

Face-to-face tutorials service for a large number of distance education students at Universitas Terbuka' (UT) regional office, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Universitas Terbuka (UT) vision on its *Strategic Plan 2010-2022* in academic areas are focus on continuously improvement in its quality and relevance. To ensure this quality one important area for improvement is learning support services. one of it is face-to-face tutorial service. Policy of this service is set at the Head Office, but operationally it is UT's regional office (RO) responsibility in organising this service in front line level. Therefore, as UT's regional office, UPBJJ-UT Bandung should manage face-to-face tutorial service effectively. This paper describes the experience of UPBJJ-UT Bandung in managing face-to-face tutorial service including planning, recruitment of tutors, students and field staff, training of tutors, organizing, supervising, monitoring and evaluation. UPBJJ-UT Bandung has challenges to manage effectively face-to-face tutorials, with 56 courses to be tutored to more than 27.000 students of the Primary Teacher Training Program (PTTP) and the Early Childhood Teacher Training Program (ECTTP) students that scattered in 127 learning centres of 20 districts in West Java Province. It also employs more than 600 part-time tutors and 75 learning centres facilitators and assigns 20 academic staff, who act as the observers.

Besides following procedures, some factors have to be taken into consideration to ensure the effectiveness of face-to-face tutorial management, such as: 1) tutorial places settlement; 2) scheduling; 3) tutor assignment ; 4) tutors training; 5) coordination meeting; 6) supervising and monitoring; and 7) tutor performance observation.

Keywords: face-to-face tutorials; tutors training; regional office

A. Background

The quality of an implementation of open and distance higher education in UT is determined by three indicators: 1) learning materials, 2) learning support services and 3) implementation of the exam. Two recent indicators are managed by thirty seven UT's regional offices while the policy is set by the UT Centre. UPBJJ-UT Bandung, located in Bandung, the capital city of West Java province is one UT's regional offices is directly dealing with the students in organizing open and higher education services. Its working area covers 20 of the 26 districts / cities where most of its territory is mountainous, and while

others are mainland and the beach. Its population in the year 2010 is amounted to 43,021,826 people, is the most populous province throughout Indonesia (Habibie Blog, 2010). Its vision is to be a professional UPBJJ-UT in order to realize the UT as one of the leading institution among higher distance education institutions in Asia 2010 and in the world 2021. While the mission is: 1) expanding learning opportunities for communities in high-quality education, 2) improving the effectiveness of learning through learning support services ; 3) ensuring the competence of graduates through the accurate evaluation process and learning outcomes; 4) enhancing partnerships with the community in order to realize knowledge-based society, and 5) disseminating and share information about higher distance education. To carry out its vision and mission, the duty and function UPBJJ-UT Bandung include four things: 1) implementing the activities of academic administrative services in the form of registration and examination; 2) implementing learning materials and learning support services that include the distribution of learning materials, implementation tutorials, practice, laboratory works , student extracurricular activities and the delivery of diplomas; 3) to carry out general administrative services which include administration, personnel, finance, sales objects UT, and others, and 4) developing and fostering collaboration with various agencies. In carrying out its duties and functions, UPBJJ-UT Bandung assisted by the Indonesian Education University (UPI), University of Padjadjaran (UNPAD) and Bandung institute of technology (ITB). As students service centre UPBJJ-UTBandung has important role in delivery the services, where one of them is face to face tutorial services.

Face-to-face tutorial mechanisms are specifically designed by the UT in order to be effectively implemented by each UPBJJ-UT. Face-to-face tutorial sessions are held 8 times in one semester. During third, fifth, and seventh session assignments are given in form of a test given in classroom for an hour or take home tasks. Contribution of face-to-face tutorial activity on the students final marks is 50%, consisting of a tutorial assignments mark by 35% and students participation mark by 15%. Students participation mark consists of level of students participation activities in classroom and level of students attendance in tutorial activities. Tutorial final marks can be given if students: 1) attending at least 6 of 8 sessions and 2) attending tutorial assignments tests as scheduled.

