



Proceeding of the 34th Annual Conference of the Asian Association of Open Universities (2021)

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Re-orienting ODL to Surmount Challenges***

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STRATEGIC COLLABORATION TO PROMOTE EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN UNIVERSITAS TERBUKA

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Abstract

The problems that arise in implementing independent learning for students as applied in distance education in Universitas Terbuka (UT) are: 1). Not all students are ready to study independently, so it impacts student success; 2). Not all students are familiar with online-based education services. This article aims to analyze strategic collaboration in improving the quality of education through open distance learning in UT. This article is the result of research with a qualitative approach. Data collection uses interviews, literature studies, documents, and other data that support this research. The informants were chosen by considering the representation of UT in the western region (UT Palembang), central region (UT Malang and UT Jember), and east region (UT Kupang). Informants included the head of UT's regional, managers, employees, and the UT's partner. The results of the study show: 1). UT-Pokjar's strategic collaboration is good enough; 2). The study group (Pokjar-UT) is a strategic partner in improving learning and organizing higher education in the region; 2). Pokjar-UT has an essential role in informing UT's academic policies in the areas, especially in areas where internet access is weak. 3). The characteristics of UPBJJ-UT's leaders have an essential role in collaboration. The implications of the results of this study are 1). UT needs to control effectively in strategic collaboration to improve the quality of learning; 2). Quality assurance for the learning process carried out based on the UT-Private partnership needs to be improved.

Keywords: collaboration, ODL, strategic, UT.

Introduction

UT's characteristics of the distance education system require students to be independent and proactive in studying. Students must have the discipline to manage learning time, prioritize, study teaching materials, overcome problems, and learn difficulties quickly and independently. UT provides various learning resources, such as printed teaching materials, online teaching materials, and non-printed teaching materials, which are designed for independent learning. In addition, UT provides various learning facilities to assist student learning processes, such as the Face to Face Tutorial (TTM), Online Tutorial (Tuton), and Independent Exercise (LM). Academic administration services such as registration, payment of tuition fees, printing of exam participant cards, and final semester exams (UAS) are also provided online.

Problems often faced by UT students in learning are 1). Not all students are ready to study independently, so it impacts student success; 2). Not all students are familiar with distance education. Some UT students require coordinated services to facilitate group learning activities in form study groups (Pokjars). Pokjar administrator is a group of people who are willing to assist UT in coordinating teaching and learning activities in the regions. The number of students who one Pokjar coordinates is 100-500 students. Pokjars are needed to help provide administrative services and information about UT to students who need assistance in groups. The available data shows that the role of Pokjars in the implementation of distance education in UT is still huge. Table 1 informs that more than 77,27 % of students in 4 (four) UT's region/ Unit Pelayanan Belajar Jarak Jauh/UPBJJ-UT are in Pokjar coordination.

Table 1 Pokjar Students Data in Four UPBJJ-UT

No	UPBJJ-UT	Amount of Pokjar	Number of Students managed by Pokjars	Total of Students	Percentage
1	Jember	26	6091	9640	63.18
2	Malang	32	9183	12243	75.01
3	Palembang	69	11047	14487	76.25
4	Kupang	49	11424	12071	94.64
Amount/Average		176	37745	48441	77.27

Source: UPBJJ-UT Jember, Malang, Palembang, dan Kupang, 2019

Table 1 informs about the number of students joined in Pokjars in 4 UPBJJ-UT. The number of students who joined the Pokjar in UPBJJ-UT Kupang was 94.64%, Palembang was 76.25%, Malang was 75.01%, and Jember was 63.18%. Based on these data, it can be said that Pokjar has an essential role in the implementation of UT distance education.

The significant role of Pokjar is to encourage UT to collaborate in organizing learning. The UT-Pokjar collaboration is legalized with the UPBJJ-UT-Pokjar Cooperation Contract. The tasks and functions of the UT Pokjar are to help students register, distribute teaching materials, hold face-to-face tutorials, assist in the implementation of the end-of-semester exams, socialize and promote UT to the community. However, Pokjar-UT's performance is still not able to meet student expectations. Based on the results of Kristanti's research (2018) on the Implementation of Management Policies for the Management of the New Scheme Study Group at the Open University, it shows that UT should increase supervision of Pokjar's performance.

The study results also state that student satisfaction with Pokjar's performance is still lacking.

