

UNIVERSITAS TERBUKA :
PUBLIC and PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP



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I. INTRODUCTION

One determining factor of national development is human resources. Having abundant natural resources does not mean that it would be enough to be a capital to create a welfare society. Natural resources should be taken care of by persons who are capable and knowledgeable in how to manage that. These days in globalization era, it is necessary for a nation to have human resources with high competency, who have capability to compete in global world so they can survive. Getting a better and higher education is one way to achieve this, therefore human resources development needs to be carried on seriously, and it should include all of social stratum.

For most people education is a process that always involves face-to-face education and it needs a specific time and place. Therefore, many people cannot afford to pursue higher education because they do not time and they cannot leave their place in order to pursue it. These phenomenon are faced by the Indonesian government, as the archipelago with population more than 200 million in 2003 and geographically it is wide and consists of more than 13.000 islands, Indonesia has difficulties concerning transportation and communication. In order to decrease these problems it needs the application of distance education.

Distance education is an innovation in the history of modern education that was introduced in the middle of 19th century. Distance education becomes the integrated part in the system of modern education. The progress in using of information and communication technology urges the fast expanding of distance education; therefore, it can increase the access and participation into education for people who needed. Sociologically, distance education has the benefit to strive for even distribution of achieving education. Therefore, distance education help those who live dispersed, even in remote areas. Distance education brings education to society but not society to educational institution.

At the beginning, distance education was considered as an alternative education system outside the regular educational system. The use of distance education at that time was to give an opportunity to some people, especially who live out of town and they want to continue their studies but having difficulties in attending regular educational institution.

Afterwards, this opinion is change now, distance education is seen as a complementary of the regular educational system. It means that without the presence of distance education the whole educational system is not complete, because there will be some people with any means cannot continue their education or fulfilling their skill through the regular educational system. In this case, Universitas Terbuka is built to be a complementary, not a competitor to other universities that already exists, because Universitas Terbuka's target is for some people with their various reason who cannot attend the regular education.

Universitas Terbuka, as the only higher distance education in Indonesia, has applied the principles of the distance education; first, there is a distance between students, educators and the education organizer. Universitas Terbuka has almost 200,000 students that spread out all over Indonesia. Second, because of this, the education process depends on the use of various materials --printed or not printed materials – and technology. Third, students have to self-study and make use of various learning support. In Universitas Terbuka, students are recommended to use some learning supports such as electronic tutorial, face-to-face tutorial. Third, distance education is widely open for anybody who wants to participate in education without any prerequisites such as age, place and variety of qualification that one has had before. In this case, the acceptance of new students by Universitas Terbuka is not limited to various field of high school diploma. Fourth, students are allowed to choose what kind of educational program they want to learn and suitable with their interest and necessity. At Universitas Terbuka, new student are free to choose their subject. Fifth, distance education has an open system in terms of when to enter and leave the education process. At Universitas Terbuka, students can register only one subject and decide to leave the educational process but in another time they can register again and choose another subject . Sixth, distance education is offering education programs with the same standard of quality for all of the students. (Suparman;2004)

To be a good organizer in distance education system, Universitas Terbuka cannot work by itself. In other words, Universitas Terbuka needs other parties in order to reach its goals. This is concerning with the concept of partnership that is becoming the important aspect in the sustainable development paradigm. Sustainable development in recent times has become a global dialectics. In essence, it is a critique of various approaches concerning modern development. Sustainable development is a concept in favor of the balance between economic, social and environmental dimensions of development. The balancing process potentially can be achieved through the concept of civil society as an arena in which individuals, state institutions, markets, and society interact within a framework based on rights through the process of catalyst of dialogue, balancing interest, early warning system and collective actions (Primahendra;2002). Therefore, the partnership aspect plays an important part in the interaction that is happening in civil society, and the persistence of Universitas Terbuka at the hand of civil society and become their responsibility.

