3

Proceedings

QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

ASIAN UNIVERSITY PRESIDENTS FORUM 2009

OCTOBER 19 - 21, 2009
HOTEL BOROBUDUR, JAKARTA - INDONESIA

Hosted by:

UNIVERSITAS NEGERI JAKARTA

Building Future Leaders

Organized by FE UNJ

3

Endorsed by:

THE MINISTRY OF CULTURE AND TOURISM OF THE REPUBLIC OF INDONESIA

JAKARTA GOVERNMENT TOURISM OFFICE

Enjoy Jakarta

Media Partners:

The Jakarta Post

KBR68H

MEDIA INDONESIA mediaindonesia.com

Asia Calling Your window on Asia

IMPLEMENTING QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM IN A LARGE-SCALE OPEN AND DISTANCE EDUCATION INSTITUTION AT UNIVERSITAS TERBUKA

Tian Belawati, Aminudin Zuhairi & Sri Yuniati P. K. Hardini
Universitas Terbuka, Indonesia

Introduction

Over the past few years, there has been significant growth of quality assurance activities for higher education at institutional, national, regional and global levels. Growing interests by the public and stakeholders in the accountability of higher education have encouraged governments to establish national quality assurance and accreditation agencies. The definition of quality assurance may differ, but quality assurance shares commonalities of purposes in terms of ensuring that students receive high quality and relevant education and that degrees are widely recognized by governments and employers.

Quality assurance involves systematic management and assessment procedures in order to monitor performance against objectives, and to ensure achievement of quality outputs and quality improvements. Quality assurance facilitates recognition of the standards of awards, serves public accountability purposes, helps inform student choice, contribute to improved teaching learning and administrative processes, and help disseminate best practices leading to overall improvement of higher education system. However, setting common standards and evaluation criteria should take into account diversity and plurality of higher education within national as well as regional system.

The term QA generally refers to a process of defining and fulfilling a set of quality standards consistently and continuously to satisfy all consumers, producers, and the other defined stakeholders. In engineering and manufacturing for example, quality control or quality assurance is a set of measures taken to ensure that defective products or services are not produced, and that the design meets performance requirements. It includes the regulation of the quality of raw materials, assemblies, products and components; services related to production; as well as management, production, and inspection processes. QA programs typically include peer or utilization review procedures to remedy any identified deficiencies in quality.

Quality education has been placed high on the agenda of educational leaders, policy makers, and practitioners, in line with the increased demand for quality education from the consumers. In many societies, stakeholders have increasingly high expectations to have an educational system which generates quality products, services, processes, and graduates in return for their increasingly greater contribution to educational Endeavour.

Governments also want to ensure the accountability of educational institutions, whose source of income come from public funding. Stakeholders in general have serious concerns over educational quality in order to meet the challenge for creating high-caliber human resources in order to strive and win global partnerships and competitions. It has become imperative for educational institutions to improve the quality of educational provision continuously.

Quality Assurance in Open and Distance Learning

Quality has always been an issue in open and distance education (ODE). As distance education initially grew during the industrial era and is considered as the industrialization of education, people had always been emphasizing its strength for enhancing access to education (Peters & Taylor in Belawati, 1999). This has driven many countries to adopt distance education system as parts of their educational system (Garrison in Belawati, 1999). This paradigm of access was in line with the belief in student's autonomy and independence in learning once the learning materials have been developed (Moore in Belawati, 1999). Nevertheless, as the industrial society has moved toward the post-industrial era, distance education has also evolved concerning more for quality. This has then became the new paradigm of distance education, in which the importance of interactive communication between students and tutors, and among student themselves is emphasized (Garrison & Sewart in Belawati 1999). It is within this paradigm that quality assurance (QA) has become one of the key aspects in planning and managing open and distance learning (ODE) provisions.

ODE stakeholders have become increasingly interested in quality issues. Learners demand quality ODE services for which they have to pay partially or completely. Stakeholders require ODE providers to pay serious attention to quality in terms of products, processes, production and delivery systems as well as philosophy. Total quality approach, which covers not only products but also services and processes, has been regarded a useful method of looking at the whole process of ODE. Achievement, continuous improvement and maintenance of quality standards become primary targets of ODE institutions. There has been some doubt that quality might be difficult to achieve in ODE organization but this skepticism has been unfounded.

