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47	STUDENTS' PREFERENCE AND ACCESSIBILITY OF THE USE OF ONLINE LEARNING RESOURCES FOR NON- BASIC EDUCATION PROGRAMS AT UPBBJ-UT MAKASSAR <b>Kusmaladewi, Jamil</b>	251
50	DEVELOPMENT OF ONLINE COURSES ON A METHOD OF CODING EDUCATION FOR K12 TEACHERS IN JAPAN <b>Tatsumi Takeo</b>	261
51	PERCEPTION OF DISTANCE LEARNERS ON THE USE OF NANOLEARNING VIDEOS AS AN EDUCATIONAL TOOL <b>Michelle Loh, Phalachandra Bhandigadi, Jasmine Selvarani Emmanuel</b>	269
53	USE OF SELF-REGULATED LEARNING STRATEGIES AMONG HIGH AND LOW ACHIEVER UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS IN OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING <b>Amina Latif, Dr. Munawar Sultana Mirza</b>	278
54	DECISION-MAKING TECHNIQUES IN MANAGING UNIVERSITAS TERBUKA REGIONAL OFFICES IN INDONESIA <b>Sofjan Aripin, Anto Hidayat</b>	288
59	RESEARCH ON THE APPLICATION OF DATA VISUALIZATION AND ANALYSIS TECHNOLOGY IN ONLINE EDUCATION <b>Wei Fangfang, Wei Shunping</b>	292
60	"THE POETRY IS IN THE PITY"—BUT WHAT ABOUT THE TEACHING? ASSIMILATING ODL INTO TEACHING OF WORLD WAR I POETRY IN THE LITERATURE CLASSROOM <b>Lal Medawattegedara</b>	301
62	E-LEARNING VLOG MODEL DEVELOPMENT: ENHANCING LEARNING MOTIVATION AND COGNITIVE ABILITY (A CASE STUDY OF STUDENTS OF BUDGETING) <b>Andi Sylvana, Murtiadi Awaluddin</b>	305
64	EVALUATION OF UT's ACADEMIC SERVICE SCHEMES <b>Enang Rusyana, Dina Thaib, Sugilar, Argadatta Sigit</b>	312
65	IMPLEMENTATION OF DIGITAL BADGES FOR ONLINE AND OFFLINE COURSE RECORDS: POSSIBILITIES FOR MICRO CREDENTIALS AND QUALITY ASSURANCE <b>Tsuneo YAMADA</b>	320
66	EFFECT OF COOPERATIVE LEARNING ON STUDENTS' ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT IN E-LEARNING ENVIRONMENT AT HIGHER EDUCATION LEVEL <b>Sehar Rashid, Dr. Munawar Sultana Mirza</b>	327
67	EFFECT OF ACADEMIC CLINICS ON THE PROGRESS OF STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AT THE UNIVERSITAS TERBUKA <b>Hendrin H Sawitri, Gede Suwardika</b>	331
68	ISSUES AND CHALLENGES FACED BY ONLINE HIGHER EDUCATION TEACHERS <b>Darakhshan Muslim, Dr. Munawar Sultana Mirza</b>	337
69	TRANSFORMING ONLINE TEACHING & LEARNING IN ODL ENVIRONMENT THROUGH APPLICATION OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) <b>Nantha Kumar Subramaniam</b>	344
73	EFFECTIVENESS OF MODES OF INTERACTION IN ONLINE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT: A CASE OF VIRTUAL UNIVERSITY OF PAKISTAN <b>Saleha Ali, Dr. Munawar Sultana Mirza</b>	353

## DECISION-MAKING TECHNIQUES IN MANAGING UNIVERSITAS TERBUKA REGIONAL OFFICES IN INDONESIA

Sofjan Aripin<sup>1</sup>, Anto Hidayat<sup>2</sup>  
*Universitas Terbuka, Indonesia*

### Abstract

Universitas Terbuka (UT) is a university with the largest management of student services which spread throughout Indonesia as well as Indonesian citizens living abroad with a total number of 320,700 students during 2019.1 registration period. Student service satisfaction is largely determined by the accuracy of the policy and the effectiveness of its implementation as set out in UT's strategic plan. The implementation of this policy is realized in the operationalization of the annual work program. There is a strategic power to operationalize the UT work program in the field, namely the role and presence of 40 regional offices (ROs) as UT's leading service sectors that must be supported by the leadership effectiveness capabilities and accuracy of operational decision making. The existence of UT ROs institutionally has been standardized in accordance with UT policy, but operationally every leadership of UT ROs will certainly face challenges, even problems related to the diversity of characteristics of its management area which are much influenced by social aspects (homogeneous and heterogeneous), culture (constructive and destructive), economy (income), geography (easy and difficult services), internal resources (governance and human resources), and national policies (implementation). The ability of a leader in applying decision-making techniques determines the success or failure in managing UT ROs.

