Using Semester Package System to Increase Grade Point Average Score in Universitas Terbuka

by Sri Yuniati PKH

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in Universitas Terbuka

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Abstract

One of the problems faced by the students of Universitas Terbuka (UT) is the low of Grade

Point Average (GPA) score. To increase it, UT provide a semester package system (SIPAS).

SIPAS is an approach for one program where its courses in curriculum are divided into eight

semester-packaged. By using SIPAS students GPA can be expected to be increased. This

paper discusses the use of SIPAS by students of Agribusiness Study Program, and to know

the percentage of students whose GPA is greater than 2.50 in terms of using the SIPAS type

taken, namely SIPAS Plus, SIPAS Non face to face tutorial and Non SIPAS. Population data

taken from 2,475 students of Agribusiness Study Program registered in year 2013-2015, and

is derived from students who have a first registration in year 1994 to 2015. The sample used

was 825 students who register and take the exam continuously from year 2013 to 2015.

Results of descriptive analysis showed that the percentage of GPA greater than 2.5 is largely

achieved by the students who use SIPAS Plus, followed by Non-SIPAS and SIPAS Non Face

to face tutorial. The results are used to evaluate SIPAS Non face to face tutorial which is the

result did not increase as expected GPA.

Keywords: SIPAS, GPA, Face to face tutorial

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Becoming a student of Universitas Terbuka (UT), one is expected to develop their capability in self-directed learning. Self-Directed Learning (SDL) requires the students to learn by their own initiatives and can be done individually or in group. SDL is defined as the ability to plan, do, and evaluate the learning process by themselves. In practice, no many UT students are capable of effectively performing SDL. One of the weaknesses encountered by UT students is the planning of their study. It is often found that some students take few or too many courses per semester causing failure of the students to optimize their capabilities (if few courses are taken) or plan their study far beyond the capabilities of the students (if too many courses are taken). This situation has allowed UT to establish the policy to make guidance package curricullum. Hence, Directives Package curricullum is further developed as a guideline for the students to plan and complete their study timely, and get maximum GPA (Universitas Terbuka, 2012). Guidance Package curricullum is designed in the form of Semester Package System (SIPAS) by taking into consideration the number of credit semester unit (CSU), structure of competencies in each course and examination. The maximum number of CSU which can be taken by the student in each semester is 24 CSU. However, for working students, the recommended CSU is not more than 18 CSU per semester. There are four SIPAS Services offered by UT, where the difference is the provision of the tutorial. By observing the tutorials given to the students in the SIPAS Services, it is expected that UT will identify which SIPAS are capable of improving the students GPA.

Literature Review

According to Darmayanti (2005), in the context of formal "Long Distance Education System", first-year students must adapt themselves to different learning environment from the

face-to-face education system they used to recognize. One of the methods to help the students develop their SDL is by giving tutorials. So the students can ask and discuss with the Tutor about course materials which they find difficult to understand. On the other hand, Islam (2010) explained that even though Senior-High School graduates may be sufficiently prepared for SDL, when they are admitted as UT's students, they have to determine the need for their study, to plan their study (time and place), to study (time, place and intensity of study), to evaluate their study (to perform exercise, formative test, individual task, tutorial task and measure the results of study), and to seek learning assistance which is provided by UT in the form of tutorial.

Tutorial is a form of learning support offered to UT students. In the tutorial, learning activities are carried out under the assistance of tutor who take role as a facilitator. UT provides 2 (two) tutorial, namely face-to face (FtF) tutorial and online tutorial (Tuton). FtF tutorial and Tuton discuss essential and difficult subjects the students must comprehend. However, utilizing learning support is not the ultimate goal of being UT students. It's only a mediation to achieve a higher goal: being a self-directed learner. Self-directed learner, according to Malcolm Knowles (1975: 18), is an individual who ".... take the initiative, with or without the help of others, in diagnosing their learning needs, formulating learning goals, identifying human and material resources for learning, choosing and implementing appropriate learning strategies, and evaluating learning outcomes". Self-directed learning can be done individually or in groups, both in the study group and in tutorials.

The materials in the tutorial, which are designed for eight sessions include (1) essential competencies or concepts in a course; (2) problems faced by the students in learning the modules; (3) issues related to performance (practicum) of students both inside and outside tutorial class; and/or (4) problems related to the application of the knowledge learned in their daily lifes.

