

MANAGING PERFECT DISTANCE SERVICES TO MEET THE DISTANCE STUDENTS COMPLAINS

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ABSTRACT

One of most important aspects to be considered in carrying out the distance education is how the students' services can be well managed. The technique is the better the services are given to the students the more students are interested in taking part in the distance learning system. We can't avoid the fact that the implementation of distance education would not be free from students' complains. As the institutions managed all administration and academic services through distance system it needs perfect distance services to make the students feel satisfied. In managing these services there are some aspects to be considered. The form of services can be varied according to which one is the most efficient in overcoming problem from the students. The various complain come from the students can be grouped into administration and academic complains. The most principal thing to implement the perfect services is giving quick and final services. Even it is possible to have one stop services.

Key words: forms of distance services, perfect distance services, quick and final services

Universitas Terbuka (UT) is the only distance higher education in Indonesia that manages education based on the distance learning system, a single —mode. Since it was established in 1984, it has contributed to the achievement of national education aim. According to the statistics data, since 2006 UT has 287,482 students spread all of the Indonesia and now it has almost 500,000 students. Most of them are the students of education faculty, the rest are the students of the other faculties at UT (economic, social and politic, and science faculty). There were 585,186 students who had graduated from UT. The advanced growth of technology has made people realized that the way to learn can be done with various ways, one is by distance education system. There are some institutions that have managed distance learning though they still have to manage face to face learning system or conventional learning.

The demand of the society on the quality of education and the development of the distance learning system encourage the need of qualified distance higher education. Therefore, there should be quality standard for managing the distance learning. There have some standard quality such as National Accreditation for the Distance learning, the Association of Open University (AAOU) and Commonwealth of Learning (COL). Most of them contained standard of distance management according to their own idea. Information about how to manage the distance learning system from the students is also very important to be considered so that

students' services would be well managed. Therefore, this research was done to get information from the students of distance learning concerning what the students need.

The problem of achieving the quality standard for managing the distance higher education is that there should be any criteria or quality standard that should be fulfilled by the Distance higher education in order to be the effective and has good quality of the distance education institution from the point of view of the students. In managing the distance higher education, the service that related with the students is registration, learning material distribution, learning support, examination and certification.

The problems are:

1. What are the indicators of the quality of registration in distance higher education?
2. What are the indicators of the quality of learning material distribution in distance higher education?
3. What are the indicators of the quality of learning support in distance higher education?
4. What are the indicators of the quality of examination and certification in distance higher education?

This research was aimed to find information gathered from the distance learning participants about the standard and criteria for the effectiveness and quality of management of the distance higher education. Specifically the aim is to get information about standard criteria for the quality service of the distance higher education concerning registration, learning material distribution, learning support, examination and certification.

METHODS

This research is descriptive qualitative research. Research variables were the indicator of the service quality of the distance higher education concerning registration, learning material distribution, learning support, examination and certification. The population of this research was the students of Universitas Terbuka from non educational faculty who have registered for four times, and once time for educational students, and students who have taken distance training held by health department. Sample of this research were 600 respondents comprises of 300 students, 100 alumnus of ut, 100 alumnus students of the distance education and training from the health department, and 100 alumnus. Information from the correspondences was gathered using questioner and interview. Data were collected using questioner. Data were analyzed based on the descriptive analyses.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

There were only 78 respondents who answered and sent back the questioner. The following table shows the frequent distribution of the respondents.

Table 1. Data of Demographic Sample Research

Variables		Male		Female	
		Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Students status	Active	41	52.56	25	32.05
	Alumnus	8	10.26	4	5.13
	No response	-	-	-	-
Faculty	Education	7	8.97	9	11.54
	Science	13	16.67	11	14.10
	Social	10	12.82	3	3.85
	Economy	19	24.36	6	7.69
Job	Workless	1	1.28	5	6.41
	Civil servant	21	26.92	5	6.41
	Private Company	27	34.62	18	23.08
	No response	-	-	-	1.28
Education background	Senior high school	36	46.15	16	20.51
	Diploma 1	3	3.85	1	1.28
	Diploma 2	1	1.28	1	1.28
	Diploma 3	7	8.97	9	11.54
	Diploma 4/ Postgraduate	2	2.56	2	2.56
2Respondent		78		78	

Registration service

Respondent who answered the questioner stated that information related with recruitment students should be available at the branch office (56.97%). Information about education such as curriculum, learning material, learning support, and graduation has better been put in the Central office. They also said that the curriculum in the distance higher education should not be changed too frequently because it causes infliction to the students. There were 34, 62 respondents said that bundle of registration should be sold at the post office. Table 2 shows the registration process preferred by the respondents.

