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**Building Quality Assurance
For Open and Distance Learning
(Experience from Universitas Terbuka, Indonesia)**

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Subtheme : Quality and ODL – the way forward

BUILDING QUALITY ASSURANCE FOR ODL (EXPERIENCE FROM UT)

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Quality Assurance (QA) in Higher Education has an important role in maintaining and managing the quality of its system. Universitas Terbuka (UT) as the only open distance learning (ODL) system in Indonesia has struggled to build its quality assurance system. Started in 2005, UT using ISO 9001 (quality management system) to manage the operational process in UTs' head office and 36 regional offices. The use of ISO 9001 has a significant result to maintain its quality. However, a thorough recognition of the quality of academic activities and in managing non-academic can not be performed well when only using the ISO 9001 standard. UT requires getting an accreditation from a national accreditation board in Indonesia for higher education which is called Badan Akreditasi Nasional (BAN-PT). Besides that, UT as a member of Asian Association for Open University (AAOU) has to consider the AAOU Statements of Best Practices which was launched by the AAOU in the end of 2010.

From the existing references of standard of QA, UT started to build a new QA system by combining and integrating all existing statements of quality. The results obtained are of the 10 standards covering policy and planning, human resources, internal management, learner and Learners' profile, program design and curriculum development, course design and development, learner support, infrastructure, media and learning resources, learner assessment and evaluation, and research and community services with 120 statements of best practices. Implementation of this new QA system will contribute to the process of maintaining the UT's quality.

Keywords : QA, standard, statements of best practices

1. INTRODUCTION

Quality is always at the first priorities in producing a product in daily life. It occurs because a quality consists of elements of efforts to surpass customer satisfaction, products, services, process and environment. In producing goods or services, aspects relating to result, process, and environment need to reckon. Result and process aspects relate to fulfillment of customer expectation while environment aspect relates to the always changing condition following the changing world. Quality issues also become a concern in education that emerge standards in determining quality of products, process, and environment.

In accordance with Act of the Republic of Indonesia Number 20, Year 2003 on The National Education System (later on called UU SISDIKNAS), to maintain the quality education, the government established National Education Standard Bureau that developed National Education Standard later on called NES (Government Regulation Number 19 of 2005). The NES consists eight standards covering standards of 1) content, 2) process, 3) graduate competencies, 4) educators and educational personnel 5) facilities, 6) management, 7) finance, 8) educational evaluation.

To meet or to surpass the eight standards, each educational unit both in formal and non-formal is obliged to carry out educational quality assurance. Quality Assurance System in Higher Education is a synergy of Study Program Self-evaluation, Higher Education accreditation (one of them is National Accreditation Board for Higher Education or BAN-PT) and Quality assurance. Quality Assurance System in Higher Education is implemented based on institutions (Dirjen Dikti, 2008).

BAN-PT, an independent institution established by the government of the Republic of Indonesia based on UU SISDIKNAS, develops instruments to evaluate and accredit all academic programs offered by higher education institutions by referring to the National Education Standard. In 2010, BAN-PT managed to complete evaluation and accreditation instruments for Distance Higher Education Institutions. It means that the quality education managed by UT as a Distance Higher Education Institution is acknowledged by the authority and legal institution of the Republic of Indonesia.

UT as a Distance Higher Education Institution is established in 1984. The initial students were 65,000 and it rose sharply up to 600,000 in 2010. UT tries its best to manage four faculties.

Managing an organization with a huge number of students residing in all over Indonesia (more than 17,000 islands) is a great task. UT is committed to maintain both the academic quality in the four faculties and operational management carried out by the 37 Regional Offices (ROs).

2. QUALITY ASSURANCE POLICY AT UT

UT commitment to quality began in 2001 by adopting *Asian Association of Open Universities (AAOU)* framework. It resulted in UT Quality Assurance System consisting of 9 components and 107 quality statements that have to be implemented. The 9 components are:

1. Policy and planning (7 statements)
2. Human resource recruitment and development (9 statements)
3. Management and administration (21 statements)
4. Learners (10 statements)
5. Program design and development (6 statements)
6. Course design and development (14 statements)
7. Learning supports (18 statements)
8. Assessment of student learning (15 statements)
9. Media for learning (7 statements)

The result of UT self evaluation determine the first priorities that have to be carried out to begin the quality assurance by developing quality assurance guidelines for all existing processes. The development of quality assurance involved the whole stakeholders and took more than two years to complete. UT also established Centers of Quality Assurance that takes care of the development of UT quality assurance. The center reports directly to the Rector.

In 2004, UT had 215 quality assurance guidelines. They were distributed to all units to learn. Every semester, the units made a report on the conformity of the guidelines to the daily activities. If inconformity occurred, the guidelines were then revised. The revision was undertaken every year until 2005. In that year, UT began to established easier and comprehensive quality assurance guidelines starting from the objectives, targets, up the evaluation of the target and ways of improvement and prevention.