As the catalyst of dialogue, civil society is enabling dialog between institutions to achieve consensus. In that dialog which is concerning with sustainable development, it should concern with others interest. In this case, the dialogues that arise between Universitas Terbuka and its partner such as other education institutions, markets or the state, should be considering the interest of each partner. Partnership can be seen as cooperation between two parties or more in engaging the problem solving faced by each party. This cooperation involves understanding among parties, that each party will get advantages from this partnership. *Balancing interest* is marked by openly interest balancing process; it means that each partner has the equal bargaining position. This process will guarantee that three dimensions of development; economic, social and environment which will obtain the same concern. The interaction that is happening in the civil society between institutions is an *early warning system* towards deviation that could threaten the society by giving signals that send to other institution. In this case, the dialogues that arise from the partnership between Universitas Terbuka and private or public sector will emerge problems that maybe come up later. The dialogue bring about a *collective action* formulation, that fulfill the agreement priorities. This collective action is the implementation of partnership between Universitas Terbuka and private and public sectors.

II. THE NECESITES OF UNIVERSITAS TERBUKA

As a higher education institution, Universitas Terbuka tries to carry out an educational system that offers cheap tuition fee so that many people can afford it. However, not all of Indonesian people are able to pay for their tuition fee. On the other hand the government always appeals that society fund is the important factor to implement the higher educational system, so financial support from other institution, either public or private institution, is extremely needed in order to create qualified human resources. Therefore, the partnership between Universitas Terbuka and private and public sectors to collect fund for the education expenses is becoming important.

For people who want to study in state universities but they are not accepted, Universitas Terbuka is their alternative. The problem is that they are not convinced that Universitas Terbuka is suitable to be an alternative - as a state university- , for that reason it needs extensive promotion and socialization to many people about the existence of Universitas Terbuka. In order to accommodate people who are not accepted state university, Universitas Terbuka cooperates with other state universities. Partnership between Universitas Terbuka and other state universities in promotion and socialization could be an

effective way to build society image towards the existence and quality of Universitas Terbuka. It is also important to convince other state universities that cooperation with Universitas Terbuka is based on mutual understanding.

The other need of Universitas Terbuka which is considerable important is the need of various means of administrative and academic service, and learning activities. Giving education to society is not limited by place and time and it will need complex means. It is important and necessary to provide the means of communication technology to handle the communication problems with students who live dispersed in all of Indonesia regions and abroad, although not all of Universitas Terbuka students have a better access to this communication technology means. Therefore, it is important to distribute the means of communication technology to Universitas Terbuka's regional centers (UPBJJ) . However, the various means of technology communication that already exist should be intensively offered to students - whether they used it or not - and they use it as their please to access the means according to their own accessibility. And cooperation with other institution in order to provide means of technology communication is required.

Universitas Terbuka is efforts to give academic services as much as possible to students can be seen in the several of learning supports offered by Universitas Terbuka, such as tutorial through radio, television, audiocassette and internet. In providing tutorial through radio and television, collaboration with radio and television station should be made .

Another crucial necessity that cannot be develop by Universitas Terbuka is concerning with learning activities that need facilitie for lab work. However, it is considerably not effective and efficient if Universitas Terbuka has to provide the facilities in its 30 UPBJJ, so partnership between Universitas Terbuka and other local educational institutions in providing lab facility should be developed.

For students at Universitas Terbuka modules (printed learning materials) are the simplest means. These printed materials are the learning material that are easily accessable by all students. This means that they directly can study it without other learning support. Therefore, module needs to be written by lecturer and practitioners from several education institutions either private or public, considering that they know the development of each studies. The use of their expertise will increase the selling of the modules because their name, writings and popularity can be a selling point.

Cooperation between Universitas Terbuka and these experts could be in the form of face-to-face tutorial. Face-to-face tutorial is still considering an important element for Universitas Terbuka students, because self study - as one of the characteristic of distance education- is not yet becoming habit for most of Indonesian people. The focus of face-to-face tutorial is

not only on how to learn material from the modules but also to understand the concept and to analyze cases, so the quality of the students can be increased.

