



## ONLINE TUTORIAL FOR ODL STUDENTS: SHARING EXPERIENCE FROM PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE COURSE OFFERED AT DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION - UNIVERSITAS TERBUKA

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### ABSTRAK

Tutorial *online* (tuton) pada pendidikan jarak jauh seharusnya memungkinkan proses belajar yang asinkronus. Saat ini, sekitar 60% dari seluruh mata kuliah yang ditawarkan di Universitas Terbuka sudah dilengkapi dengan tuton. Tingkat partisipasi pada tuton, yang dicerminkan dari paling tidak ada satu mahasiswa yang registrasi pada tuton mata kuliah tersebut, mencapai 98%. Meskipun demikian, tingginya prosentase ini tidak otomatis mencerminkan tingginya tingkat partisipasi mahasiswa pada aktivitas tuton di mata kuliah. Agar dapat berpartisipasi dalam tuton, mahasiswa disyaratkan untuk melakukan registrasi mata kuliah dan mengaktifkan fasilitas tuton. Dalam artikel ini, dilaporkan hasil analisis terhadap aktivitas mahasiswa pada dua kelas tuton (kelas A dan kelas B) untuk mata kuliah Filsafat Ilmu yang ditawarkan di Fakultas Keguruan dan Ilmu Pendidikan pada semester pertama tahun 2012. Data memperlihatkan bahwa seluruh mahasiswa sudah mengaktifkan tuton tetapi hanya 50%-80% mahasiswa yang aktif dalam tuton. Sementara itu, hanya 60%-75% mahasiswa yang paling tidak pernah satu kali *login* pada tuton, 30%-48% aktif berdiskusi, dan 20%-72% mengirimkan tugas. Data ini menunjukkan bahwa mahasiswa belum sepenuhnya memanfaatkan tuton. Wawancara dengan peserta tuton memperlihatkan bahwa kesulitan pada koneksi internet dan ketidakbiasaan terhadap sistem yang digunakan merupakan dua kendala utama bagi peserta untuk aktif dalam tuton.

**Kata kunci:** bantuan belajar mahasiswa, Fakultas Keguruan dan Ilmu Pendidikan, filsafat Ilmu, tutotial online, Universitas Terbuka

### ABSTRACT

*Online tutorial in open and distance learning is supposed to provide asynchronous learning process. At present, around 60% of all courses offered by Universitas Terbuka are complemented with online tutorials. The participation rate for the course complemented with online tutorials which reflected with at least one student login in the online tutorials is high, 95-98%. However, this percentage does not guarantee that participation in the online tutorials is equally high. In order for students to be able to participate in the online tutorials, they have to first register the course and activate the UT online facilities. To analyze student' activities in online online tutorials, data from two online tutorial classes in Philosophy of Science online tutorials offered in the first and second semester of 2012 at Department of Education are used. The data showed that all of the students have activated the online tutorials facilities but only 50%-80% of the students were actively engaged in the online tutorials. Furthermore, only 60%-75% students were at least login the online tutorials once in the eight week period, 30%-48% students engaged in discussion, and 40%-72% submitted assignments. This findings show that students have not taken full advantage of the online tutorials.*

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*Interviews with the students showed that difficulties in the internet connection and unfamiliarity with the system are two main constraints for student to be actively engage in the online tutorial.*

**Key words:** *Department of education, online tutorial, philosophy of science course, student support service, Universitas Terbuka*

## **Background**

Online tutorial, one of learning services provided by Universitas Terbuka (UT) to facilitate students' learning process, is conducted through proper measures to ensure that students could take full advantages of the service. Online tutorial has several features such as course overview, resources, topics for discussion, and assignments. In course overview, students could view the whole content of a course and the relation among them. Resources provide additional learning materials on top of what the students have already got from modules. Topics for discussion are predetermined to provide students with enough exercises to master the course. Meanwhile assignments are provided to evaluate students' mastery of the course. Activities in online tutorials include viewing the uploaded materials, engaging in discussions forum with other students and designated tutors, and uploading tasks assigned specifically for the course.

