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# **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF LEADERSHIP STYLE AND POLICY IMPLEMENTATION AT DISTANCE LEARNING PROGRAM UNIT OF UNIVERSITAS TERBUKA OF TARAKAN - NORTH KALIMANTAN PROVINCE**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Distance Learning Program Unit of Universitas Terbuka (UPBJJ-UT), which is the frontline in providing services and assistance to students in the region, has a central and strategic role. The role is primarily determined by leadership and ability to implement UT's policy by the head of UPBJJ-UT as the local authority in the area in managing and maintaining quality of learning and services. UPBJJ-UT Tarakan as one of the 40 UPBJJ-UT, which are spread throughout Indonesia, has functions and duties to implement policies that have been defined by the UT Center, from the process of socialization and promotion to public, students' registration, up to the graduation ceremony. The problems and obstacles encountered by each UPBJJ-UT have its own diversity and uniqueness that require every head of UPBJJ-UT to have different leadership style in leading the unit. There are many challenges for the head of UPBJJ-UT Tarakan in managing services to learners and stakeholders in the province of North Kalimantan and the region of Sabah Federation, such as: various socio-cultural heterogeneity; partnership and competition with other universities; as well as underdeveloped, foremost, and outermost (border) area with heterogeneous geographical contours. There are two questions related to services management, i.e., how is the effectiveness of leadership style of the head of UPBJJ-UT in managing the services? And how is the accuracy of the head of UPBJJ-UT in implementing services policy?

Keywords: effectiveness, leadership style, policy implementation, distance learning

## **INTRODUCTION**

Regional office of Open University (UPBJJ-UT) as the frontier in providing services and assistance to students in the region which is the authority has a central and strategic role. The role will be largely determined by the leadership and the ability to implement policies by the head of the regional office of Open University (UPBJJ-UT) as territorial manager that has authority in maintaining the academic and administrative services as well as the quality of learning.

UPBJJ operational office are located in 34 provinces with 40 UPBJJ-UT offices throughout Indonesia, even in Java there are several provinces with 2 to 3 UPBJJ-UT offices in each province and there are 5 UPBJJ-UT that specifically serve students at the frontier to support UPBJJ-UT for Foreign Services. Each UPBJJ-UT office manages between 1,500 students up to 20,000 students with various social heterogeneity, culture, geography, access, and management resources of UT.

Higher education policy in Indonesia is regulated under Law Number 12 Year 2012 and Act Number 4 Year 2014 on the implementation of higher education including UT as one of them. Though, the law has not fully accommodated the implementation of open and distance higher education. Considering this kind of situation, UT's rector and head of UPBJJ-UT should pay special attention in implementing and maintaining the quality assurance of its academic and administrative services efficiently and effectively.

Nationally, UT with 40 UPBJJ-UT offices is the only high-performing Open and Distance Higher Education in Indonesia consistently serving the community and students as much as 325,000 learners, ranging from

metropolitan people to remote and regional areas. This is in line with the ideals of the Indonesian nation that every citizen is entitled to access quality education as well as the *Nawacita* (Indonesian President's vision) program of the President of the Republic of Indonesia, point number 3, stating that remote or rear communities must be served and encouraged to employment opportunities as part of the national development policy.

## **METHOD**

The method employed in this study was descriptive qualitative describing UPBJJ-UT Tarakan's management during 2016-2017 period internally (the office management) and externally (the coordination and communication with UT's partners and stakeholders in North Kalimantan and Sabah Federation of Malaysia. Document and interview were used as data collection technique in this study.

### **UPBJJ-UT Tarakan**

UPBJJ-UT Tarakan as one of 40 UPBJJ-UT scattered in the region of Indonesia has function and task to implement policies that have been set by UT, starting from public socialization process, students' enrollment and registration, until graduation process. Various problems are faced by every UPBJJ-UT. It requires professionalism, conceptual management, experience, and the art of leadership of the head of UPBJJ-UT. There are various challenges at UPBJJ-UT Tarakan in managing UT's services, as follows:

#### **1. Social and Cultural Heterogeneity,**

Dayak ethnic is identical with Kalimantan ethnic. It is also the same with North Borneo with total population about 725.000 people that has some districts that are still closely related to Dayak ethnic. Generally, North Kalimantan has multi ethnic. Banjar and Bugis ethnics are the most dominant population in North Kalimantan. It can be seen from four regencies and one city, there is only one regency that is dominantly occupied by Dayak ethnic.