The objectives and ideal targets of face-to-face tutorial services which are set by UT's management consist of three points: 1) increasing the delivery time of course materials distribution, its target at least is 95% for each semester; 2) increasing of the efficiency of learning materials delivery; its target is the delivery cost no more than Rp 3000 for each learning materials package; 3) increasing the graduation rates of students who attending compulsory face to face tutorials, its target is the number of students who passed with minimum mark is C compared to the number of students who participated tutorials at least is 75% for each semester and 4) reducing the case of students marks on tutorials, practice and lab works that are incomplete, incorrect and / or late, its target is the number of tutorial, practise and lab work mark cases versus the number of students participate at the most is 5% in two semesters. Each UPBJJ-UT can set strategies based on management consensus. There are two types of face-to-face tutorial services that provided compulsory and voluntary bases. For PTTP and ECTTP students the tutorial is provided on compulsory base and three courses are tutored for each student in every semester.

On 2010.1 (odd semester of 2010) 25.103 PTPP students and 2.854 ECTPP students registered and attended in face-to-face tutorials on 123 learning centers in 20 districts/cities. This tutorial activities involved 20 districts/cities committess, 1.047 tutors, 127 learning centers' facilitators and 20 field coordinators. Tutors came from various educational institutions, among others were from state and private universities, local educational institutution, educational training centers, and professional organizations. Most of tutors had educational background that fulfilled the requirements but less knowledge and experience in implementing face-to-face tutorial concepts. Learning centers' facilitators responsible for providing administrative support. They had to ensure conducive learning environment for both tutors and students. Field coordinators were upbjj-ut Bandung's academic staff that were assigned to ensure that tutorial activities in a certain district were implemented properly. They were also assigned to observe the implementation of tutorial concepts which was practised by tutors in classrooms. Due to the large number of students and learning centers that scattered throughout UPBJJ-UT Bandung working areas the tutorial activities should be managed effectively to ensure the quality of tutorial process. In other words, the tutorial plan and preparation should be accurately designed through early students' recruitment, selective tutor and learning centers facilitators recruitment, learning centers selection, tutorial scheduling, tutor training, coordination meetings and followed by implementation of tutorial schedule. This article addresses the experience of UPBJJ-UT Bandung in organizing face-to-face tutorial for PTPP and ECTPP students on 2010.1.

B. Results and Discussion

Planning the tutorial activity

The number of students' recruitment, learning centres establishment, tutors and learning centres' facilitators' recruitment were shown in Table-1 bellows.

Tabel : 1
Numbers of Students, Districts/cities, Learning Centers, Classrooms, and Tutors per program

Programs	Σ				
	Students	District/City	Learning Centers	Classrooms	Tutors
S-1 PGSD	25,103	20	103	812	679
S-1 PAUD	2,854	14	24	109	86
Σ	27,957		127	921	765

Source : Learning Service Coordinator

As mentioned before, face-to-face tutorials provided for PTPP and ECTPP students on compulsory bases. Therefore, the number of students that would attend the tutorial activities could be determined immediately based on the

number of last semester students plus the number of new students registered. As shown on Table-1 the number of students attended the tutorial on 2010.1 was 27.957 students that were scattered in 127 learning centres in 20 districts/cities. 24.605 out of 27.957 students (88,01%) lived outside of Bandung city, whereas 3352 students (11,99%) lived in Bandung and its surrounding city

Tabel : 2
Tutors's initial institutions

Initial Institution	Σ Tutors	%
State University	467	61.05%
Private University	76	9.93%
Local education institution	169	22.09%
Educ training, QA institution	30	3.92%
Educ profesional institution	15	1.96%
Non formal education institution	8	1.05%
	765	

Conducting new learning centres was depending on the numbers of new students registered. New learning centres were only established when there were at least 40 students would attend the tutorial activities on those locations. The number of tutors recruited for PTTP and ECTPP were 679 tutors and 86 tutors respectively. This amount was a result of optimizing the tutors' assignment mechanism. The number of tutors needed for each PTTP and ECTP was 923 and 124 tutors. Tabel-2 shows tutors' initial institutions, 520 tutors (67,92%) lived in Bandung whereas the remain 245 tutors (32,08%) lived outside of Bandung City. Educational background relevance and tutors' initial institutions were main considerations in determining tutors placement. Since the proportion of the number of tutors who lived in Bandung city inversely with the number of students who lived in the similar places, then a lot of tutors were sent to various learning centres outside Bandung city. Learning centres' facilitators were responsible for providing administrative support for the tutorial such as session agenda, tutors and students attendance lists, tutorial assignments answer sheets and tutorial assignments marks sheet and in digital form through compact disc. The assignment of UPBJJ-UT' academic staff as field coordinators who were responsible for supervising the tutorial and observing the tutorial practise, were also set up.