Quality improvement becomes imperative for ODE providers, and governments have set up quality agencies intended to address the challenge for improving the quality of educational practice. Pressures for quality improvement have emerged from both internal and external parties. Internally, ODE institutions are challenged to undertake continuous improvement of their services. Externally, stakeholders have persistently questioned the quality, accountability, effectiveness and efficiency of educational system in which they have interest and to which they make contribution as users. And for

many ODE institutions, funding levels and student enrollments in distance education programs depend on quality of performance and services of these institutions.

Quality in ODE is most often viewed in terms of materials produced, despite the importance of the process component. Judging the quality of products in ODE is relatively easy. The course materials, which are often the major means of engaging with the learners, are tangible, publicly visible, open to scrutiny by students and other interested parties, and it is much easier to judge the quality of a tangible product than of less tangible aspects such as learning process, teamwork, or management (COL, 1997). Quality in ODE covers a number of aspects including products, processes, production and delivery system, and philosophy (COL, 1997). Quality of products includes such things as course materials, number of graduates, examination pass rates, and admission in further studies. Quality of processes covers areas such as learning and teaching processes, advising students, coordinating external course and test item writers, networking with regional offices, managing student information. Quality of production and delivery system includes course production, print and multimedia production, test item production, scheduling, warehousing and stock control, getting materials to students, and transmission of broadcast. Quality of philosophy covers such things as vision, mission and policy statement, institutional culture, governance, corporate culture, and public image.

In terms of products, the quality of ODE varies from one institution to another, depending on priorities, resources and size and potential student body to serve. ODE institutions in developed countries to a larger extent have used ICT-based courses, while those institutions in developing countries use printed materials as a major medium of instructional delivery. The use of ICT in ODE system in the developing country is still at experimental stages, and even though the institution is ready to experiment with modern ICT-based courses, access and participation by students is still relatively low. It is the challenge for institutions in developing countries to socialize and educate students, educators and the society in using ICT facilities for ODE enterprise.

Quality of processes is more difficult to address than products. Various kinds of learning supports may be provided by institutions, such as tutorial services, organized study groups, library access, and access to learning resources. However, students are at liberty whether or not to fully use these facilities. The challenge for the institution is not only to provide learning support but also to encourage student participation and use of this support to ensure quality learning processes. The management and decision making processes are also difficult to assess. It is even more difficult to assess and takes some time to observe how the quality of decision making has positive and productive impact on an institution.

In terms of production and delivery system, ODE may be likened to industrial

management. Management is crucial in ODE, as management activities follow assembly-line procedures and some jobs require craftsmanship. Deadlines and schedules have to be timely met. What goes wrong in one activity can have devastating effects on further subsequent activities. For instance, delays in meeting course development deadlines can result in delays in production, printing, dispatching, and eventually in students receiving materials. Even examination schedules may have to be delayed, otherwise students may perform badly in the examinations. The process of course, test item and media development as well as tutorial services requires professional craftsmanship.

In terms of philosophy, institutional vision, mission, and policy documents are often well stated and circulated widely among staff. The problem is often how staff understands the meaning of these documents. The challenge for ODE leaders are to engineer change and ensure that staff focuses their activities and priorities on institutional goals and missions. Consultation and communication between institutional leaders and staff are needed to socialize and internalize these ideas. Implementation of institutional mission, policy and strategy requires constant follow up and guidance from the top level administration.

QA can be adopted as effective method and tool to respond to the challenge of quality in ODE. QA is not an effort to create quality, but rather it is a systematic and comprehensive effort to improve quality. QA is not a means to achieve particular target and develop procedures, but rather it is a continuous process of improvement. QA is based on the assumption that quality can be improved continuously. Systems and procedures that are developed for this purpose ensure that staff continuously and critically question the quality of ODE products and processes and attempt to improve it. QA is inspired by the business practice, and therefore, it uses the language commonly applied in business, such as customer, service, product, and efficiency. Traditionally, educational institutions consider such an approach as being inappropriate; however, escalating pressures from stakeholders for greater accountability requires ODE institutions to have quality self-assessment. ODE system operates like service organization, in which there is industry-like operations, such as the design, development, production, and distribution of multimedia learning materials.