In one semester, online tutorial is conducted in eight week period with each week presents one or two topics depending on the load of the course. Every week, an initiation learning material is provided followed by topics to be discussed. Through the eight week period, students are asked to submit three assignments due in week 3, 5, and 7. Students get scores from their activities and assignments from the online tutorial which is accounted for 30% of their final score for the course. The other 70% of the final score is coming from final examination. At present, around 60% of all courses offered are complemented with online tutorials. The participation rate for the online tutorials complemented with online tutorials which reflected with at least one student login in the online tutorials is high, around 70%. However, this percentage does not guarantee that participation in the course is equally high. In order for students to be able to participate in the online tutorials, they have to first register the course and activate the UT online tutorials facilities. It is therefore the objective of this article to analyze students' activities in online online tutorials. Focus on this article is on students' activities not in tutors' although studies mention the importance of tuors' roles for effective online online tutorials. Philosophy of Science course is chosen because it is a mandatory course.

## **Students and Online Tutorial**

Many open and distance learning (ODL) students join ODL with preconceived ideas about their needs as learners which were often based on earlier schooling experiences (Burnett, 2003). Indonesia is famous for its one-way educational process where teachers pour all his/her knowledge and students passively receive whatever the teachers pour. Such students frequently accustomed to be told what to do and when to do it which encouraged dependency rather than autonomy in learning. This condition will likely happen in online tutorials where students are asked to manage their study according to what is agreed in the start of the semester.

Some studies have been conducted to analyze various aspects in online tutorial. Burnett (2003) examined tutor participation in synchronous online chat by analyzing the chat records. Three areas of tutor responsibility in online chat were identified: social, organizational, and intellectual. Studies by Ligorio *et al.* (2002) and Burnett (2003) highlight the significance of the social dimension in establishing a supportive atmosphere in synchronous interaction. Meanwhile, Ng (2004) considered that the handling of participants' communication anxiety was a very significant issue. The unfamiliarity with the technology used in the online tutorials could prevent students from engaging in it. Meanwhile, Marjanovic (1999) found out that when synchronous collaborative systems are brought into teaching, greater improvements in the level of active participation, the quality of discussion and group dynamics.

Through action research, Salmon (2000) developed a five-stage e-moderating model, grounded in constructivist learning theory as well as practical experience. Salmon (2000) asserted that essential to online tutoring are what she called e-tivities, reflective learning activities undertaken by students individually and in groups at each of the five stages. However, online tutorials are not yielded positive results. In a study of an OU technology and society course with over 1000 students, Kear and Heap (1999) observed both positive and negative consequences of online tutorials. Although, in an advanced mathematics course at the OU, Thomas and Carswell (2000) tried with some success the snowball online tutorial, in which students start off in pairs and move by stages to group discussion under a tutor; the trial showed that this method resulted in a little more continued interest from students.

In spite of inconclusive results from implementing online tutorial, Richardson (2009) stated that course designers could be confident about introducing online tutoring into distance education, provided that tutors and students received appropriate training and support. One way to support students is by using e-mail to communicate with students (Hawkridge, Morgan, & Jelfs, 1997).

### **Online Tutorial in Philosophy of Science Course**

UT has provided guidance both for students and tutors to be used in online tutorials. Students are encouraged to study the guide before joining online tutorial. In the guidance, students are provided a step by step instruction on how to log in, to view initiations, to join discussion, and to upload assignments in the online tutorials. Once the students have successfully registered in the online tutorial, he/she could log in and see a welcome page (Figure 1).

Pages of online tutorial for students (Figure 1) are different from pages for tutor (Figure 2). Students do not have the facilities to write in the page. They can only upload discussion and assignment file. On the other hand, tutors have the facilities to change, add, or remove files from the page(s). The system also allows tutors to send individual email to student.