Keywords: Policy implementation, Leadership, Decision making, Management, Service satisfaction

### Introduction

Universitas Terbuka (UT) institutional policy is regulated in the Ministry of Research, Technology and Higher Education Regulation number 16 of 2017, concerning the Organization and Governance of the UT and the Ministry of Research, Technology and Higher Education Regulation number 84 of 2017, regarding the UT Statute. The policy becomes the foundation for UT in implementing every activity and program in the organizational units in UT, as well as its Regional Offices (UT ROs) which has the function and task of implementing operational service policy (Piiffner, John M and Presthus, Robert V. 1960) to students and communities in the region and regulated in Standard Operating Procedure (SOP).

There are 39 UT ROs in 34 provinces and 1 UT RO overseas service to serve 320,700 students during the 2019.1 registration period. Organizationally, the UT RO is led by a Director assisted by a Head of Administration, a Manager of Registration and Examination, a Manager of Teaching Materials and Learning Assistance, a Financial Treasurer and several staff (Picture. 1). The composition and service capacity of each UT RO has different characteristics based on social aspects (homogeneous and heterogeneous), culture (constructive and destructive), economy (income), geographical (easy and difficult services), internal resources (governance and human resources), national policy (implementation), and the number and range of student services.

The role of the Director of UT RO is quite strategic and decisive in carrying out functions and tasks in implementing each operational policy in each annual activity plan (AAP) and budget activity plan (BAP) with program achievements to be carried out to maintain the quality of academic services and academic administration to be well maintained; the realization of good governance between UT RO and local government, the central government vertical agency, private business partners, the community and stakeholders (Muhammad, Kurniawan. 2017) and maintain the stability of the students number at each registration.

The strategic role of the Director of the UT RO to take operational policies, solve various operational problems, the effectiveness of decision making, the regulation and management of service partners with study groups as well as provincial and district or city government requires leadership effectiveness, persuasive communication, and human relations. The central role as the Director of UT RO will be inevitable in making accurate and fast decisions, this is where expertise is needed to use effective decision-making techniques (Muhyadi, 2003)

### Method

This study was conducted with a qualitative method and a descriptive approach to explain primary data from relevant parties for in-depth data collection from each UT internal data source, namely UT RO Directors, study groups, students, local governments, and other stake holders. Other data support comes from policies and other relevant references. Collection and deepening of primary data from the main data source was carried out directly and confirmed again to obtain data accuracy.

### **Strategic role of ut ro.**

Directors of UT RO as the representative of UT Headquarters in the regions is the top leader in the region which is their responsibility in managing internal management, access to services, and management of distance education. Managing internal management is associated with the structure and capacity of government employees which is quite limited between 4 to 40 people to serve the number of students ranging from a minimum of 2000 students to 20,000 students per UT RO requiring the director's expertise in governing and managing organizational administration.

UT RO is obliged to provide proper access to every prospective student and student to obtain academic and non-academic services in supporting their learning success. Access is a facility provided by UT to provide opportunities and smooth learning for students, starting from the registration process for prospective student registration and student course registration (UT student registration through [sia.ut.ac.id](http://sia.ut.ac.id)) or directly coming to UT RO or through study groups, service preparation distribution of teaching materials (modules), Orientation for New Student (ONS) and Electronic Student Learning Skills Training (e-SLST) to graduation students. Distance education governance is not only to maintain the stability of internal bureaucracy, but it involves maintaining good relations with stakeholders who are very helpful and support UT in implementing UT RO operational, such as the availability of borrowing the final examination place, web-based test place in the computer lab in the provincial/ district/ city Education Office environment.

Determining operational policies in implementing each academic policy from the four faculties and supporting academic policies that must be implemented in the interest of satisfying the services of students and stakeholders requires the ability to interpret (Jones, Charles O. 1996) correctly any activities and programs carried out by the director, starting from the process of socializing prospective students, implementing registration, learning process, strengthening and maintaining learning, up to the graduation process.