Implementing QA principles in a distance education institution is an overwhelming task. It takes a great deal of effort, patience, systematic try-out, socialization and training to ensure that innovation is a productive effort. It is common in organizations that people talk about quality, but they may not know exactly what it means, and how it is to be provided, to be maintained and to be improved continuously. Changing mindset is one of the biggest tasks in an innovation, and it requires a great deal of courage and constant commitment of the top leaders of an institution. Implementation of QA implies change

of work culture of staff at all levels in. Everyone in the organization would have to think about and do something real for quality improvement in every steps of work activities they are doing. In theory, drafting organizational change and improvement could be easy. In practice, leading people towards change is a formidable task. People tend to maintain status quo, and resist new ideas, even if these ideas are to improve their professional practice.

Realizing the fact that change is difficult and as the effort to increase the accountability of the educational institutions, the Indonesian Ministry of National Education (MONE) for example states that a higher education institution must have a QA system, which will ensure the realization of its vision in satisfying the stakeholders' social, industrial, as well as professional needs. To ensure the application of any QA system within universities, the Ministry of National Education through its Directorate General of Higher Education has made institutional reports of implementation of QA as one of the requirements for obtaining the government funding through both competitive and devoted funding schemes. Even without this external pressure, Universitas Terbuka (UT) has been committed to and implementing an internal QA system to assure its accountability to its stakeholders.

About Universitas Terbuka

Indonesia started using a DE system in 1955 with the establishment of a correspondence diploma program for upgrading teachers. However, it was not until 1981 when two distance education projects were started to give in-service training to secondary and tertiary level teachers that distance education system was widely utilized. These programs were established as crash programs for teacher training to keep up with the demand for additional teachers. Subsequently, the skills of those teachers who needed upgrading could only be met with distance education, since regular training was too expensive and replacing teachers for further training was difficult. It was these programs which later formed a part of the Indonesia Open University or Universitas Terbuka (UT) in 1984, a state and the only university in Indonesia that is entirely using DE mode of teaching.

UT is a nation-wide basis university serving 596,922 thousand students at present. To ensure the efficient operation of the daily activities, UT has a strong centralized management system with its Head Office (HO) located in the capital city of Jakarta and 37 Regional Offices (ROs) throughout the country. Although the offices are located in relatively big cities within the local area, it does not mean that they have the appropriate infrastructure for accessing electronic communication. Despites some development which have been carried out to enhance the use of ICT, the communication between the ROs and the HO relies mostly on mail and courier services, telephone, or facsimile. The

use of ICT-based communication channel such as e-mails have only been started to be used more extensively within the last two years.

UT offers over 800 courses through 32 Study Programs under four faculties: the Faculty of Economics and Developmental Studies (FEKON), the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences (FISIP), the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences (FMIPA), and the Faculty of Teacher Training and Educational Studies (FKIP). UT also has Graduate Program offerring Master of Public Administration, Master of Management, and Master of Fishery Management. The Faculty of Education offers only in-service training programs for practicing primary and secondary school teachers, while the other three faculties are open for high school graduates as well as working adults.

Establishment of QA Centre and Adoption of QA framework

The changing paradigm in higher education management including higher education at a distance, in Indonesia and worldwide has triggered UT to implement a quality assurance system. Quality assurance (QA) is a systematic and comprehensive process to improve quality continuously. QA system ensures that all staff continuously question and improve the quality of distance education in terms of philosophy, process, product and services.

Historically, "quality" has for a while become one of the key agendas of the government and higher education institutions, although many institutions have constraints to put the idea into a concrete practice. A similar challenge has also been confronted by UT. Efforts to improve the quality of distance education services have already existed in UT. Up until 2001, a number of UT policy documents and strategic plans have clearly defined "quality" as one of the key words. However, it was only in 2001 when UT developed its *2001-2005 Operational Plan,* that "quality" was explicitly focused on three areas, i.e. improvement of: (1) academic quality, (2) student participation, and (3) internal management (UT, 2001).