The reliability of the service that is given by Universitas Terbuka to its student should be coincide with the increase of the science quality of its academic staff. Although academic staff in Universitas Terbuka tend to organize academic and administrative services, they are still a lecturer and it means that their academic capability still needs to be developed in accordance with studies program for which they work. For that reason, partnership with funding institution for research and continuing education should be increased.

The explanation above is concerning with the need of Universitas Terbuka in its efforts to organize distance education. However, there is one thing that needs to be underlined is Universitas Terbuka potentials could be useful to other institutions and then a partnership can be formed. Universitas Terbuka as the only higher education with the system of distance education has a long experience that can be reliable in the making of various self-study learning materials, self-study media, and organizing self-study activities. These potencies are needed by other institutions which are beginning to see distance education as an alternative to getting higher education and those potencies should be developed and promoted to public , because in the future it has better prospect.

III. PARTNERSHIP

In organizing distance education, Universitas Terbuka needs much support from other partners, because the working area of Universitas Terbuka is so wide that Universitas Terbuka cannot carry out itself. The purpose of forming partnership between Universitas Terbuka and other party is to give an opportunity to achieve higher education to many people as much as it can, for example partnership with Local Governments, Bank Rakyat Indonesia, Penyuluh Pertanian, Garuda, etc. Universitas Terbuka also encourages the government to give scholarship or educational fund, for example a program for the illiterates (*kejar paket* A, B, C), program for elementary and junior high schoolteacher. This partnership model should be increased and expanded because the increasing of human resources quality is the responsibility of all people

Because of the tuition fee to enter private university is too expensive and the need to provide higher education, Universitas Terbuka make a closer cooperative program with other universities. Students who are not accepted at state university are channeled to be Universitas Terbuka students. That kind of cooperative program that had been done is with

Universitas Diponegoro (Undip), Universitas Tanjung Pura (Untan), Universitas Sriwijaya (Unsri), and Universitas Lampung (Unila). In this case, they are taking part in giving face-to-face tutorials and Universitas Terbuka is taking part in organizing administrative and academic services. This partnership is becoming the effective media to give a better understanding to people that the quality of Universitas Terbuka is parallel with other universities and the thing that make it difference is only the learning system.

To maximize the administrative and academic services to students, Universitas Terbuka is cooperating with Indosat – a communication company – in giving on-line system service. The student will have benefit from this on-line system, because students will have information about their grades and examination schedule, because grades list that is sent by mail sometimes are not received by the students. With this on-line system students can have direct information and this service based on on-line system should be widely used.

It is important to use technology in distance learning education. Through cooperation with internet provider, Universitas Terbuka offers several administrative and academic consultations, electronic tutorials, web supplements, electronic consultations, etc. In fact, not all students can access to internet technology, but as an effort to give learning supports to students as many as possible the role of internet media cannot be ignored, even though the use of internet media depend extremely on how much people use the internet.

Learning supports that is given to student is a complementary for self-study activities, because in self-study students rather use the printed materials or module. Therefore, Universitas Terbuka tries to design a module as perfect as possible because it has an important role in self-study activity. Student's heterogeneity should become a major consideration if Universitas Terbuka wants to create learning materials that can be easily studied by all students. Universitas Terbuka works together with lecturers from other university to create perfect and actual materials, because it is not easy to make a high quality module alone, and those lectures indirectly become temporary lecturer in Universitas Terbuka. This partnership gives benefits to Universitas Terbuka, because sometimes lecturers who write the learning materials will use them as a reference and good learning materials written by trustworthy writers will be looked for and finally these kinds of learning materials will be sold in the market.

Universitas Terbuka is not able to provide many tutors so lecturers from other universities and practitioners sometimes are offered to be tutors in face-to-face tutorials. Another reason is they have wider perception and deeper material understanding as everyday they are working on it and getting update information on the knowledge. Face-to-face tutorials should be socialized to students, because through tutorial students not only learn modules but also have better understanding and enriched with several illustrations. Face-to-face

tutorial is an effective media for students who want to deepen their knowledge, sharpen their intellectual activity and increase their communicative ability.