FtF tutorial is organized in eight sessions per course. During the tutorial, students are assigned with three tasks at the 3rd, 5th 7th session. The task which requires conceptual understanding must be completed in the tutorial session, while the task involving performance or practice may be completed outside the tutorial session. In the FtF tutorial, the students are required to participate actively studying the material, attend the sessions, to discuss and to complete the tasks. (UT Catalogue, 2016).

In the Online Tutorial, the students are required to actively participate in studying the initiation materials, to discuss and to complete the tasks. The tasks assigned are completed and sent online to the tutor. Participation assessed on the activity in the study initiation material and the discussions with peer students and tutors (UT Catalogue 2016). If the course is designed in an optimal situation, and the performance of tutor in doing tutorial are good, this may affect the level of learner satisfaction (Sinclaire, 2013) and Herman (2012).

The percentage of tutorial task score contribution in diploma and undergraduate program to the final score is as follows.

a. Task and participation in the course FtF tutorial 50%

b. Task and participation in the course Online Tutorial 30%

c. Task and participation in the Final Task Online Tutorial 50%

d. Task and participation in the Final Task FtF tutorial 50% (especially for Teacher Education Program)

e. Practicum 50 % (UT Strategic Plan 2010-2021 & UT Operational Plan 2014- 2017).

Starting from 2014, the minimum completion standards of final semester examination is applied to the students participating in the tutorial. As per Rector's decree on the threshold score for passing Final Semester Examination it is stated that: The threshold score for passing the Final Semester Examination is 30 (at the scale of 0-100). If the score is lower than 30, the students have failed the course although they have good tutorial or practicum score. The

percentage of tutorial task score contribution in diploma and undergraduate program to the final quality score is as follows.

a. Face-to face tutorial

The aspects evaluated in the FtF tutorial include the completion of tasks and participation in the tutorial. The task and participation score contributes 50% to the course final score if the Final Semester Examination score reaches a minimum of 30.

b. Online tutorial

The aspects evaluated in the Online Tutorial, include the completion of tasks and participation in the tutorial. The task and participation score in the course Online Tutorial contributes 30% to the course final score (UT Strategic Plan 2010-2021 & UT Operational Plan 2014- 2017).

UT developed four types of SIPAS namely SIPAS Plus which is FtF tutorial for all registered-courses and training, SIPAS Full (FtF tutorial for all registered-courses), SIPAS Semi (FtF tutorial for half of the registered-courses), and SIPAS Non-FtF tutorial (No Face to face tutorial). SIPAS is a form of services offered to the UT students based on the experience that GPA of the teacher students using SIPAS Semi is better compared with that of regular students not using SIPAS. The GPA of teacher students to the year of 2013 was 2,64 while GPA score of non-teacher students was 2,57 in the same year (UT Strategic Plan 2010-2021 & UT Operational Plan 2014 - 2017). Based on such experience SIPAS is used as one of the method to improve GPA, mainly for new students graduated from Senior High School and university scholarship beneficiary.

In SIPAS Plus, Full and Semi, the students are required to attend FtF tutorial in 8 sessions per semester. While SIPAS non-FtF tutorial in 8 sessions will be organized by online tutorial. Mercy (2014) found out that students apathy of FtF tutorial rooted from poor perceptions on FtF tutorial and tutors tend to lecture as in face to face to face teaching.

In SIPAS Plus, Full and Semi, there are applicable requirements to be met which include (a) a group (class) of about 25 persons per class, (b) mandatory participation in FtF tutorial based on type of SIPAS. While in the SIPAS Non-FtF tutorial, because the students are not required to attend FtF tutorial, they are not required to form a class.

By using SIPAS Services in which students are given special treatment in the form of FTF tutorial in all and part of the courses taken to SIPAS Plus, Full, Semi, snf using only Online Tutorial to SIPAS non-FtF tutorial, it is expected that SIPAS Services will improve the GPA score of the students. Results of this study was to answer the research questions: Which SIPAS Services resulted in the largest percentage in the improvement of students' GPA score ≥ 2.5?.

The purpose of this research is to provide inputs to the UT policy makers in offering SIPAS Services to the students.

The population selected was 2,475 students from Agribusiness study program in 2013 – 2015. firstly registering in 1994 until 2015. The samples were 825 students whose initial registration and joined the examination for the year 2013-2015 continuously.

Descriptive analysis were used to identify the percentage of GPA score $\geq 2,5$ in each SIPAS used by the students of Agribusiness Study Program namely SIPAS Plus, SIPAS Non-FtF tutorial and Non-SIPAS.