Based on that *2001-2005 Operational Plan,* a concrete action was taken in the form of the establishment of a *Quality Assurance System Committee* in October 2001. Comprising 10 people, under direct supervision by the Rector and Vice Rectors, this small Committee worked out to develop the university's quality policy manual. The first assignment for the Committee was to develop a framework for UT quality assurance system. Being one of the founding fathers of the *Asian Association of Open University* (AAOU), the Committee believes that the *AAOU Quality Assurance Framework* (which was still a draft at that time) should be referred to and adopted for implementation at UT. Based on the AAOU framework, the Committee then formulated the university's QA policies in consultation with the university's high officials followed with in-depth discussion with numerous staff in various units throughout the university. Eventually, all

key people agreed on the policies stated in a quality policy manual called *Sistem Jaminan Kualitas* (Quality Assurance System) *Universitas Terbuka* (UT, 2002) abbreviated as SIMINTAS.

Quality improvement then becomes a real action. The quality policy manual was further presented and socialized during the annual National Coordination Meeting, held in the UT Headquarters in April 2002. The outcome of the Meeting was quality self-assessment and recommendations for improvement. The University then took follow-up actions through the writing of quality assurance manuals. The purpose of the writing of the manuals is to systematically document UT operational activities and procedures, continuously improve them, and consistently apply the documented procedures in daily activities. The writing of these quality assurance manuals involved a lot of small teams from various units throughout the university, altogether comprising about 200 academic as well as administrative staff. They work intensively and cooperatively to write the manuals, try them out, improve them continuously, and then apply them consistently. The significant outcome of such activities is the development of a learning organization, in which people readily learn the best practices of others.

During the subsequent National Coordination Meeting in March 2003, the implementation of SIMINTAS was formally established with the Rector's Letter of Decision on the Use of QA Manuals to perform daily activities. In 2003, initially 113 QA manuals were produced, documenting UT operational activities and were ready for use to perform various activities and operations of the university. Then on July 21, 2003, the *Quality Assurance System Committee* was formalized and converted into the *QA Centre* known as the *Pusat Jaminan Kualitas* abbreviated as PUSMINTAS. Beginning the year 2004, UT entered the new year with "*the Spirit of Quality Assurance System*" called the "*Gelora SIMINTAS*", in which UT has transformed itself into becoming a full-fledged learning organization.

The year 2004 is a significant milestone for UT, which has driven UT to adhere to the following requirements in order to achieve its vision and missions: (1) the use of QA manuals consistently, (2) implementation and integration of QA system into annual action plans for continuous improvement, (3) participation, supervision, and motivating staff to accomplish sets of specified targets by the management, and (4) establishment of quality, effective and efficient work culture following specified systems and procedures documented in the QA manuals.

QA implementation has changed the existing management practice fundamentally. As in any changes, it has been felt that some of the staff attempted to react unfavourably to the fundamental change, as it has put some pressures, or even some sort of threats, to their conventional work styles. Quality improvement necessitates significant efforts, commitment and investment in terms of time, resources and cost. Being a shared

responsibility of management and staff, QA implementation requires active participation from all people within the institution. The efforts have involved all people and resources through clear direction, leadership and high commitment to improve quality continuously as required by the students and other stakeholders in order to achieve the institution's vision and missions.

The Steps of QA System Implementation

As stated previously, UT has adopted the *Asian Association of Open Universities (AAOU) Quality Assurance (QA) Framework*. To contextualize the framework, UT modified the statements of best practices in the *AAOU QA Framework* and developed indicators in accordance with UT's unique needs and relevance to the Indonesian context. Specifically, the implementations of the framework were conducted through the following steps.

1. Development of QA policy manual.
2. Self-evaluation and Priority setting for quality improvement.
3. Development of QA Job Manuals
4. Implementation and Revision of QA Job Manuals.
5. Continuous evaluation of QA implementation.

1. Development of QA policy manual

Based on the adopted QA framework, the PUSMINTAS Team formulated the university's QA policies, which was formatted in the form of statements of best practices. The policies, which later be known as the QA Policy Manual, is comprising of 107 best practice statements within the following 9 main components, reflecting the comprehensive needs to operate quality distance education programs.

