THE INVOLVEMENT OF FACULTY MEMBERS AND DISTANCE STUDENTS IN ONLINE TUTORIAL PROGRAM: UT EXPERIENCE

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ABSTRACT

Studi ini bertujuan untuk menjelaskan peran staf akademik dan mahasiswa FKIP-UT dalam tutorial on line (tuton). Studi dilakukan selama tiga masa registrasi (2005.1, 2005.2 dan 2006.1) melalui alamat e-mail http://student.ut.ac.id./mod/statut. dan difokuskan pada aktivitas kegiatan staf akademik FKIP-UT (tutor) dan mahasiswa dalam kegiatan tuton. Hasil observasi menunjukkan bahwa ada sebanyak 52 matakuliah yang dilengkapi dengan fasilitas tuton pada masa registrasi 2005.1, 66 matakuliah pada masa registrasi 2005.2, dan 107 matakuliah untuk masa registrasi 2006.1. Hasil studi menunjukkan bahwa selain adanya kenaikan jumlah matakuliah dengan tuton, terdapat kenaikan partisipasi mahasiswa dan tutor dalam kegiatan tuton, 29 mahasiswa yang aktif mengikuti tuton pada masa registrasi 2005.1, 123 mahasiswa pada masa registrasi 2005.2, dan 192 mahasiswa pada masa registrasi 2006.1. Meskipun terlihat adanya kenaikan partisipasi mahasiswa dan tutor namun masih terdapat 40 matakuliah yang ditawarkan pada masa registrasi 2005.1 tidak diakses oleh mahasiswa, sedang pada masa registrasi 2005.2 ada sebanyak 36 dan 2006.1 sebanyak 59. Meskipun cukup banyak matakuliah yang tidak diakses oleh mahasiswa namun masih banyak staf akademik (tutor) FKIP-UT tetap aktif dalam kegiatan tuton.

Kata kunci: mata kuliah, siswa akses, tutorial on line.

The most distinctive characteristic of distance education (DE) is the physical separation of learner and teacher. Contact or interactive such as instruction or lecturing is conducted through media. The fundamental task of distance education is then to prepare its students to practice self directed study. In this type of educational system, the role of a teacher is to aid students in their learning process by making the course materials lucid through an easy style with colloquial language without difficult expressions, thereby, making the courses attractive and easy to understand (Holmberg & Baath, 1982).

The process of designing course materials is called modularization and defined as breaking highly complex subject areas into segments that involves less than a full semester's work. The role of distance teacher (tutor) is to deliver the courses using instructional media such as printed, audio and visual kits. DE system addresses the obstacles of learning for distance students as compared with on-campus students. DE students usualy have more material to read and to concentrate on, limited contact with other fellow students and instructors, and more distractions because of self-study (Howard, 1985). To make these things balance, the program management in DE system provides tutorial to assist its students in their learning process.

The rapid development of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) during the last decades has changed radically the face of DE from a model of instructional industrialism to ICT-

based learning support system. The internet network invention has made the instructional system of DE possible to improve the quality of learning process especially in increasing the intensity of communication and interaction between tutor-student. Taylor explained that the using of online-based tutorial has just begun in the 4th generation of DE development, while 5th generation is characterized by internet equipped with campus-portal access (Wardani, 2004).

Since the last 5 years Universitas Terbuka (UT) has enlarged its tutorial service with ICT system. One of the tutorials provided by UT is online tutorial (OT), which also called as internet-based tutorial or web-based tutorial (WBT). Through this activity, e-learning is introduced to students to support individual study. Through OT students are encouraged to communicate with tutor discussing problems or connected to reading materials especially difficult and confusing ones.

This article, presents a result research concerning OT activities in the Faculty of Education Universitas Terbuka (FKIP-UT, 2006) during 3 registration periods: 2005.1, 2005.2 and 2006.1. All students participated in OT and faculty members involved in developing tutorial script were appointed as research subjects. Most students are teachers from all part of Indonesia, both urban and rural areas. The TO activities were traced back through http://student.ut.ac.id./mod/statut.

The implementation of OT in Faculty of Education UT is a part of student support service, a form of learning assistance provided by UT for its students, especially those who have not enough time to attend face-to-face tutorial. The aim is to assist students studying the course materials through two-way communication between tutors and students. To make this program works, both students and faculty members as program users should be actively involved in all OT activities. Faculty has the tasks in developing tutorial program, uploading text material to web-based tutorial, writing assignments, and creating online communication with students (program users). While students are inviting to use program facilities such ask reading text material and doing all tutorial tasks. To increase student participation in OT, FKIP-UT has put this activity as one of academic requisites. At the same time, to make this program working, users should have the ability to operate computer and the opportunity to access internet.

In Indonesia, research on internet for instruction had been done during the last few years. Research conducted by Sukarsih (2005) revealed that according to 145 respondents in DI Yogyakarta, the using of OT among students was relatively low (26%). Another research by Andriani (2005) involving 8 post graduate students (Magister Program) as respondents revealed that OT program in UT is good. However some students expressed their complains concerning OT in term of tutor behavior that are less communicative, less proactive, and not responsive while communicating with students. But even so, all respondents emotionally felt the benefit of OT services.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Courses Distribution for OT

Number of subjects being offered for OT tends to increase since this model of tutorial introduced 5 years ago (Figure 1). Figure 1 shows an increasing number of courses offered by FKIP-UT, 52 subjects in 2005.1 registration period, 66 subjects in 2005.2 registration period, and 107 subjects in 2006.1 registration period. Figure 1 show that UT is very intent in uploading learning material to be accessed by its students. Through OT Program, students are invited to communicate directly with tutors or lecturers discussing issues or text materials that are considered as confusing or difficult. FKIP-UT expects this activity will assist students solving their learning difficulties in practicing individual study. The increasing number of courses to be onlined will directly increasing number of

faculty members involved in OT in many academic activities such as developing learning material for OT and presenting academic service for students (Figure 2).