The operational ability of a director will be determined by the ability to communicate (Edwards III, 1980 and Van Meter, 1975) with all partners and stakeholders to strengthen access in various activities, especially regarding the trust of partners in encouraging the community and employees to increase capacity, competence and qualifications through distance education at UT. Strengthening with stakeholders is to strengthen the trust that UT as a credible institution in strengthening resources and graduates can compete nationally and globally.

UT RO is a service center for the community and students which is carried out offline or online, both types of services are implemented based on UT prospective students and UT students by paying attention to uneven internet access services, internet usage capabilities, geographical aspects, and others (Aripin, Sofjan. 2018). Student learning assistance service providers serve face-to-face tutorials, web-based exams, study clinics, and more.

The role of the UT RO director is crucial and strategic in implementing all academic and non-academic policies to provide satisfaction not only to students as the main focus of service but stakeholders as users and supporters of the successful learning process. The principal value of a director is persuasive and accommodating leadership in using decision making techniques.

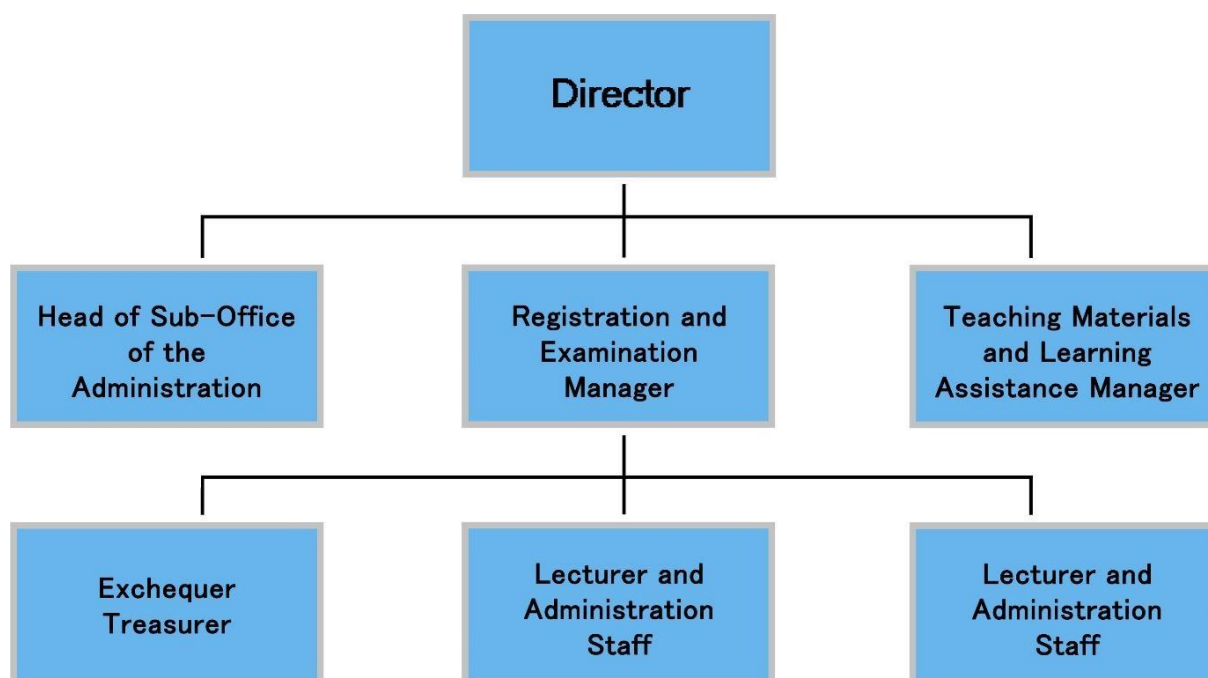
### **Leadership effectiveness.**

The key to management in managing UT RO is leadership effectiveness (Danesh, Darius, Michael J. Ryan and Alireza Abbasi, 2018) with a persuasive communication approach in the organization's internal and external organizations. One note for additional approaches in internal organizations, namely the need for additional instructional approaches that are mandatory to be implemented.