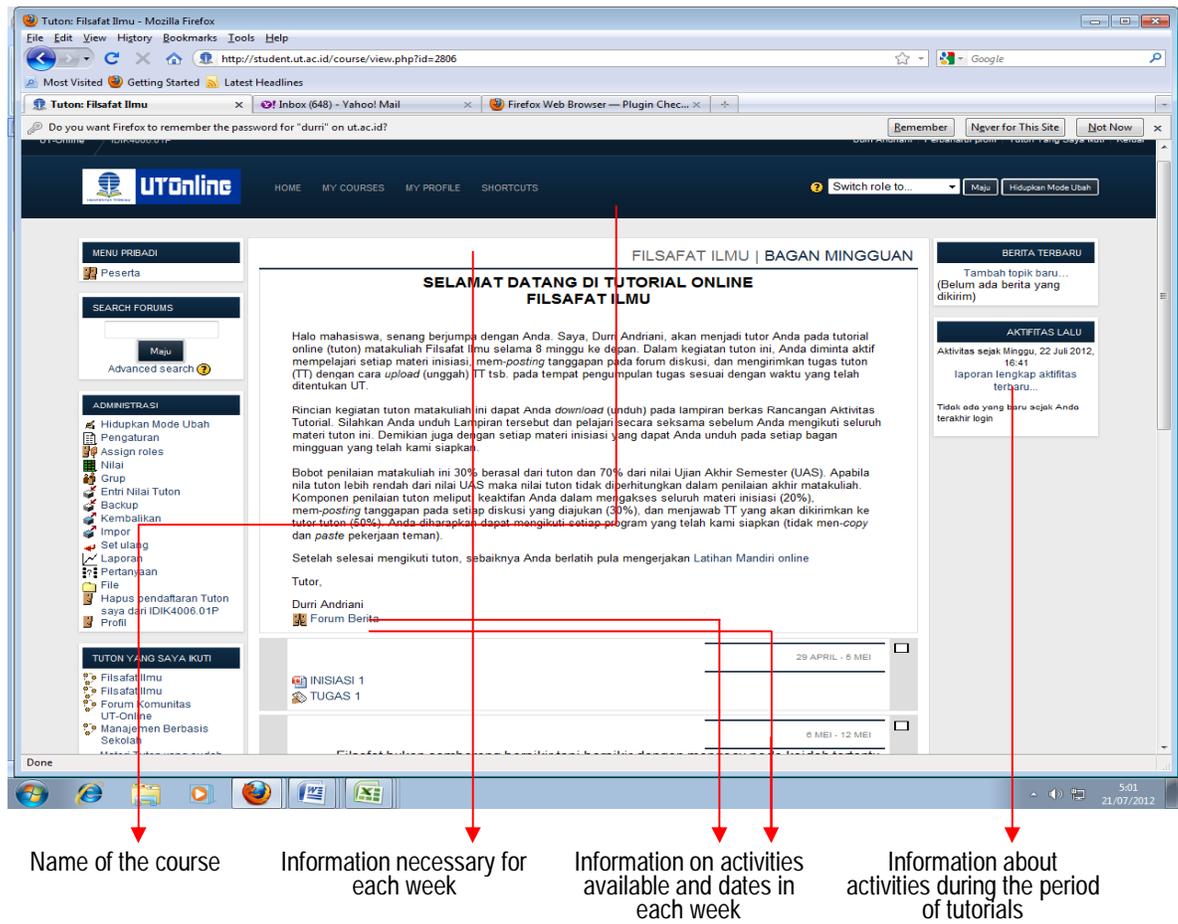