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

2. Self-evaluation and Priority Setting

In order for UT to understand the existing stage of quality, it was considered important to first self-evaluate the perceived quality of every aspects within the university's operations in comparison to the best practices stated in the QA Policy

Manual. The next step of implementation was to translate the Policy Manual into a self-evaluation instrument on each of the best practice statements. The quality self-evaluation was carried out, starting from the lowest unit level (e.g. academic department), and moving higher up to the university top management level. Units were asked to undertake an honest and consistent self-judgment on the fulfillment of each quality indicators. The results of quality self-assessment indicated both the low and high perceived quality levels of each aspect stated in the best practice manual. The self-evaluation activity has been conducted periodically.

3. Development of QA Job Manuals

Based on the results of the self-evaluation, the next priority was set to develop the Job Manuals as standards for reference, containing well-defined and clearly stated systems and procedures, records of activities, and work instructions for use by staff in their daily activities and for continuous improvement. System and procedures describe detailed work flows and activities, indicating clearly defined performance standard, time standard, expected output, workflow, as well as the needed resources and competencies to perform each job.

The system component of the manuals is analysed in terms of internal unit performing the tasks and the relationship between that particular units with other units in performing particular activities. The outcome of the system analysis is put forth in the form of mapping of activities and relation among various activities in terms of visual flowchart with clear description for each of the activities. The procedures in the manuals indicate the different stages of activities organised systematically to accomplish the defined whole activities. The component of procedures includes objective, scope, definition, reference, requirement, related unit(s), and description about performed activities.

The manuals were developed by and for the users themselves, and therefore the writing process were done by many small teams involving hundreds of staff from various units who were writing manuals related to their respective jobs and activities. In short, the process of writing manuals were done in several phases, i.e., (1) determining the manual to be developed, (2) developing the outline of the manual, (3) writing the first draft of the manual, (4) reviewing the first draft, (5) revising the draft, and (6) using the manual. Every single unit in UT should have specific working procedures. The number of job manuals developed has increased as there have been strong perceived needs to develop more job manuals to facilitate staff in performing their daily work. Up to the end of 2005, UT has developed 198 job manuals that have been used in performing various tasks. The number of manuals have been reduced significantly as UT can identify work activites accurately and efficently.

4. Implementation and Revision of QA Job Manuals

Implementation of QA requires careful step-by-step process. Initially, socialisation and training of staff has been conducted, so that they understand the procedures and are sure of what they have to do. Effective QA implementation means that the manuals are used consistently by all staff in performing their daily tasks. Job Manuals are documentation of activities, so that implementation should be a natural process. Staff are required asked to perform activities, bearing in mind that all standards and indicators have been written in the manuals. The heads and senior managers of each unit are responsible to set examples, provide guidance, supervision and training during the entire implementation process. Manuals are reviewed to ensure system effectivess, ewfficiency and customer satisfaction.

5. Continuous evaluation of QA implementation

Effective implementation of QA requires change in the mindset and work culture of staff institution. Lessons learnt from successful institutions in implementing QA requires everyone within the institution to respect and apply quality values and culture in performing their daily activities. The challenge for the top management is to carefully manage innovations and changes in work cultures and transform the existing culture into the quality work culture. Implementing QA in a large ODE institution such as UT necessitates constant commitment, strong perseverance, solid *esprit de corps*, and intensive effort for implementation.

The role of human resources is significant in QA implementation in order to make things happen. For that reason, units and individuals performing high quality processes and outputs should be fairly rewarded. Therefore, implementation of QA system is linked with performance appraisal system of unit and indivdual staff. With this system, quality performers will be well rewarded, while under performers will be trained to achieve the expected quality levels. This means that there is a fair system of appraisal so that improved individual human performance will eventually lead to improving unit and institutional performance.

Implementation of the QA system in UT since 2003 has evolved and assisted UT in transforming itself to become a dynamic learning organization. The QA implementation strategy has triggered all staff to refer to manuals in performing daily activities consistently. Staff involved in any particular tasks have been made aware of continuously redefining their performance indicators and improving system. Job manuals have been revised continuously to suit changing needs of efficient and effective system. *"Quality begins with ourseleves"*. The strong commitment of UT top management has made everyone work constructively and continuously improve quality.