Discussion

1. **Students' GPA score by Services**

Out of 825 samples analyzed, the number of participants were identified as shown in Figure 1 below. Figure 1 shows that most students of Agribusiness Study Program (46.67%) use Non-SIPAS Services, in other words, they are the students taking free courses, not in the form of semester package. While 24.85% that use SIPAS Plus are student's

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beneficiaries from Bidikmisi Scholarship. These students form class and carry out FtF tutorial to each course in the package, while the remaining of 28,48% use SIPAS non-FtF tutorial which mean the students take only Online Tutorial.
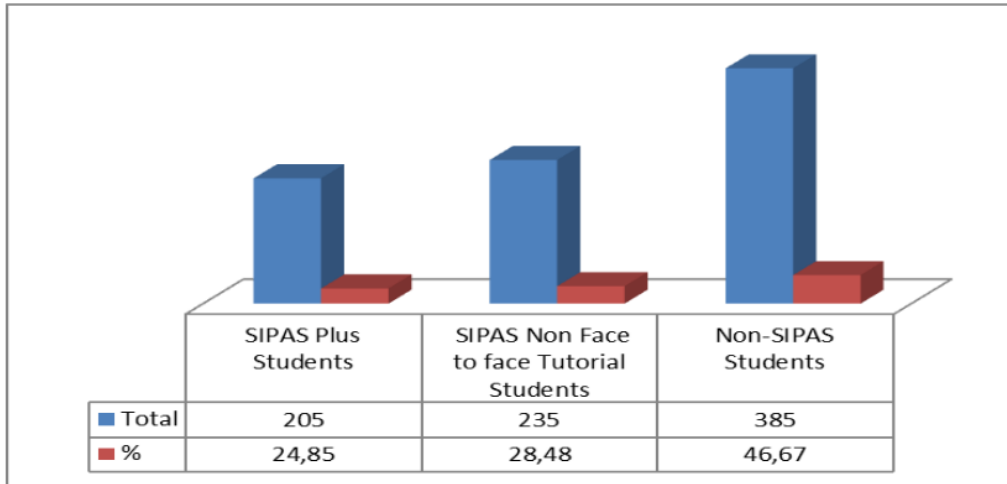

	SIPAS Plus Students	SIPAS Non Face to face Tutorial Students	Non-SIPAS Students
■ Total	205	235	385
■ %	24,85	28,48	46,67

Figure 1. Students in Agribusiness Study Program

Figure 2 shows the percentage of GPA in each SIPAS. It is found that SIPAS Plus shows the largest percentage (37.9%) in GPA score $\geq$ 2.5, followed by the students using regular services or Non-SIPAS, and show later using SIPAS Non-FtF tutorial.

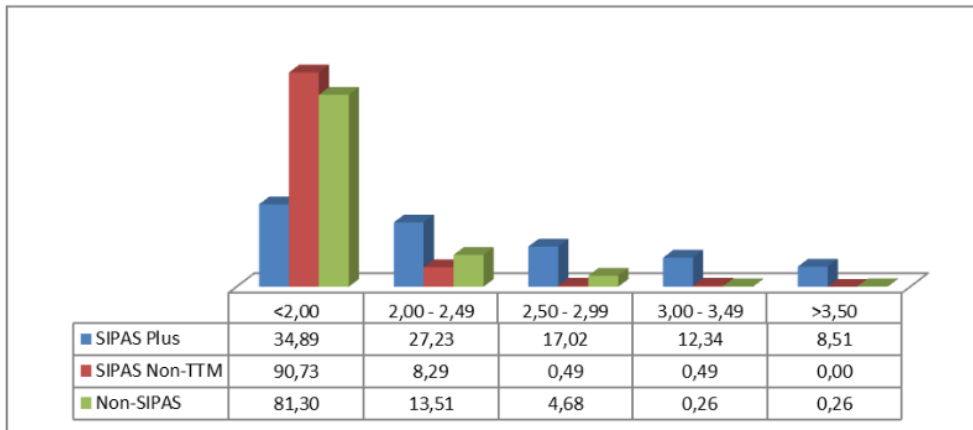|	<2,00	2,00 - 2,49	2,50 - 2,99	3,00 - 3,49	>3,50
■ SIPAS Plus	34,89	27,23	17,02	12,34	8,51
■ SIPAS Non-TTM	90,73	8,29	0,49	0,49	0,00
■ Non-SIPAS	81,30	13,51	4,68	0,26	0,26

Figure 2. GPA Score for Agribusiness Students by Services (%)

There are also unexpected situation in the use of SIPAS non-FtF tutorial and Non-