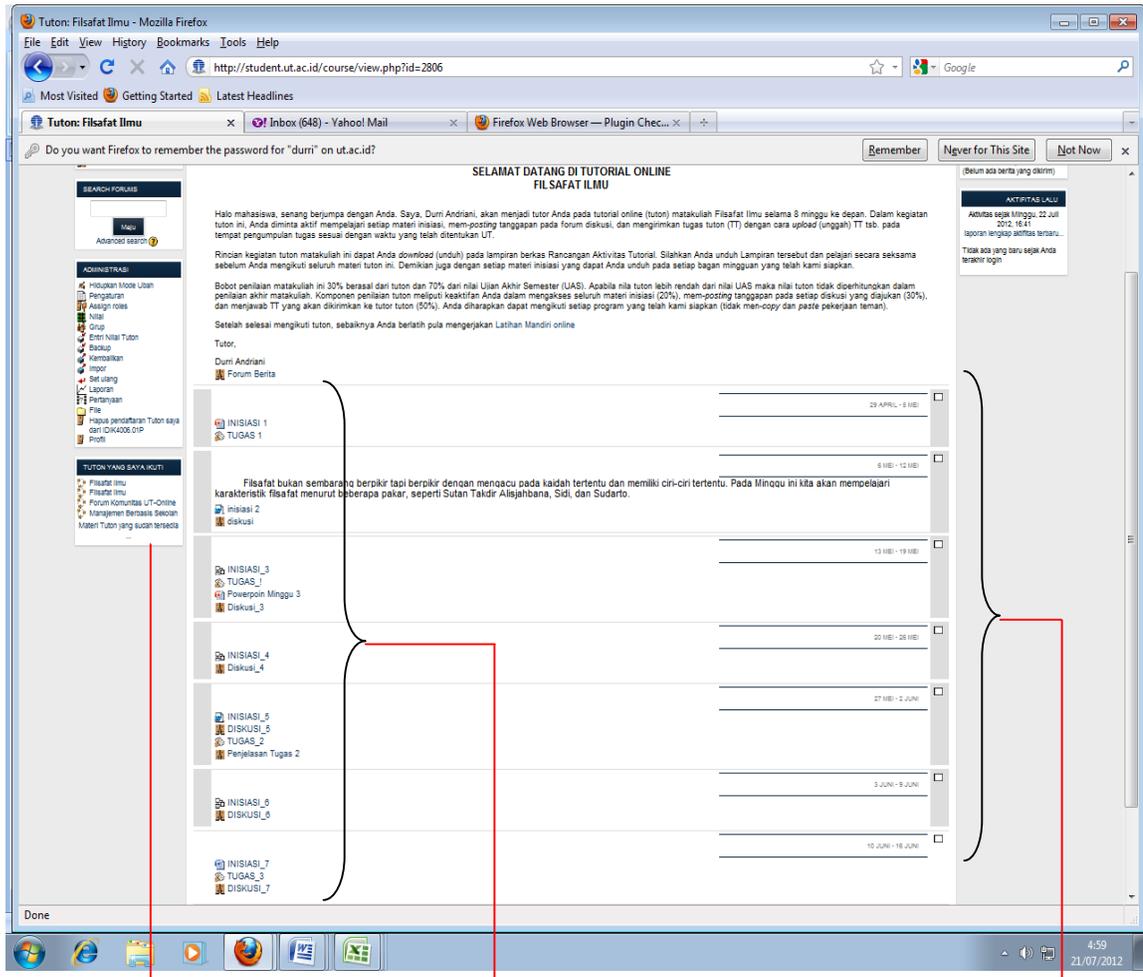