To achieve acknowledgment of the quality process UT used ISO as standard for management quality system that was implemented in Learning Material Services Center (LMSC) in 2005. LMSC was selected as the first unit used ISO 900 because the process in this center was quite resemblance to the process in industry. In fact, ISO 900 is generally used in industry. The preparation of LMSC to achieve ISO 9001 began with the revision of the existing guidelines and added quality targets. Some other matters were also prepared especially processes related with other units. LMSC is not a single and autonomous unit since the process in this unit related with other units, for example with faculties in developing learning materials, Multimedia Production Center (MPC) in preparing manuscripts of learning materials. The masters of the learning materials are then printed by outsourcing companies after selected by Division of Administration and Household (DAH). The printed learning materials, after passing quality control carried out by MPC, are sent to LMSC to be distributed to the 37 ROs, Student Group Study and Online Bookstore.

If one process is interrupted, for instance learning material development is behind the schedule, it will have an effect to the next processes, for example MPC will be late in providing masters of learning material, DAH will be late in printing the learning materials, and the end process will not meet the quality target of LMSC namely students collect the learning material in time. LMSC received ISO certificate after a delay because some major findings still occurred and needed to improve. Eventually, in 2006 LMSC received the first

ISO 9001. In the same year, UT began to improve the quality some processes by using ISO 9001 standard. The processes were learning material and examination items development, RO management, academic-administrative service, promotion and cooperation. The achievement of ISO 9001 certificates can be seen at the table below.

Table 1. Achievement of ISO 9001 in UT

No	Year	Certified Process	Units
1	2006	Learning Material Delivery Services	LMSC
2	2007	Development of Learning and Examination Materials	Faculty, LPBAUSI (PMC and Examination Center)
		Student Learning Services	11 Regional Offices
3	2008	Academic Administration Services	BAAPM
		Student Learning Services	12 Regional Offices
		Promotion and Cooperation	
4	2009	Merge of no 1 and 2 become Development and Delivery Learning and Examination Materials	
		Student Learning Services	8 Regional Offices
5	2010	Student Learning Services	Merge of 25 Regional Offices
		Student Learning Services	5 Regional Offices
6	2011	Student Learning Services	1 Regional Office

Some processes passed a tough certification process. Even though they have been trained, some units were not ready. It resulted in the certification delay. Geographic situations of the ROs and human resources were among the cause of the delay.

ISO 9001 Certification in UT was chosen to measure the existing quality management system because at that time there was not an appropriate standard to measure academic quality used by higher education managing distance higher education system. UT invited BAN-PT to accredit UT. The instruments used, however, were those to accredit face-to-face higher education institutions. This condition initiated UT to earn acknowledgment from International Council for Distance Education (ICDE), the leading global membership organization for the open and distance education community, and is open to institutions, educational authorities, commercial actors, and individuals. ICDE reviewed UT two times, in 2005 and in 2010.

3. THE FUTURE OF UT QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM

The Implementation of ISO 9001 as a way to measure quality management in all processes at UT, in fact, helps certified units improve the management system. However, if only used ISO 9001, the acknowledgment for the whole quality in academic and non academic management cannot be well achieved.

UT needs a national and international accreditation declaring that UT has a specific quality standard and may not be the same as face-to-face higher education institutions. By implementing accreditation instruments from BAN-PT for Distance Higher Education, UT had an opportunity to earn a national accreditation. In 2010, UT eventually earned B accreditation for all study programs offered.

To improve the quality academic, UT always tries to find the most appropriate standards that meet the UT characteristics as a distance higher education institution. At the end of 2010, AAOU released AAOU QA statements of best practices as a standard showing best practices of universities managing ODL throughout Asia. These best practices can be used as references on how ODL maintain the quality of academic and non academic managed by distance higher education institutions.

For the quality of academic improvement purposes, in 2011 UT revised its quality assurance policy that adopted from AAOU QA Framework. The revised version is an integration of AAOU Statements of Best Practices, instruments for distance higher education from BAN-PT, ICDE quality review, National Education Standard, and UT Strategic Plan. The new policy will be able to accommodate UT as a distance higher education institution that has academic and non academic standards that earns national and international acknowledgment. With this integrated quality policy, it is expected that starting from 2012 UT will be able to achieve academic quality that earns national and international accreditation.

4. LESSON LEARNT

UT as the only distance higher education institution utilizing single does not earn quality standards easily either for academic management or for operational management. BAN-PT as a certification body also needs a quite long time to compose quality evaluation instruments specifically for distance higher education

AAOU Statements of Best Practices, BAN-PT instruments, and the existing quality assurance regulation for education enable UT to draw up quality assurance policy that meets UT characteristics as a distance higher education that is acknowledged nationally and internationally.

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