#### **2. Partnerships and competition with other universities;**

Formal partnerships have been well established by UT with the provincial government, district/ municipal governments, the Director General of Kota Kinabalu, Tawau Consulate, Indonesian Teachers Association (PGRI), University of Borneo Tarakan (UBT), UT managers in each territory in North Kalimantan and the Malaysian Federation of Sabah as well as other partners.

#### **3. Area condition and contour heterogeneity;**

The condition of the area and the contour of the landscape are quite varied, such as the archipelago, the land area, and the hilly terrain. Transport access such as rivers and sea, land, and air with the most transportation modes are through rivers and air especially in and to remote area, inland, and border area.

#### **4. Disadvantage, front, and outermost areas (border);**

The North Kalimantan province is a regional expansion of the East Kalimantan province. North Borneo previously until now is still the disadvantage, the front, and the outer (border) area with quite difficult and very limited access. The Nunukan and Malinau districts generally use rivers, sea and air access; particularly to reach sub-districts in the inland and border areas.

#### **5. Service Coverage;**

Higher education services, especially in UPBJJ-UT Tarakan, have reached almost 95% of services in 5 districts/cities. There are still 4 sub-districts in Malinau District that have not been served because of difficult access. UPBJJ-UT Tarakan keeps trying to extend its services to those sub-districts.

#### **6. Resources of UPBJJ-UT Tarakan**

UPBJJ-UT Tarakan office only has 12 staff to serve approximately 3,600 students, which consist of 4 civil servants, 6 annual contract employees and 2 daily employees. Judging from the aspect of job analysis is in accordance with the standard determined by UT, but from the aspect of the workload is very heavy. It is heavy not only related to the coverage area of work and the number of students served but it relates to the aspect of the analysis of positions that are captured especially by the civil servants.

#### 7. Communication Access;

The communication in supporting the academic and administrative service process with various geographical factors mentioned above, is no longer an obstacle for students or communities in North Kalimantan in today's telecommunications. This is in line with the central government's supportive capacity for the provision of telecommunication towers reinforcement with 4G connection capacity. In addition, generally students have cell-phone with features that make it easy to communicate and access UT's learning process online.

Some of the diversity and constraints mentioned above become challenges and opportunities for UPBJJ-UT Tarakan in managing services as well as providing access to the community and students to learn.

### **THE LEADERSHIP EFFECTIVENESS OF THE HEAD OF UPBJJ-UT TARAKAN**

UPBJJ-UT Tarakan as a new organizational unit has duties and functions to implement every policy mandated by the central government and UT, especially in providing services to the community and students in North Kalimantan of Indonesia and Sabah Federation of Malaysia with the standards and procedures specified in the UT standard quality assurance policy. The role of the head as UT's leader plays a strategic role, not only able to run procedural bureaucratic things that are routine even rigid. There is a saying "carry out in accordance with the provisions" or "carrying out instructions without criticizing them but not for defiance". This is where the leadership role takes part in applying the leadership style carefully and intelligently in bridging the needs of the community/students as a beneficiary of UT with applicable policies and procedures.

The seven points of diversity and challenges faced by UPBJJ-UT Tarakan in managing the services are not only related to the aspects of the new organizational condition that require an internal organizational understanding both regarding the structure and authority that must be performed by the staff, but attention to external challenges such as: 1). People lack of understanding that UT is a distance university, the stigma of UT students and alumni that UT lectures are difficult to pass; 2). The dominant role of learning group managers (POKJAR) in serving UT students indicates the occurrence of illegal levies and distortions of information on UT services; 3). Lack of scrutiny in approaching new partners in addition to UT managers in the area, which is to provide confidence and strengthen information and knowledge about UT related to distance education (PTJJ) as a form of education service with distance learning system (SBJJ) to local government. In the Provinces and Regencies, Teachers' Association of Indonesia (PGRI), Association of Indonesian Kindergarten Teachers (IGTKI), Mother of Early Childhood Education (Bunda PAUD), University of Borneo Tarakan (UBT), Economic High School; Tawau Consulate, Education, Social and Cultural Functions; Commissioner General of Kota Kinabalu and Education, Social and Cultural Functions, Kota Kinabalu School of Indonesia and other partners.

Those challenges become the locus and focus for the head of UPBJJ-UT Tarakan to effectively strengthen the leadership style's ability to accommodate the management of services to students and communities in North Kalimantan area and Indonesian people in Sabah Malaysia. Leadership style shows the expertise of a leader in managing UPBJJ-UT office in achieving service target that has been operationally accumulated in every annual plan and achievement from UT vision and mission. This will be the benchmark for the UT leader in measuring target achievement and successful management of UPBJJ-UT.