Figure 1. First page of the online tutorial

Table 1. Number of Students in Each Class

Attribute	2012.1		2012.2		2012		TOTAL
	PENDAS	NON-PENDAS	PENDAS	NON-PENDAS	PENDAS	NON-PENDAS	
Male	0	8	2	9	8	11	19
Female	34	12	42	22	46	64	110
Total	34	20	44	31	54	75	129

Total number of students in the four Philosophy courses, two classes in each semester, analyzed in this article is 129 (Table 1) with 85.3% of them are female. One class consists of teachers in Elementary Education study program, commonly term PENDAS and the other class consists of students other than those in the PENDAS, commonly term Non-PENDAS. A number of 9 students were interviewed to provide deeper understanding.



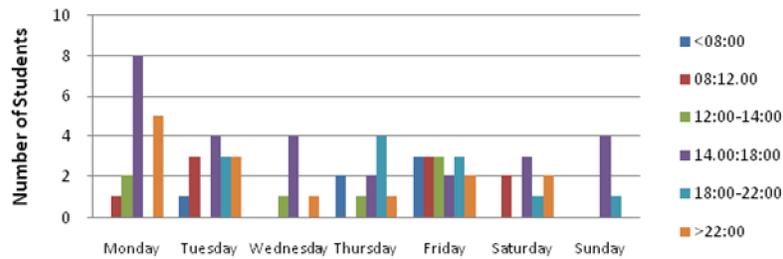
Facilities for tutor: list of students, students, activities, students, score etc

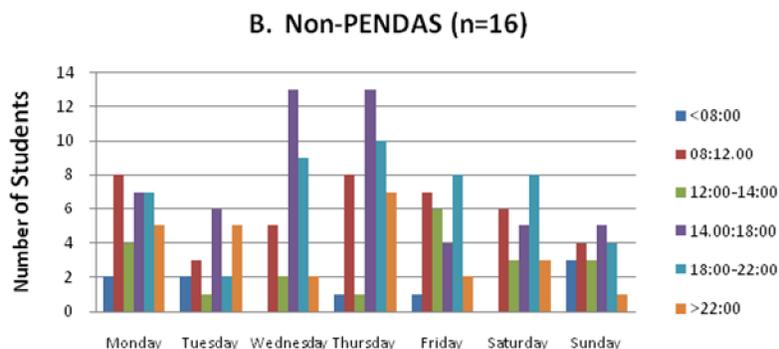
List of facilities in weeks of online tutorial sessions

Dates for each week and information on the availability of initiation, discussion, and or assignments

Figure 2. Tutors' page

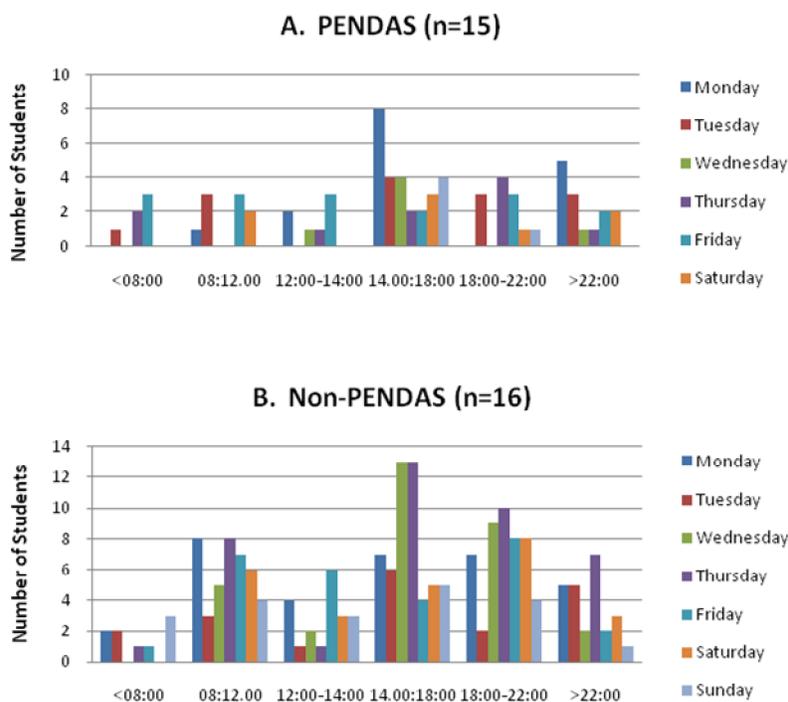
A. PENDAS (n=15)





Graph 3. Days students' login in online tutorial

PENDAS students in the first semester of 2012 (2012.1) who at least log in to the online tutorial once is 15 (44.1%) while 80% of Non-PENDAS students have logged in at least once. Looking at the days of the students' login, Graph 3 shows that every day at least 5 students logged in. Non-PENDAS students seemed to be more active especially on Wednesdays and Thursdays. Number of PENDAS students' logged in everyday, in average, is half of Non-PENDAS. The number for the second semester of 2012.1 (2012.2) is similar.



