11,894	40	500	182	722
		722			

Source: *Internal Data of Bogor Regional Office*

Table 5: The Distribution of Errors in the Period 2010.2

Location	No. of Students	No. of Errors			
		Administration	Identity	Punishment	Total
Bogor City	1,377	0	57	2	59
Bogor District	4,600	23	238	14	275
Cianjur District	3,455	6	128	27	161
Depok City	421	0	7	4	11
Sukabumi City	386	0	28	1	29
Sukabumi District	1,339	1	46	12	59
Total	11,578	30	504	60	594
		594			

Source: *Internal Data of Bogor Regional Office*

In reference to Regional Office Bogor target to ensure a minimum of 95% smoothness of examination process, or a maximum of 5% error (Doc. Simintas JKOP JJ00, 2009), the result above is in fact still fulfill the target. However, in practice, this small number of errors still bothers the Regional Office Bogor, especially since it is associated with the fact that Primary Teacher Program in Bogor Regional Office has the biggest number of students.

The impact of the large number of examination sheet errors is the increase of complaints from students, Bogor Regional Office, 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 progress 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 a saturated working condition as they face repetitive issues without effective solutions.

Discussions

Sara, D.V., et al (2009) revealed that the cause of such cases originated from the activities that occur inside 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 are still poorly understood by the examination committee and especially by the students.

As an example, with regards to the proctor working guideline on how to fill up examination sheet, it appears that there are still several proctors who did not carry out this task. In such case, proctor does not understand the condition of UT students which are very diverse in terms of background, age, culture, etc. He/she assumed that filling up one's particular 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 conducting examination *(Sara, D.V., et al, 2009)*. Meanwhile, the students reasoned that the error in filling up examination sheet are partly because he/she: (1) lacks of concentration, is nervous or in doubt (2) does not re-check the data on Student Examination Card, (3) does not re-check all the items on examination sheet; (4) misspelling of course code, and (5) is not used to fill it out *(Sara, D.V., et al, 2010)*.

Alternative Solutions

In actual fact, UT has made various efforts to solve such error in filling up the 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 final examination room supervisors need 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 socializes the procedure of filling up examination sheet and final examination administration to the students in every student's events.

This recommendation is particularly proposed because UT Regional Office has a very strategic position to avoid/eliminate the activities/processes during final examination that do 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 (e.g. during final examination) 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.