External Assessment and Accreditation

Quality assurance is an internal process to continuously improve quality to satisfy stakeholders. Quality requires external assessment. The institution itself has to make sure that a certain level of quality has been achieved and continuously improved. The importance of external quality assessment is also prevalent for the improvement of internal QA system and processes itself. The process of external quality assessment will force the assessed institution to prove the 'soundness' of its internal QA system evidenced by documented procedures and products of the institution. And it is for those reasons that UT invites different external quality assessors from different agencies, namely the International Council for Open and Distance Education (ICDE) Standard Agency (ISA), the International Organization for Standardisation (ISO) agency, and the National Accreditation Board for Indonesian Higher Education (BAN-PT).

As the largest membership organization within the online, flexible and blended learning, including e-learning and distance education community, ICDE has actively engaged in the challenging question of quality assessment and certification of trans-national education, especially of ODE and web-based courses worldwide. The ICDE-ISA was established as a global actor in the field of quality assessment, to promote public confidence that the quality of provision and standards of awards in open, distance and e-learning are being safeguarded and enhanced. As stated in its official publication (see URL www.idce.org), ISA's audits does not involve an audit of academic standards of courses or qualifications, since there exist no agreed international standards for qualifications, curriculum and academic content, although various elements of these can be, and often are, regulated by a country or a region. It assumes that institutions will be operating within the overall national and/or state legislation and guidelines, which are applicable to them at any given time. The ISA's audit is concerned with the quality and standards of services to students at the point of delivery and an institution's responsibility for what is done in its name. In short, at the centre of the audit process is an emphasis on students - in terms of the quality of the information they receive about their programs of study and the ways in which their learning is facilitated and supported so that they can achieve in practice what they might reasonably expect to achieve. Therefore, the obtainment of ISA's Certificate of Quality and International Accreditation in September 2005 re-assured UT's stakeholders about UT's high commitment on providing quality distance education in Indonesia. It has also provided UT's management and staff with feedback on what have been achieved and what necessary further actions needed to be taken for further and continuous improvement.

The International Organization for Standardization (ISO) is a global network that

identifies what International Standards are required by business, government and society, develops them in partnership with the sectors that will put them to use, adopts them by transparent procedures based on national input and delivers them to be implemented worldwide. ISO standards distil an international consensus from the broadest possible base of stakeholder groups. Expert input comes from those closest to the needs for the standards and also to the results of implementing them. In this way, although voluntary, ISO standards are widely respected and accepted by public and private sectors internationally. The efforts to get ISO certification is intended to foster UT's internal transparency and commitment on the use of previously self-developed standardized procedures. The preparation for ISO certification started in 2005, and in March 2006 UT was awarded certification for ISO 9001:2000 for the quality management system of course materials distribution from the Headquarters to Regional Offices. In the same year in 2006, UT was also making the necessary preparation for ISO 9001:2000 certifications in the development of learning and examination materials, and distance learning services for 11 Regional Offices.

In 2007 UT was awarded ISO 9001:2000 certificates in distance learning services for 11 Regional Offices, and 1 ISO 9001:2000 certificate for Development of Learning Materials and Examination Materials. In 2008, further 13 Regional Offices were also certified with ISO 9001:2000. At the same time in UT Head Office, ISO 9001:2000 certificate was awarded for the areas of Academic Administration Services and Cooperation and Promotion. In the beginning of 2009, one Regional Office was awarded ISO 9001:2000 certificate. During the year 2009, UT is also preparing the remaining 12 Regional Offices for ISO 9001:2008 certification in distance learning services. It is expected that all Regional Offices will be ISO 9001:2008 certified in distance learning services by the end of 2009. To ensure health and safety requirements in the workplace, UT is also making preparation for OHSAS 18001 certification in 2009.

The plan for 2010 is preparing to achieve ISO 20000 for Information Technology Service Management (ITSM). UT attempts to maintain and keep the system works consistently and ensure continuous improvement. In order to somply with government regulations, UT is also preparing to adopt the National Standard of Education and enrich it with consistent implementation of quality management system in its core business activities.