Graph 4. Time students' login in online tutorial

In total, percentage of students viewed initiation materials varied from 20.7% to 75.5% for class of semester 2012.1 and 3% to 34% for class of semester 2012.2. The trend was similar for both PENDAS and Non-PENDAS students. The answer of why there is a tendency of decreasing number

of students to view initiation materials, one student replied with *"It is really frustrating to wait forever to log in and to view initiation materials. The internet connection is really poor"*. This was agreed by other student who mentions her frustration because the internet connection was on-off so that she had to start over several times to log just in five minutes. These statements is supported by data from UT server which shows that 68% of the students have to relogin while trying to connect to online tutorials.

The problems of bad connection were experienced by most of the students. In a short time (2-10 minutes) they had to re-connect. Data in Table 2 were derived from number of login students have in 3-10 minutes duration. For example, XX who loggedin on Thursday May 3, 2012 from 19:04 to 19:16 had to re-connect 5 times. In the first and second loggedin she was unlikely able to get anything since she only has 2 minutes in between. Same thing happened in her third to fifth attempts where in a minute she had to loggedin three times.

Table 2. Frequency of Log in Per Day (Class semester 2012.1)

INITIA- TION	PENDAS (n=14)					Non-PENDAS (n=15)					TOTAL (n=29)						
	1 X	2 X	3 X	4 X	> 5 X	1 X	2 X	3 X	4 X	5 X	> 5 X	1 X	2 X	3 X	4 X	5 X	> 5 X
1	43	-	-	14,3	7,14	80	40	20	6,7	6,7	-	62,1	20,7	10,3	10,3	3,45	3,45
2	43	-	-	14,3	7,14	86,7	6,7	-	6,7	-	6,7	65,5	3,45	-	10,3	-	6,9
3	43	-	-	14,3	7,14	-	-	-	-	-	-	20,7	-	-	6,9	-	3,45
4	14	-	7,1	-	7,14	6,7	-	-	-	-	-	10,3	-	3,45	-	-	3,45
5	14	7,1	-	-	-	53,3	20	-	-	6,7	-	34,5	13,8	-	-	3,45	-
6	21	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	10,3	-	-	-	-	-
7	21	-	-	-	-	40	20	6,7	-	-	6,7	31	10,3	3,45	-	-	3,45
8	21	-	-	-	-	13,3	-	-	-	-	-	17,2	-	-	-	-	-
Mean	28	0,9	0,9	5,4	3,57	35	10,8	3,3	1,7	1,7	1,7	31,5	6,03	2,16	3,45	0,86	2,59

It is common in tutorial activities where students log in for about 15-20 minutes and open varied features which ideally needs time to comprehend. Data in Table 3 show that student YY viewed forum add discussion for less than one minute. Similarly, students tend to log in once and open more than three features. This tendency could be rooted from mechanism of tutorial marking schema where one of the variable is frequency of students' log in on the online tutorials.

In addition, not all students open all features provided in online tutorial. Lesson Start, a feature which describes the course in general and perceived as important to increase students understanding of the course was only opened by less than 10 students. Meanwhile, students' login in Resource Materials where students are encouraged to find additional references to be used to enrich their learning process is almost none. Both facilities are very useful. Asked for reasons of not visiting the features, the student laugh and said that she has not have enough time to do so. Further asked why she did not spare time to visit the features, finally she confessed that because "... engaging in online tutorial did not help me get good grade. I have been twice studying Philosophy of Sciences course and failed to pass the exam".

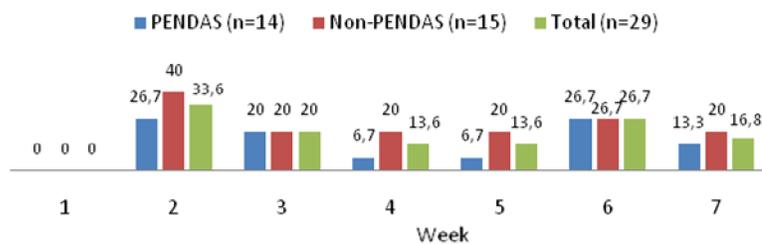
Looking into a more detail on number of days students both in class of semester 2012.1 and semester 2012.2 viewing Resource Materials, again Non-PENDAS students spent more days on