The effectiveness of a director's leadership will determine the speed of service to students, partners and stakeholders; achievement of annual activity targets in the budget activity plan; the number of final exam participants and the high number of final exam passes; realization of the target number of new students. The achievement of program targets in each activity shows indicators of the effectiveness of the success of UT RO's directors in carrying out their functions and duties.

The central role of the UT RO director is very dominant in running leadership. This is caused by the small scope of the organization (picture.1) with the workload of the Head of Sub-Office of the Administration, Manager (Coordinator) and staff in realizing the activity plan with the achievements of the activities. The ability of supervision, monitoring, and evaluation makes it imperative for the director to provide feedback on the performance of UT RO, reprimand and punishment for staff who are underperforming.

**Picture 1 ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF UNIVERSITAS TERBUKA REGIONAL OFFICE (UT RO)**



Source: Ministry of Research, Technology and Higher Education. 2017

#### **Decision making techniques.**

The Director of UT RO in carrying out its functions and duties is demanded to be careful, dynamic, and fast in making decisions that are accurate and ready to take risks. Risk analysis of a leader in decision making needs to pay attention to the following characteristics:

**Role Model.** The excess ability possessed by a director in leading UT RO is an example and role model in his internal organization as well as in front of students, study groups, partners, and stakeholders. This is reflected in the Pancasila leadership of Indonesia attitude (Kresna, [Bondhan W,2018](#)), namely: in front of staff must build equality that human beings are equal in status and degree in carrying out work; mediator between staff and middle management who do not prefer to act or behave; and role models as a top leader for staff and students.

**Persuasive.** Maintaining the stability of UT RO is a must for a leader, but in reality, conflict must occur. This is a dynamic and constructive organizational approach if the leader can pass a persuasive approach. The persuasive approach is the ability of leaders to resolve internal conflicts between staff and staff, staff and leaders, Head of Administration and Registration Manager and external conflicts, such as between study groups with study groups, UT RO with partners, UT RO with stakeholders and conflict with students. These conflicts become the responsibility of the director of UT RO to resolve with the principle of not bringing down one who is in conflict through the director's role in carrying out a persuasive approach between the two parties.

**Accommodating.** UT RO as a dynamic operational organizational unit is inseparable from the ideas and ideas of UT RO's internal staff and the ideas and ideas coming from students, study groups, local governments, and stakeholders for development and innovation at UT RO, such as the proposal to open a new study program (diploma, degree, and postdoctoral), the provision of web-based examination services in each district / city, the establishment of UT service offices in districts / cities, the expansion of registration payments outside government banks. The ability to accommodate ideas, ideas, suggestions and input that is both constructive and destructive is a necessity for a director to accommodate, most importantly the director's ability to listen, take notes and give thanks is a value of respect for them.

**Negotiative.** One of UT RO's tasks is to socialize every UT education program to the community and stakeholders to get to know, understand, appreciate, follow, and enjoy distance learning. Socialization can be done in a variety of ways and until now socialization tends to be still more effectively carried out in person with prospective students, partners and stakeholders. Surely this activity will generally not be separated from questions, suggestions, proposals and even requests for something related to studying at UT, such as;

negotiation of course registration payments every semester with UT cooperation partners, extension of registration payment time, extension of online tutorial submission, rescheduling of face-to-face tutorial implementation, and others. The ability of the director to negotiate in accommodating this proposal is certainly a satisfaction for students and stakeholders, but it still requires the director's carefulness in deciding by considering policies, standard operating procedures, and supporting experience in managing UT.

## Conclusion

1. The effectiveness of leadership in managing UT services at UT RO is largely determined by the ability to communicate appropriately within the internal organization, students, UT partners and stakeholders.
2. The implementation of UT policies manifested in various programs and activities in UT RO that are accommodated in annual activity plans and planned budget activities can be realized even though the target does not reach 100%, but the main services in the learning process must be fully realized.
3. The ability to use the right decision-making techniques by a UT RO director will have a constructive impact on the service satisfaction of students, partners and stakeholders.

## Recommendation

1. The effectiveness of leadership requires planned training before becoming a director or in the process of leading UT RO, in addition to the support of initial experience in leading organizations at the central UT and at UT RO level.
2. Decision making techniques are a way for a UT RO director who needs special training related to conflict management and risk management analysis.

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## Virtual University of Pakistan

M.A Jinnah Campus, Defence Road, Off Raiwind Road,  
Lahore. Ph: +92 42 99203897 Fax: +92 42 99200604, 99202174