The third external auditor is the National Accreditation Board for Indonesia Higher Education (BAN-PT). This is an accreditation certification that emphasizes in the quality of input, process, and output of education at academic department/study program level. The assessment is done through desk evaluation of the university's portfolio, the Study Program's Self-Evaluation Report and completed accreditation instruments, as well as site visit that includes observations and interviews with representatives of the

university's and the faculty's top management, support staff, tutors, and students. The accreditation is granted to individual Study Program within a university, once the respective Study Program has fulfilled the performance indicators set by the Board. The accreditation status is valid for five years and it has to be maintained regularly. At the writing time of this paper, UT is in the process of renewing the accreditation of all its Study Programs.

It is with the three external quality assessors emphasizing in slightly different aspects of UT's management, services, and products, UT is confident to move progressively in its QA system. UT considers the external quality audit is as important as the internal QA process. The most important part of the accreditation process is not in the obtainment of the certificate but more in the course of action of getting it. The process of getting each certification and or accreditation has enforced all parties involved to diligently follow the standardized SOP and strictly assure that all the services and products satisfy the main stakeholders.

Lessons Learned and Concluding Remarks

There are lessons learned from the QA implementation at UT. An important step taken by the UT has been serious commitment to QA implementation. QA is more than just stated policy documents, rather it is integrated into the operational planning of the University. Serious commitment also means the willingness to invest resources for QA-related activities. Unit planning and development activities should be based on effort to improve the quality of product and services continuously.

It has taken a while to socialize the idea of QA to the University community. QA implementation requires shared responsibility of all staff and management. The top management have the clear direction, supervision, resource commitment, and there must be clear communication to all staff regarding the priorities of the University on quality assurance and continuous improvement. Changing the mindset of the people is essential. QA can be effectively implemented when there is clear awareness and understanding of all staff and management, when there is constant effort and commitment, and when there is strong willingness to participate in the quality assurance processes and activities. QA implementation should eventually leads to the establishment of a learning organization, which involves the development of quality culture in distance education institutions. ODE institutions should learn from each other in QA implementation through various means of benchmarking and the sharing of best practices.

QA is an obvious promise for organizational effectiveness and efficiency, improved public accountability, and organizational adaptability to change and innovation. QA attempts to define activities in such as way that they are clear, transparent, achievable and meet customer expectations. When systems and procedures are clear,

activities are well defined, jobs are performed according to particular sets of standards. There should be measures used in terms of meeting internal as well as external standards. An ODE institution can be held accountable if it meets requirements set by stakeholders and consumers. DE institutions that operate using quality principles are the ones that consistently adhere to particular sets of standards to improve their quality. They become adaptable to change and innovation, and be more ready to take part in global partnership and competition. They can be contested and benchmarked against the quality standards of similar institutions regionally as well as globally. QA is a means to improve quality continuously.

Quality is an investment and it requires funding commitment. Sustaining quality work culture within an organization is significant challenge. QA system should bring about positive changes in organizational structure and culture that lead to improved results in terms of how DE institutions operate effectively. QA system provides management with an effective instrument that has the potential to help DE institutions achieve quality image from stakeholders. Institutions will be better prepared to be engaged in collaboration and competition with other providers when they have high quality programs. For UT, this effort has just started, and it will take a while to see its impact on the performance of institution, unit and individual staff. Further effort has been to link QA and human performance. Quality performance is rewarded. For staff members, job manuals have been designed to guide them in performing daily tasks.

Assessment plays crucial roles in quality assurance, and it is done continuously through self-assessment and eventually external assessment. Self-assessment is conducted by individual units, so that units have ideas about what they have and have not achieved, and which systems and procedures can and cannot work. Continuous improvement can then be made based on this assessment. For the institution as a whole, self-assessment provides information about which units do and do not perform well. And if particular units perform less, the University can take the necessary actions to improve their performance.

References

Belawati, T. (1999). Sejarah pemikiran pendidikan terbuka dan jarak jauh [Development of theoretical framework of open and distance learning]. In T. Belawati (Eds.), *Pendidikan terbuka dan jarak jauh [Open and distance education]* (pp. 30-44), Jakarta: Universitas Terbuka.

Commonwealth of Learning – COL. (1997). *Planning and management of distance education.* London: Commonwealth of Learning and International Extension College.

UT. (2002). *Sistem jaminan kualitas.* Jakarta: Universitas Terbuka.