Table 2: Registration process

Registration component	Frequency
The place for selling Registration bundle :	
- Post office	34.62
- Branch office	21.79
- Bank	14.10
- Various place	26.93
- No response	2.56
Processing of Registration Bundle:	
- Direct at the branch office	76.92
- Sent through post to central office	7.69
- through internet	6.41
- various ways	7.69
- no response	1.28
Place for paying education fee:	
- Bank	41.03
- Post office	26.92
- Branch office	21.79
- Various places	8.98
- No response	1.28

There were 42.31 % respondents preferred that credit transfer from other higher education should be done before they are accepted as the students of distance higher education so that they were able to plan their study well. On the other hand 48.72% respondents preferred after they are accepted as students of distance higher education. Mostly respondents (79.49%) agreed that credit transfer should be processed at the regional office in order that they were able to consult and get direct information. There were only 17.95% preferred at the center office to get effective and efficient cost. The students complain on academic and administration services given by the distance higher education was on the information that was often came late. According to respondents (2.56%) it was caused by the staff performance. Therefore there should be disciplined them so that they would improve their job performance.

Learning material distribution

Mostly respondents (93.5%) agreed that the learning material should be available at the distance higher education. It means that they need practical, and the learning material can be brought to anywhere. So they can read whenever they have time. Another kind of learning material such as audio, video, audio gratis, CAI and web are not so popular to them. Table 3 shows the respondents preferences on the learning material.

Table 3: Response about whether or not the Distance Higher Education

Kind of Learning Material	Necessary available	unnecessary available	No Responses
Printed Material	93.59	1.28	5.13
Audio	43.59	23.08	33.33
Video/CD	65.38	19.23	15.38
Audio gravis	21.79	30.77	47.44
Computer assisted instructional (CAI)	16.67	28.21	55.13
Web	53.88	17.95	28.21

Services on the students learning support

Learning support in the distance higher education consists of tutorial orientation, and communication media. There were about 51.28 % respondents did not agree with the orientation. The respondents might not know the importance of orientation. Since the students should be familiar with the system of distance learning, they have to take it; therefore there should be a trial of promoting the important of orientation.

Another learning support studied in this research was tutorial. There some learning support in the distance higher education available. Face to face tutorial seems to be the most learning support preferred by the students of distance learning. Another learning support system was not so interesting to them. Table 4 shows the respondents' ideas on the learning support that should be available at the distance higher education.

Table 4. Respondents' Ideas on the Learning Support

Kind Learning Support	Frequency	Present
Face to face tutorial	20	25.64
Consult to either regional office or center office through a letter, e-mail or telephone	10	12.82
Multimedia learning material	4	5.13
Printed material as learning supplement containing summary of the course	8	10.25
Written tutorial	6	7.69
Complete module are available at the region office	3	3.85
Information about job vacancy at the regional office	2	2.56
Provide learning guide such as how to choose the courses to take, or how to learn each course	2	2.56
Provide item test bank completed with how to answer each item test	2	2.56
Academic adviser who is ready at any time	2	2.56
Provide monthly magazine that contain up to date information	1	1.28
Provide library and internet facility to learn	1	1.28
Provide mid semester test before the final semester test	1	1.28
Module should contains learning material match with the final semester test	3	3.85
Give the scholarship	2	2.56
Learning support have been well managed	1	1.28
No responses	10	12.82

Table 5. The Respondent's Idea about Necessary and Unnecessary Tutorial

Kind of Tutorial	Necessary	Unnecessary	No responses
Face to face	78	6	16
Written	67	10	13
Radio	50	23	13
Electronic	56	17	17

Distance higher education offers kinds of tutorial. There are four kinds of tutorial namely face to face tutorial, written tutorial, tutorial through radio, and electronic tutorial. Respondents tend to choose face to face tutorial. There were not significance differences between kinds of tutorial because there is a little bit different in number. Table 5 shows respondent's idea about necessary and unnecessary tutorial available at the distance higher education.

Table 6. Respondents' Idea on the Implementation of Practice and Practicum

Group (69.23 %)		Individual (19.23%)	
Reason	%	Reason	%
Have the same	40.74		33.33
Effective and efficient	25.93	Support the students to work by themselves	26.67
Give chance to discuss, idea changes, and consult	16.67	The students address is far from each other	13.33
Like at the conventional university	1.85	Evaluation was based on individual	6.67
Be able to compare the result of practice/practicum	1.85	Free and optimal	6.67
Support the students to do practicum/practice	1.85	Efficient in time	6.67
Easy to gather the students	1.85	No responses	6.67
No responses	9.26		

Related with the implementation of practice and practicum, more than half of the respondents tend to choose that practice and practicum should be done in group work. The rest tend to choose individual work. Table 6 shows respondents' reason why they choose group work or individual work in doing practice and practicum.