Pokjar-UT is an integral part of the UT organizational structure in the management review, although it is not included in the formal structure. The organization is an intentional in managing people in achieving specific goals. Robins (1994: 16) explains the existence of 3 (three) organizational characteristics, namely: 1) each organization has specific objectives; 2) each organization consists of people; and 3) each organization deliberately arranges the structure so that everyone can work. The organizational design of the UPBJJ-UT Pokjar is a contemporary organizational design. According to Robins (2002), modern organizational design is well suited for dynamic and complex developing environments. One of the contemporary organizational designs is in the form of a team structure. The team structure is a form of the whole organization consisting of work teams that perform administrative tasks (Robins (2002: 330)

In terms of communication, the UT and Pokjar-UT partnership requires synergy. According to Hampden-Turner (1990), synergy is complementary and complements differences to achieve more significant than the number of parts per section. UT Synergy and Pokjar UT is a form of activity that combines the interests of UT and students who are bridged by the UT Pokjars, which is expected to produce the objective of implementing distance education optimally and efficiently as expected. UT-Pokjar synergy is implemented in the form of external collaboration.

Based on the data, the performance of Pokjars still does not meet UT's expectations. For example, in the holding of face-to-face tutorials, there are still many violations found, among others, the tutorial schedule is not under the plan, and it is not even carried out following the rules, the competency of the tutor is not under the requirements, and the teaching material does not reach the students (Pusmintas, 2018).

This research aims to implement the UT-Pokjar strategic collaboration as an effort to help students support the student learning process. This article intends to analyze the implementation of the UT-Pokjar partnership in improving the quality of learning through ODL.

Methods

This article is the result of research with a qualitative approach. Data collection uses interviews, literature studies, documents, and other data that support research. Informants are chosen by considering UT's representation in the western region (Palembang), middle (Malang), and east (Kupang). Informants included the head of the UT UPBJJ, regional UT managers, employees, students, and Pokjar. Data obtained from the field needs to be processed and analyzed to answer the research problems.

In qualitative research, data processing and analysis require special preparation and steps. According to Creswell (2013: 276), it takes several steps that must be taken before arriving at the analysis stage. *First*, processing and preparing data for analysis. This step consists of interview transcription, scanning material, typing field data, or sorting and organizing the data into different types depending on the source of information. *Second*, read the accurate data. According to Wolcott (2009: 13), this step is included in sorting and organizing data. At this stage, the data needs to be disaggregated or given an identity based on imaginable categories, according to the theoretical basis used. Imaginable categories are the sub-themes or focus analyzed in the research. In this study, the subtheme was determined based on the focus of the research question. Third, analyze in more detail by coding the data. Coding is processing material/information into writing segments before interpreting them (Creswell, 2013: 276). Based on the result of coding the imaginable categories and an adjustment is made in achieving the collaboration, conclusions can be drawn towards the UT-Pokjar collaboration trend. Based on the research problem, the aspects analyzed in this study are the organizational

structure, planning, implementation, evaluation, leadership role, and organizational collaboration achievement.

Results Discussions

Pokjar Guidelines (2018) explain about form Pokjar in UT. Pokjar Mandiri is a Pokjar that is formed on the initiative of students independently and is chaired by a student. Pokjar-UPBJJ UT was created by UPBJJ-UT to help provide services to a group of students and was coordinated by a Pokjar Administrator. The Pokjar-UT administrator is an individual whose role is to assist student study group activities based on UT stipulated provisions. Pokjar-UT administrator is appointed and determined by the Head of UPBJJ-UT on a contract basis.

Contracts are a way for UT to bind Pokjar to meet the requirements set by UT. Contracting is also a way for UT to coordinate and communicate with students through Pokjar-UT in the form of collaboration. Collaboration is a form of partnership to achieve the desired results and at the same time give birth to trust between the parties concerned. The position of the UT Pokjar in the UT organizational structure is included in the team structure as shown in Figure 1.

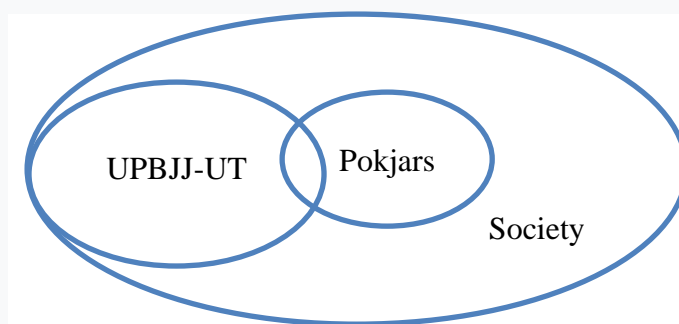


Figure 1 : The Form of Collaboration UT-Pokjars

Based on Figure 1 it can be explained that UPBJJ-UT has special teams that carry out the task of organizing distance education, outside the formal structure of UPBJJ-UT. The groups are designed according to UT's needs. To control these teams, UT organizes a Regional Work Meeting (Rakerda) which aims to synergize the implementation of UT-determined policies, communicate UT policy information, and the results of team performance evaluations by stakeholders (students and the public). The form of the team structure is considered appropriate because Pokjar is able to bridge the interests of UT students who are scattered and overcome the problem of internet access in regions that are still inadequate. Team ties can be released at any time by UT, if Pokjars violate regulations, disadvantage students, and cannot work together.