Finally, the tutorial activities draft were scheduled based on UT's academic calendar, where it was begun no later than a week after the new student orientation of study was carried out. Due to the large number of students, the tutorial activities were organized in two periods. The first period was conducted for the students of the semester that had the practice courses / lab works, while the second period was conducted for the new students' semester. Through the liaison tutors, tutorial schedule draft was then sent to the institution that most tutors were assigned. This strategy proved very useful

in minimizing the changes that occur ahead of schedule is finalized. In the tutorial preparation stage, all of these planned products were socialized to all parties that involved in tutorial activities.

Preparing the tutorial activity

The preparation of tutorial activities consisted of series activities which were conducted simultaneously. The first was coordination meeting between upbjj-ut Bandung and the learning centres committees. In this meeting the evaluation result of the previous semester activities was communicated to ensure that improvement will take place in the future semester. Furthermore, the readiness of the learning centres, the schedule of learning materials distribution and the certainty of new students' recruitment were confirmed. Learning materials were distributed to students before tutorial activities begun to allow for sufficient preparation before attending to the tutorial sessions. Second activity was conducting the tutors training. This activity was intended to equip the tutors with the deepest understanding of the distance education systems that are implemented in the UT and tutorial skills, since most of the tutors had very limited knowledge and experience of distance education concept. Through tutors training tutors were prepared for the new roles which helped them in delivering effective tutorials for distance learner (Isswar Jheengut, 1998). Tutors were trained to compose the map concept, Tutorial Activity Design (TAD), Tutorial Activity Unit (TAT), and matrix for tutorial assignments item. They were also required to practice a mini tutorial and commented on by the peer tutors. Third activity, was conducting the coordination meeting with tutors, learning centres facilitators, and field coordinators. In this meeting the evaluation results were communicated to ensure that improvement takes place. This meeting was ended by group discussions to gain similar perception of how the tutorial was implemented.

Implementing the tutorial schedule

Learning centres facilitators had responsibility to ensure a conducive learning environment for both tutors and students and to submit a report to the related field coordinators for each session. They provide administrative documents such as session agenda, tutors and students attendance lists, tutorial assignments answer and mark sheets. Tutorial assignments is held in the third, fifth and seventh session in the form of written test or take home assignments. Temporary replacement of tutors was permitted after obtaining head of upbjj approval. Besides supervising the tutorial activities in district level, field coordinators have also to observe the tutorial practises in the classroom. They observe the consistency of the real tutorial activities with the planned TAD. In order to obtain the information about customers' feedbacks, two kinds of questionnaires were distributed to all students; those were students' satisfaction on UPBJJ-UT Bandung's services and students perceptions about tutors' performances. The results are shown on tables below respectively.

Tabel-3
Students' satisfactions of face-to-face tutorial services

	Indicators	Marking Criteria				Number of respondents
		1	2	3	4	
1	C1	0.00%	5.62%	66.45%	27.94%	1371
2	C2	0.65%	16.57%	55.99%	26.78%	1527
3	C3	0.28%	9.00%	63.81%	26.92%	1445
4	C4	0.64%	7.15%	62.45%	29.76%	1398

4= very satisfactory; 3= satisfactory; 2=less satisfactory; 1= unsatisfactory

For each of its indicators, more than 82% of respondents expressed satisfactions with the services provided by UPBJJ-UT Bandung, the remaining stated were less satisfied. The highest satisfaction in tutorial service shown on indicator C1 (Ease of getting tutorial service), amounting to 94.38%. Provisions that UPBJJ-UT must hold tutorial for PTPP and ECTPP students, good coordination and intensive communication between UPBJJ-UT Bandung with its work allegedly contributed to these achievements. The lowest satisfaction on tutorial service is shown on the indicator C2 (Feasibility of tutorial venue), amounting to 82.78%. Use of elementary school buildings with inadequate facilities at some learning centres cannot be avoided.