Table 7. Respondents' Reason for Choosing the Instructor, Counselor, and Supervisor

Lecturer, Supervisor	Reason	Percentage
Lecturers of the Distance Higher Education	They are Professional and quality	61.11
	Society is proud of the Distance Higher Education	5.56
	They are more attention	5.56
	They are responsible with distance higher education	5.56
	They assess the students quickly	5.56
	No responses	16.67
Lecturer from the local university	They are easy to meet	51.35
	They are professional and able to guide the students	8.11
	They know the location and condition better	5.41
	There are many lecturers who are interested	2.70
	The students rely on them better because they are from the state university	2.70
	They are easy to overcome the problem of practicum or practice	2.70
	They held practicum/practice together with their student in their university	2.70
	No responses	24.32
Lecturer comes from other institutions (not from the local university)	They easy to call or to meet	44.44
	They have experiences according to their profession	22.22
	The students are able to master the practicum better	11.11
	They decide anything based on them so as to make it more democratic	11.11
	The students need to practice or do the practicum at the real situation	11.11
Combination	They master the field	57.14
	They are close with the students	14.29
	They easy to call whenever they are needed	14.29
	No responses	14.29

Related with the implementation of practice and practicum, there were 47.44% want the supervisor from the lecturer of the local university. Other respondents about 23.08% wants the supervisors should be from the lecturer of the distance higher education. The rest respondent chooses another lecturer from different institutions. Table 7 shows the reason of respondents in choosing the lecturer.

Examination service

Concerning examination service, there are three variables that were the frequencies of the examination, kinds of examination, and supervisor of the examination. Based on the frequencies of the examination, mostly respondents (67.95 %) choose twice a year. Then the kind of examination that was mostly chosen by the respondents was objective test. The supervisors should be from lecturer of the higher education both distance higher education and conventional higher education. Respondents did not have any problem with who should supervise at the examination room. They can be both from lecturer of local university and

lecturers from the distance higher education. In detail table 8 shows the Respondents' idea about examination service at the distance learning system.

Table 8: Respondents' idea about examination service.

Aspect		Frequencies	Percentage
Frequencies of examination	Twice a year	53	67.95
	Three times a year	11	14.10
	Four times a year	6	7.69
	Two or three times a year	4	5.13
	No responses	4	
Kind of examination	Objective test	39	50.00
	Easy test	20	25.64
	Objective and easy test	13	16.67
		0	0
	Oral test	1	1.28
	Written and oral test	2	2.56
	No responses	3	3.85
Supervisor of examination	Lecturers or staffs who are from distance higher education	30	38.46
	Lecturers or staffs who are not from distance higher education	30	38.46
	Anyone	13	16.67
	No responses	5	6.41

In the certification services of the distance higher education, there are three aspects were asked to the respondents, namely graduation, time of graduation and the length of finalizing certification. Table 9 shows respondents' idea on the certification services.

Table 9. Respondents' Idea on the Certification Services

Aspects		Frequencies	Percentage
Frequencies of Graduation (in a year)	once	20	21.64
	twice	48	61.54
	Three times	6	7.69
	Four times	1	1.28
	No responses	3	3.85
Place of the graduation	Center office	13	16.67
	Branch office	45	57.69
	Local university	5	6.41
	Combination	8	10.26
	No responses	7	8.97
Delivery of the diploma and transcripts	At the time of graduation	19	24.36
	One day to one week after the graduation	17	21.79
	Two weeks to one month after the graduation	32	41.03
	Two months to six months after the graduation	7	8.97
	No responses	3	3.85

CONCLUSION

Based on the analyzed data from respondents it can be concluded that the respondents' suggestion as follows;

1. Registration service in the distance higher education should be:
 - a. information should be accurate
 - b. bundle of registration should be available at the post office
 - c. places for paying education fee should be available at the branch office, bank, and at the post office
 - d. flexible of course transferred before and after
2. Learning material distribution:
 - a. both printed and non printed material should be available
 - b. each leaning material should be completed with information about characteristics of courses
 - c. learning material should be brief, compact, accurate
 - d. learning material should be completed with the questioner concerning learning material evaluation
 - e. learning material should not only be available at the central office and the branch office but at the bookstore as well.
3. Learning support should cover:
 - a. orientation for the new students
 - b. offer various learning support to meet the students need
 - c. held the implementation of practice and practicum at the regional office by the guidance from the lectures at local higher education
 - d. held communication media for the student through students group, routine meeting, or through media like internet, magazine, or books.
4. In implementing examination, distance higher education should:
 - a. held twice examination in a year, using objective test or essay test
 - b. held examination supervised by lectures from both region office and local higher education
 - c. supervise the students in the examination implementing the strict monitoring, by the high dedication supervisor, strict sanction
 - d. held twice graduation in a year
 - e. give the certification to the students at least one month after the graduation

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