The appointment of the Pokjar-UT management is carried out with the principles: 1). Benefit Principle, namely to facilitate the learning group activities and communication between Pokjar and UPBJJ-UT. 2). Service Accessibility, namely to bring UT services closer to members of study groups. Like an organization, Pokjar-UT needs to be managed with organizational principles, such as planning, implementation, and evaluation. Analysis of the management of the UT-Pokjar collaboration can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2: UT-Pokjar Collaboration Analysis Table

No	Aspects	Implement	Analysis
1	Planning	Implemented through contracts every year	UPBJJ-UT Rakerda Forum attended by all Pokjar-UT (Score: 10)
2	Implementation of Duties and Functions	Available Guidelines and Procedures.	Effective, Pokjar's levies on students are reduced compared to before there were contracts and guidelines (Score: 8)
3	Benefits of UT-Pokjar collaboration	Win-win solution principle	UT is quite helpful in the delivery of information, the learning process, registration, delivery of teaching materials, examinations, socialization and promotion, provision of facilities and infrastructure, tutors. Pokjars receive incentives based on grade (Types 1, 2 and 3) Score: 8
4	Evaluation	Mechanisms, guidelines and procedures are available	Monitoring has not been maximized, there are still complaints and dissatisfaction of students with UT services through Pokjar: tutors do not meet the requirements, there are still other levies. (Skor : 7)
5	Regulation	There are only contracts	Potential to cause conflict, if the rules are unclear (Score : 5)
6	Leadership	The Head of UPBJJ-UT is the primary controller in the collaboration	The average Head of the UPBJJ-UT has the ability to control the UT-Pokjar collaboration In certain regions, the cultural background of the head of the UPBJJ-UT has a significant role. (Score: 8)
7	Structure	Teams	Strategic partnership, which is mutually beneficial Score: 9
8	Score of partnership UT-Pokjar	All of quality of partnership	Score 7.8 (Good enough) Category: 1,0-4,9: less 5,0-7,9: good enough 8,0-10,0: very good The achievement of the UT-Pokjar UT collaboration is quite good, but it still needs improvement in quality

No	Aspects	Implement	Analysis
			control that supports the learning process

Source: Result of analysis, 2019

Based on Table 2 above it can be explained that the UT-Pokjar UT partnership is running in a good enough category. This is indicated by the average score from aspects of planning, implementation of tasks and functions, evaluation, leadership, aspects of advantages and disadvantages, as well as the structure that shows the partnership is going well. Team structure with incentive pattern based on grade, can be accepted by Pokjar-UT. Pokjar grades are determined based on the number of students managed by Pokjar. Grade 1 (100-200 students), grade 2 (200-300 students), and grade 3 (300-500 students).

Some of the problems in carrying out team-based collaboration at UT are 1). The mechanism of control of Pokjar's compliance in maintaining the ethics of distance education is still not maximal. Example: there are still many Pokjars who charge extra fees from students and the tutorial schedule is disobeyed. 2). Provision of resources that are not appropriate (inadequate tutor standards, facilities and infrastructure). Based on the data above, the biggest challenge for UT in controlling the strategic partnership is the importance of the ability to control the association that benefits both parties. From the UT side, the quality of learning can be maintained well without harming students, while from Pokjar the importance of preserving partnership commitment.

Direct and periodic evaluation and monitoring is one way for a mutually beneficial partnership for both parties. In the 4.0 era, the biggest challenge in the league was to strengthen partner loyalty to UT and improve the quality of learning. Partner loyalty to UT needs to be supported because in the era of 4.0 virtual class models could be implemented by anyone. Educational services can be carried out anywhere without knowing the limits of distance and time.

Klasifikasi Pokjar...hanya berdasarkan

Conclusion

UT Collaboration - Pokjar UT runs in a reasonably good category, in terms of aspects of planning, implementation of tasks and functions, evaluation, leadership roles, benefits, and weaknesses, as well as collaboration design structures. In general, the UT-Pokjar collaboration design has a significant role in assisting the implementation of higher education through open distance learning. The leadership characteristics of UPBJJ-UT have an essential role in controlling partnerships. In certain regions, the leadership character of UPBJJ-UT has a vital role, such as the cultural similarity and ethnicity of the local community. UT management foresight in placing the Head of UPBJJ-UT has a significant role in supporting the success of collaboration.

Klasifikasi

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