Table-4
Students perceptions of tutors performances (N=570)

Tutors characteristics	Score	Summary
Describe the purpose and rules of the tutorial	3.41	Good
Explain the benefits and relevance of the content course	3.43	Good
Mastering the subject matter	3.6	Good
Providing enrichment content and sample	3.38	Not Good
Describe the content course with a systematic and interesting	3.33	Not Good
Using instructional media	2.93	Not Good
Using the polite language and easy to understand	3.52	Good
Be polite	3.55	Good
Motivates students to actively participate	3.37	Not Good
Manage the discussion interestingly	3.25	Not Good
Giving students the opportunity to answer questions	3.36	Not Good
Provides a tutorial assignment on the 3, 5, 7 session	3.61	Good
Give feedback on the results of the tutorial assignment	3.38	Not Good
Encourage students to conclude the course	3.34	Not Good
Begin and end the tutorial on time	3.38	Not Good
Score average	3.39	

The maximum score for each tutor characteristic is 4. UPBJJ-UT Bandung defines high standard in categorizing tutors performances. Only those who

obtained score at the above of total average score were summed up as good performance tutors. Since most of learning centres did not provide adequate learning facilities, the score obtained of using instructional media was the lowest score. UPBJJ-UT Bandung had suggested to learning centres committees to find other better tutorial places.

Tabel-5
Unconformities of face-to-face tutorial services

Content	Schedules	Tutors	Tutorial facilities
		0.38%	0.06%

Each tutorial activity steps refer to standard procedures that set up by UT and it was obligated for all parties involved in this activity to obey these procedures. The result shown on Table-5 indicated that at least there're 4 tutors broke the procedures and 1 tutorial venue did not meet the requirements. This means the procedure of selecting tutorial venue did not implement properly.

Table-6
Obstacles in managing tutorial assignment marks

Not registered/not complete	Incorrect students number	Delays	Others
0.04%	0.13%	-	-

Tutorial assignments marks were processed as soon as those were submitted by learning centres' facilitators. More than 51.000 tutorial assignments marks data had to be keyed-in and obstacles arrives whenever students' numbers on the marks lists were incorrect, or students were identified as not registered. The first finding can be identified as human errors. The learning centres' facilitators did not follow the procedure of accessing students' numbers from the student records data base. The second finding can be caused by either human errors or other causes that needed further searching.

The result of the achievement of quality targets measurements is shown in Table-7 below.

Tabel-7
The achievements of objective targets

Objectives	Targets	Achievements
To increase timelines of delivery learning materials	At least 95% in 1 semester	Freshmen : 97%; Undergraduate students : 99%

To increase the efficiency of learning materials delivery	At least Rp. 3000,- for each learning materials package	Rp. 9010,-
To improve students graduates level attending tutorial	At least 75% for each semester	76,39% (Practice Courses = 99,57%; Lab Work courses =98,31, Tutorial = 76,60%)
To decrease recapitulation of marks of tutorial, practice, lab work courses that in complete, incorrect or late	Become maximum 5 % in 2 semester	9,14% (Practice/Lab work= 8,7%, Tutorial = 0,44%)

Two of the four objectives failed to achieve targets. Rising transportation costs due to price increases in fuel prices is one of the causes the target failed to achieve. In the future transportation cost for learning material s delivery needs to be revised. The failure to achieve the set target of tutorial, practise/lab works marks mostly caused by delay time in submitting the final practise/lab work report by the students. In the future, students need to be reminded about the deadline of reports to be submitted.

C. Conclusions

Face-to-face tutorial services involving various parties where each party is contributes to the successful of the implementation of such services. Communication that was built by UPBJJ-UT Bandung with each party through various modes of activities is intended that each party understands its' rights and obligations. Forming task forces at learning centres and districts level was a strategy to control the quality of face-to-face tutorial services. Problems that arrived can be identified and solved immediately. The results of tutorial evaluation will be communicated and used as a feedback to improve of face-to-face tutorial services in the following semester.

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CERTIFICATE

The International Council for Open and Distance Education (ICDE)
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