## **Leadership Effectiveness**

First, it can be seen from how the leader uses strategy in: managing and nurturing staff; mobilizing and motivating civil servants, annual contract employee, daily contract employee and other supporting staff. It requires appropriate placement by the leader in clarifying the duties and functions of each staff. This is inseparable from the ability and background of the staff, so it needs to explain in detail and the need for field understanding.

Second, it can be seen from the ability of the leader and staff in keeping the student services satisfaction on various obstacles and problems in the academic process and academic administration caused by UT and UPBJJ-UT errors and the mistakes made by the students. The leadership style plays a role here to overcome and provide solutions to the students, such as students' scores that weren't published or scores below the average or zero score according to student's perception, slow acceptance of learning materials, late registration of courses, demand for taking test in other UPBJJ-UT. This is where the role of the leader to the staff in giving explanations and solutions as expected by the students.

Third, it can be seen from the leader's ability in maintaining partnerships with stakeholders to provide information and regular reports on the development and achievement of students studying at UPBJJ-UT, so that if there is a change of leadership to, the good relations with stakeholders can still be maintained.

Effective leadership style is a style that can accommodate conceptual styles of leadership such as authoritarian, democratic, *laisse faire*, motivational, power, supervisory, participatory, transactional, transformational, charismatic, persuasive (Yukl, 2015; Kaloh, 2000; Djaenuri, 2015). In particular, the strengthening of leadership style in UPBJJ-UT Tarakan area tends to be more persuasive, democratic, transformational and motivational in approaching the students with consideration of heterogeneity aspect, even transactional style in operational service such as the provision of examination place, tutorial place, and implementation of the second residential tutorial.

Leadership effectiveness in maintaining good relationships with partners or stakeholders and UT managers in areas by using persuasive, participative, transformative and transactional approaches is quite effective in maintaining service satisfaction. For all the head of UPBJJ-UT, policies that have been issued should be obeyed. Charisma of the leader need to be maintained but not in terms of image building.

The effectiveness of leadership styles in leading and nurturing staff tends to be persuasive, motivative, democratic and authoritarian. This is inseparable from the staff's ability and background, but it needs a separate approach in developing a newly-built UPBJJ-UT.

## **ACCURACY IN IMPLEMENTING SERVICE POLICIES IN UPBJJ**

UPBJJ-UT Tarakan as one of work unit of UT has duties and functions in higher education especially service of open and distance higher education of course will not be apart from policy that have been determined by Ministry of Research, Technology and Higher Education of the Republic of Indonesia in implementing every policy of higher education which have Regulated in Law number 12 Year 2017, Act number 4 Year 2014, and Ministry Regulation, such as: establishment, change and dissolution of higher education; accreditation of study programs and institutions; the implementation of public higher education services, and others. These policies will be operationally implemented in UPBJJ-UT which is enjoyed directly by the community and students.

Considering the seven challenges and heterogeneity faced by UPBJJ-UT Tarakan as mentioned above, it is not an easy thing to operationally to provide services to about 3,600 students with three major service groups, i.e. undergraduate, non-basic education students, basic education students, and graduate students. The ability to implement it clearly will intertwine with the ability of the head of UPBJJ-UT in organizing, interpreting and implementing policy precisely and accurately (Jones, 1993).

The rigidity in implementing those policies will give impacts on student services, such as in the new student orientation service (OSMB) if it is still based on 100 new students as the ticket for holding the OSMB activities will be difficult for regions with geographic contours such as in North Kalimantan. The ability to interpret technical policy is required by a head of UPBJJ-UT to keep the activities of OSMB can be run smoothly as a medium of information for UT and give real picture of UT in general and picture of complexity of students of UPBJJ-UT Tarakan. The implication is that students become confident and passionate to learn in various conditions.

The consequences of a distance higher education must provide opportunities for all students massively and within a broad range, "If an educational organization offers or plans to engage in distance education activities, a qualified individual at an appropriate administrative echelon should be designated with responsibility for providing leadership" Simonson, et.al. (2012). The implementation of policies in distance higher education will not be separated from the ability of the head in interpreting each policy before being implemented.

## CONCLUSIONS

1. The effectiveness of leadership style is the realization of the head of UPBJJ-UT's achievement in achieving annual target of UT's vision and mission. The role is very strategic demanding professionalism and competence in facing challenges and heterogeneous and dynamic problems to provide solution for unfavorable services.
2. The implementation of services is a concrete form to provide service satisfaction to students, stakeholders, or UT managers in the region. The ability of leaders in interpreting policy will determine whether or not students are satisfied with academic and administrative services provided UPBJJ-UT.

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