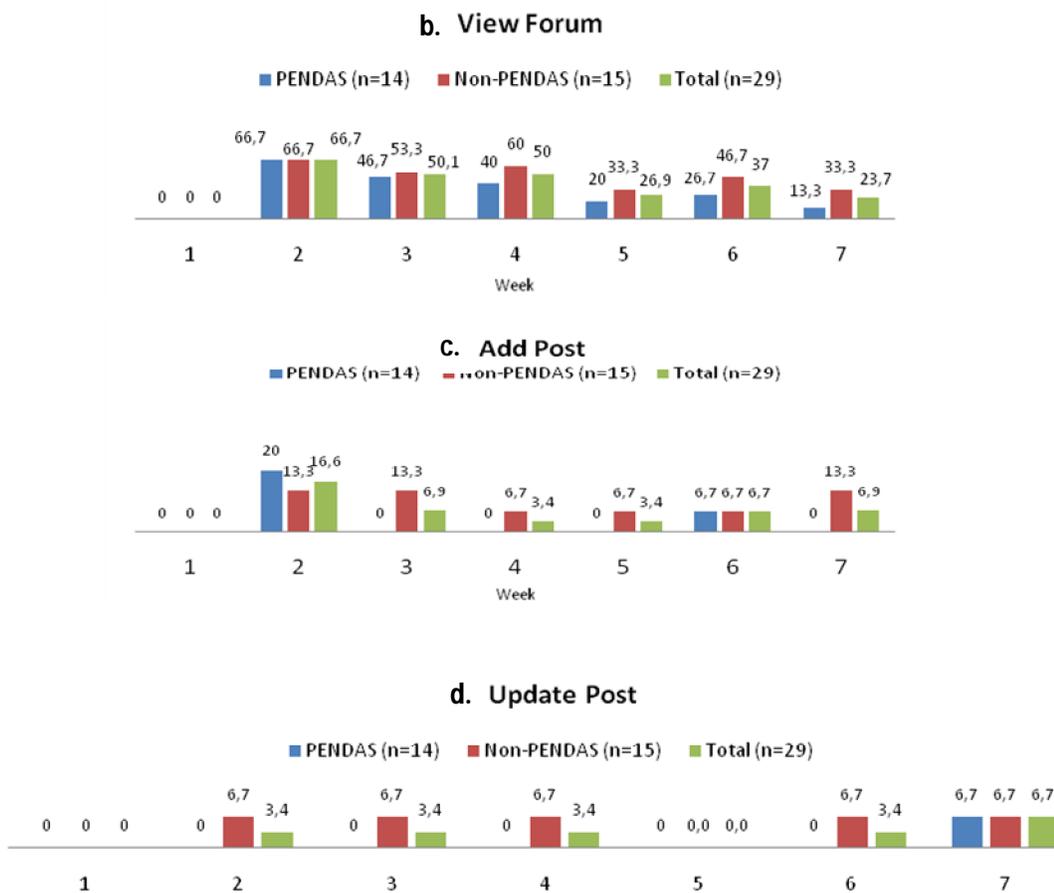
viewing resource. Maximum days of PENDAS students spent in one week was two while the maximum days spent for Non-PENDAS students was four days.