SIPAS (percentage of GPA score $\geq$ 2.50 of Non-SIPAS is greater than SIPAS Non-FtF tutorial) this condition may be affected by among others:

a. The first year of study is a critical period during which students are adapting themselves to how SDL at UT. In SIPAS Plus they may be supported by FtF tutorial to all courses in the package, while others not (Online Tutorial only, which is also non-mandatory). This is in agreement to what is said by Islam (2010) and Darmayanti (2011).

b. The students with Non-SIPAS Services choose the courses based on their individual capabilities (preparedness for SDL), so this is a need to identify, on the other SIPAS Non-FtF is already set in a package so that the students can learn them by themselves although with less preparedness for SDL, and therefore, the results from Non-SIPAS are better.

c. Packaging in semester one and two on SIPAS service are too strenuous (approximately 20 credits, while the student is still in transition period to study with long distance system).

Figure 3 shows the average GPA of the Agribusiness students by Services.
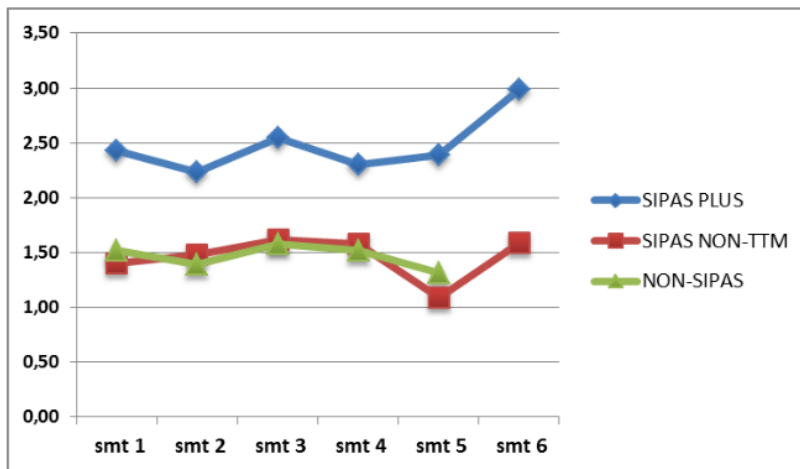

Figure 3. GPA Score of Students by Services

Figure 3 shows that the first and second semester is critical period to students, as expressed by Darmayanti. et. al (2011). However, the critical point since the beginning to the second semester for the students with SIPAS Plus, the average of GPA achieved was more than 2.00 (GPA score >2.00) compared with those taking SIPAS non-FtF tutorial and non-SIPAS, it is shown that the score is less than 1.50 (GPA score <1.50).

d. Online Tutorial offered for free is not or less optimized by the students with SIPAS non-FtF tutorial and Non-SIPAS. This reduces the opportunity for Online Tutorial score contribution which may improve the GPA score. This may be caused by lack of internet accessibility in the residential address of the students.

2. GPA score of Students by Interest in Agribusiness Study Program

Based on the interest in Agribusiness Study Program, it is found that the largest proportion of the students are interested in Agricultural Extension Communication, while only minority of the students are interested in Husbandry and Fisheries.
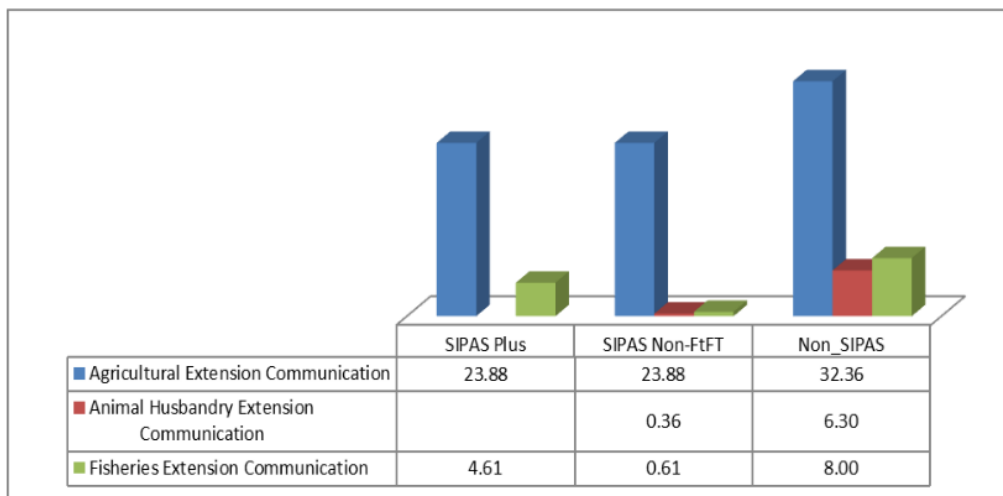
	SIPAS Plus	SIPAS Non-FtFT	Non_SIPAS
■ Agricultural Extension Communication	23.88	23.88	32.36
■ Animal Husbandry Extension Communication		0.36	6.30
■ Fisheries Extension Communication	4.61	0.61	8.00