Universitas Terbuka has a limitation to have direct contact with its students – in teaching activities- so Universitas Terbuka make efforts to give various learning materials and learning supports as much as possible. One of them is tutorial through radio and television, with its production house - studio unit - Universitas Terbuka works together with Radio Republik Indonesia and a tv station to give on air tutorial. This cooperation is very useful because the range of those stations can cover all Indonesia regions, therefore, this partnership should be continued and the quality should be improved.

Universitas Terbuka is having difficulty in providing lab facility, so through UPBJJ, Universitas Terbuka tries to work together with educational institutions in some provinces in providing the facilities . Universitas Terbuka borrows them and the educational institutions could provide the equipment and technicians. This cooperation model is already being done for teacher education program (FKIP) and natural science program (FMIPA). This partnership should be enhanced because it would be ineffective and inefficient if Universitas Terbuka has to provide the lab facility by itself.

As it had been explain before about the needs to raise the academic quality for the academic staff in Universitas Terbuka. Even though the Universitas Terbuka policy tends to put academic staff in position as an organizer, but broadening perception of knowledge for academic staff must be done . Continuing education that is compatible with one's subject for academic staff is very demanding. Partnership with funding educational institution must be increased, for example partnership between Universitas Terbuka and Victoria University, from Canada in providing scholarship for magister program is one of partnership that has already been done. The difficulty to obtain scholarship from government and the strict rule scholarship in terms of age limitation, Universitas Terbuka must widen this partnership model. Beside that, academic staff also needs developing skill on how to organize distance education so Universitas Terbuka needs to cooperate with other distance education institutions in providing scholarship for distance education program, holding seminars on distance education and exchanging staff . The experience they can get from this cooperation is very useful for development of Universitas Terbuka.

To broaden academic staff's perception research programs become important. Therefore, Universitas Terbuka has to find opportunity to build cooperation with other institutions, either private or public sector, to obtain research fund. This is to promote the potency of Universitas Terbuka as one of the best organizer, researcher and trainer in distance education system.

One thing that should be convinced by all employees in Universitas Terbuka that although Universitas Terbuka is still young but because of its unique characteristics it has bigger potential than other educational institutions do not have, that is knowledge and experience to organize distance education system. There are three major pillars that must be improved in organizing distance education, which are learning materials production (especially in learning materials design), learning media production and academic evaluation. In Universitas Terbuka, the unit that concerns with learning materials design is inter-universities center (PAU), studio and computer units are handling learning media production and examination center does academic evaluation. Therefore, the role of those units must be increased and it must be widely used. Those units have higher selling point, for example PEKERTI and PATUT programs developed by the PAU and evaluation program by the examination center had been used by other higher institution.

IV. CONCLUSION

Universitas Terbuka with its wide working regions has duty to bring wide opportunity to people who want to get higher education and it will need help and support from various partners. Universitas Terbuka is not designed to be complete because there are external resources that can be used by Universitas Terbuka. Therefore, the capability of Universitas Terbuka in organizing and using external resources could be something important.

The role of the UPBJJ should be improved concerning with organizing and using external resources and the UPBJJ should be active in developing cooperation. Therefore, the position of the head of the UPBJJ must be occupied by person who has a strong bargaining position in his working area, has a skill of persuading people to support Universitas Terbuka and has a negotiating capability. Otherwise, The Headquarters must firm its existence as distance education institution, by developing its three major pillars. Staffs who work in the unit that deal with those pillars should be rotated routinely to give wider opportunity to all staff to have major skill as a qualified organizer in distance education.

Interrelated with sustainable development issue, the Universitas Terbuka partnership with external resources is necessary. Because this partnership will give impact on increasing its role as an education institution which gives opportunity to people who want to increase their quality of life through education. If all related partners understand this concept it becomes an obligation for all to give support for developing of Universitas Terbuka in the future.

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