Table 3. Data of Student XX & YY Activities on One Single Day

Day and Time	Code	Name of student and Student number	Facility Open
Thu 3 Mei 2012, 19:16	182.4.172.97	XX	resource view
Thu 3 Mei 2012, 19:16	182.4.172.97	XX	resource view
Thu 3 Mei 2012, 19:16	182.4.172.97	XX	resource view
Thu 3 Mei 2012, 19:06	182.7.143.126	XX	resource view
Thu 3 Mei 2012, 19:04	182.7.143.126	XX	resource view
30 November 2012 10:01	36.75.102.96	YY	assignment view
30 November 2012 10:01	36.75.102.96	YY	forum view forum
30 November 2012 10:00	36.75.102.96	YY	assignment view
30 November 2012 10:00	36.75.102.96	YY	assignment view
30 November 2012 10:00	36.75.102.96	YY	course recent
30 November 2012 10:00	36.75.102.96	YY	course recent
30 November 2012 9:59	36.75.102.96	YY	forum view discussion
30 November 2012 9:59	36.75.102.96	YY	forum view forum
30 November 2012 9:59	36.75.102.96	YY	forum add post
30 November 2012 9:57	36.75.102.96	YY	forum view forum
30 November 2012 9:57	36.75.102.96	YY	forum view forum
30 November 2012 9:57	36.75.102.96	YY	course view
30 November 2012 9:57	36.75.102.96	YY	course view
30 November 2012 9:49	36.75.102.96	YY	assignment view
30 November 2012 9:48	36.75.102.96	YY	upload upload
30 November 2012 9:48	36.75.102.96	YY	assignment upload
30 November 2012 9:47	36.75.102.96	YY	assignment view
30 November 2012 9:47	36.75.102.96	YY	assignment view
30 November 2012 9:47	36.75.102.96	YY	forum view forum
30 November 2012 9:47	36.75.102.96	YY	forum add discussion
30 November 2012 9:46	36.75.102.96	YY	forum view forum
30 November 2012 9:46	36.75.102.96	YY	forum view forum
30 November 2012 9:45	36.75.102.96	YY	assignment view
30 November 2012 9:45	36.75.102.96	YY	course view

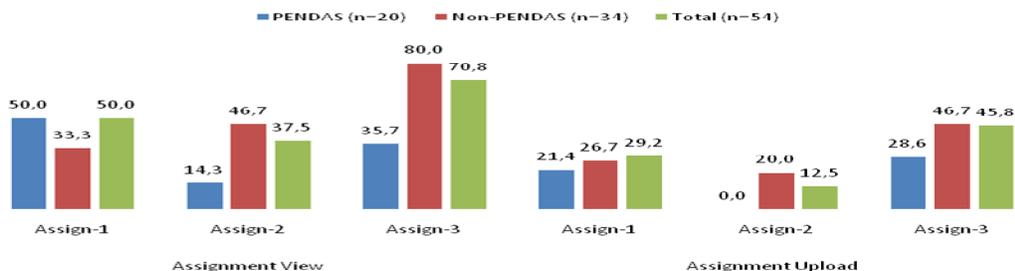
**a. Add Discussion**





Graph 5. Students activities in discussions in online tutorial

In discussion sections which each week begin with new topic, students can engage up to five activities; viewing topic for discussion, add discussion where he/she upload his/her opinion or thought about the topic, and view forum (Graph 5). Other students posted their opinions or thought, add post in which he/she could put his/her opinion as an answer to others, and update post. In each of the posts, students are asked to learn how to communicate their opinion or thought based on materials learnt in that specific week.



Graph 6. Students login in assignment (Total Students, %)

The last post in the discussion section is up-loading assignments (Graph 6). Not as expected, some students did not upload their assignments even though they have been informed that as part of online tutorial requirements, students have to upload three assignments in order to be considered in the final score for the course. No more than 30% students upload their first assignment. The percentage decreased for second assignment but increased for third assignment.

Efforts to encourage students to take a more active role have been taken by using email as suggested by Hawkrige, Morgan and Jelfs (1997). The email was sent by using facilities embedded in the online tutorial system and also from private address. Out of 20 students who have never logged in the online tutorial and were sent email to remind them, only two replied the email. However, replying the email (stating reasons for not engaging in tutor) was their only response. They have never logged-in in the online tutorial. Similar thing happen when students were phoned. Only five students returned the call and two of them finally active in the online tutorial. One student has been reached through her facebook account.

### **Conclusion**

Adult learners have to learn many new skills to return to higher education in ODL system, these include time management and technological skills in addition to the expected academic quality. Without such capability, online tutorial provided is not effectively utilized. However, although open learning demanded maturity from students and capability to learn by themselves, the essential element of online tutorial as one of student support is likely to be a constant necessity to be integrated in all ODL program.

It is important to empathize with students difficulties in term of internet connection. The materials in online tutorials need to consider the capacity of internet bandwidth available for most of the students.

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