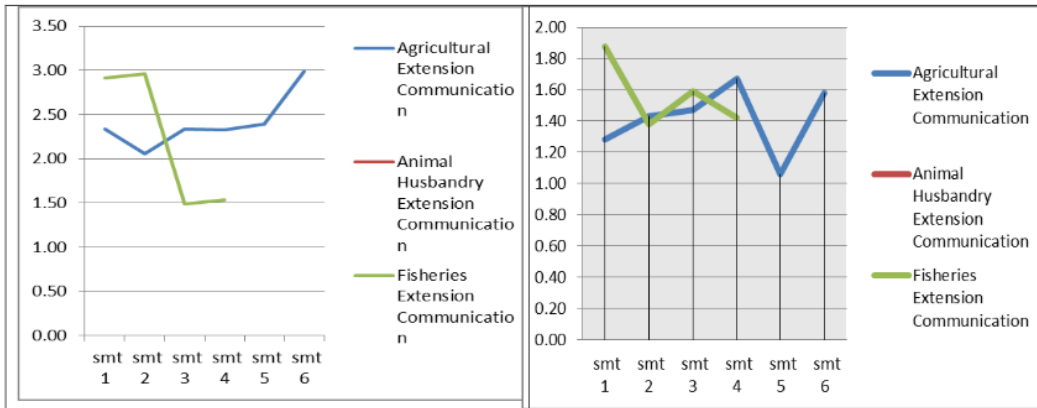**Figure 4. Percentage of Number of Students by Area of Interest**

Figure 5. GPA Score of Students per Area of Interest with SIPAS Plus Services	**Figure 6. GPA Score of Students per Area of Interest with SIPAS Non-Face to face tutorial**

a. Figure 5 and 6 show that there is no student choosing the Agricultural Extension Communication Study Program in SIPAS Plus and SIPAS Non-FtF tutorial.

b. GPA score in the Fishery Extension Communication shows better than GPA score the Agricultural Extension Communication with SIPAS Plus and SIPAS Semi.

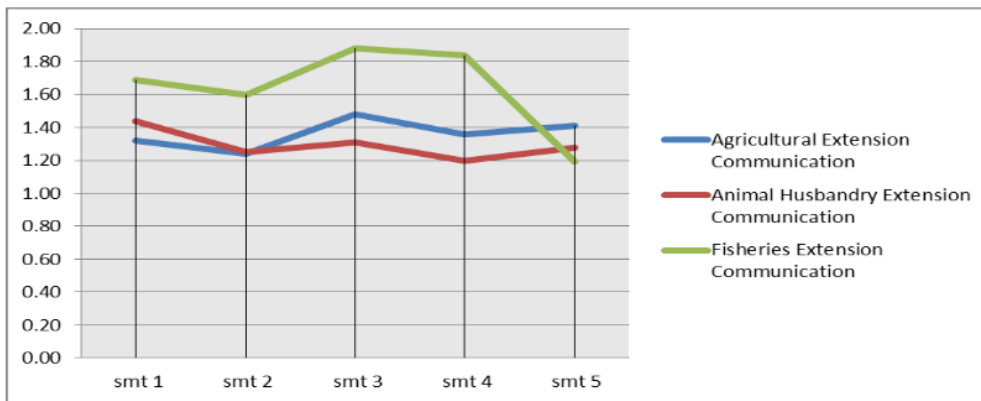c. GPA score of SIPAS Plus was >2,50 while SIPAS Semi <2.00.

Figure 7. GPA Score of Students by Area of Interest with Non- SIPAS Services

Conclusion and Future Study

    d. All areas of interests in the Extension Communication Study Program are chosen by

the students with Non-SIPAS Services with the highest GPA score by Fishery

Extension Communication Study Program <2,00 (Figure 7)

Based on data analysis, it is concluded that SIPAS Plus are proven to have more

participants in achieving GPA score $\geq$ 2.50 followed by Non-SIPAS and SIPAS Non-FtF

tutorial.

Re-evaluation needs to be conducted on SIPAS Non-FtF tutorial mainly the number

of credit semester in the first and second semester, not to overburden the students adapting

themselves to self-directed long distance learning system.

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