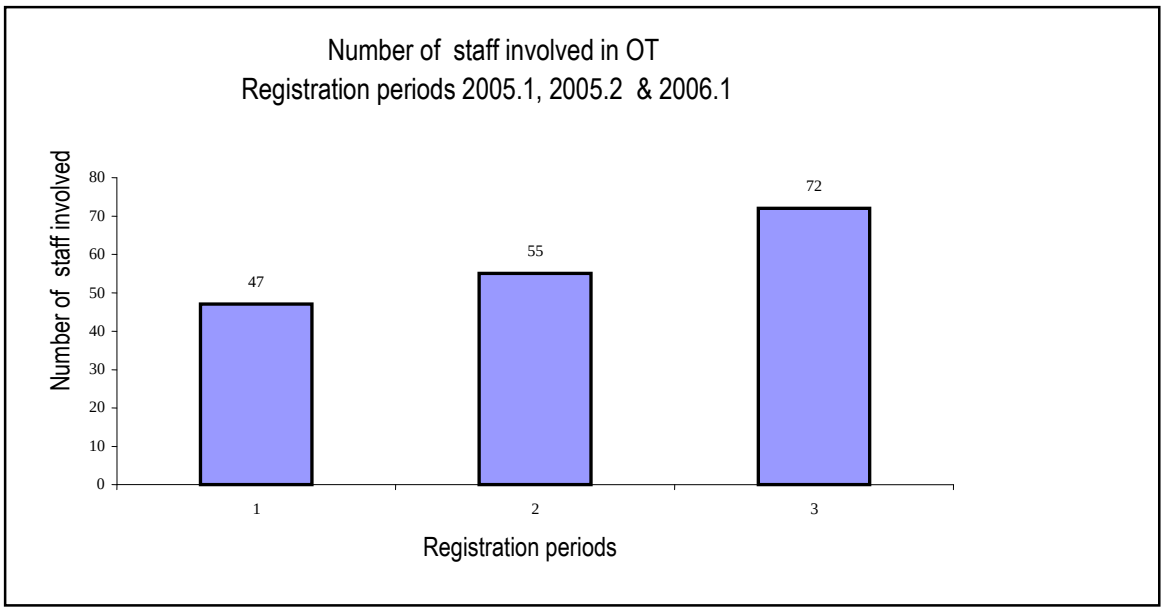

Figure 1. Courses Distribution for OT

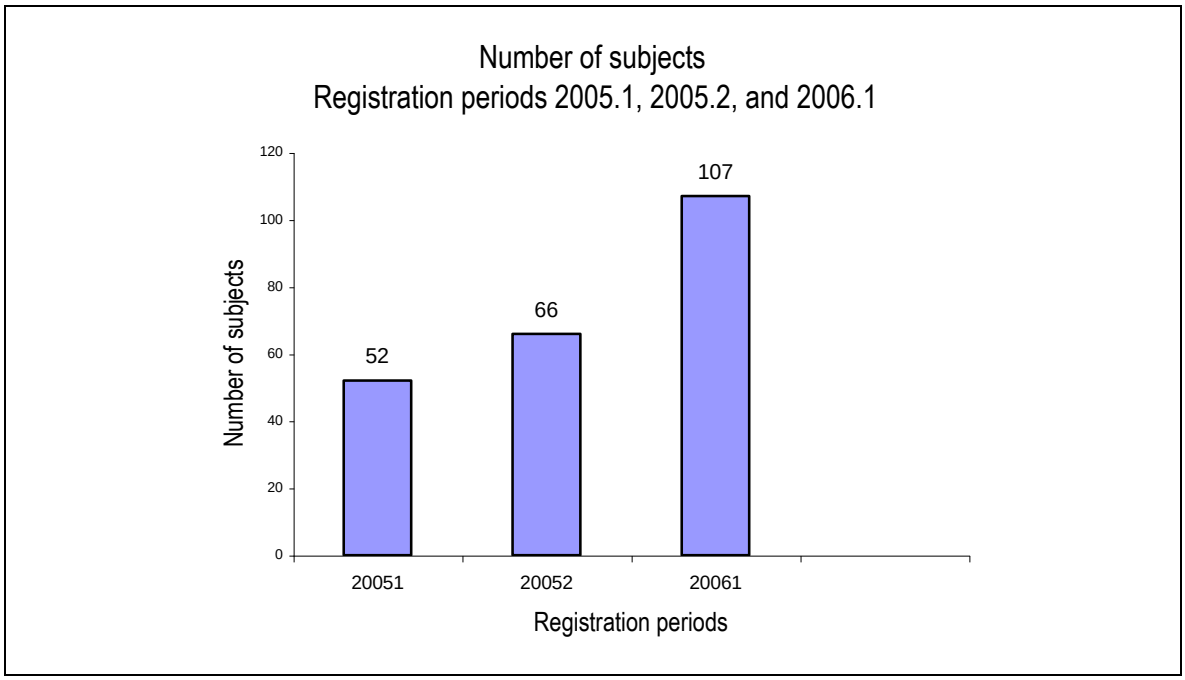

Figure 2. Academic Staff Involved in OT

Number of courses to be online in OT during the last 3 registrations scattered among units in UT. The Department of Mathematics and Natural Science has the biggest number offering OT compared to other departments such as Department of Social Science and Language and Art (Figure 3).

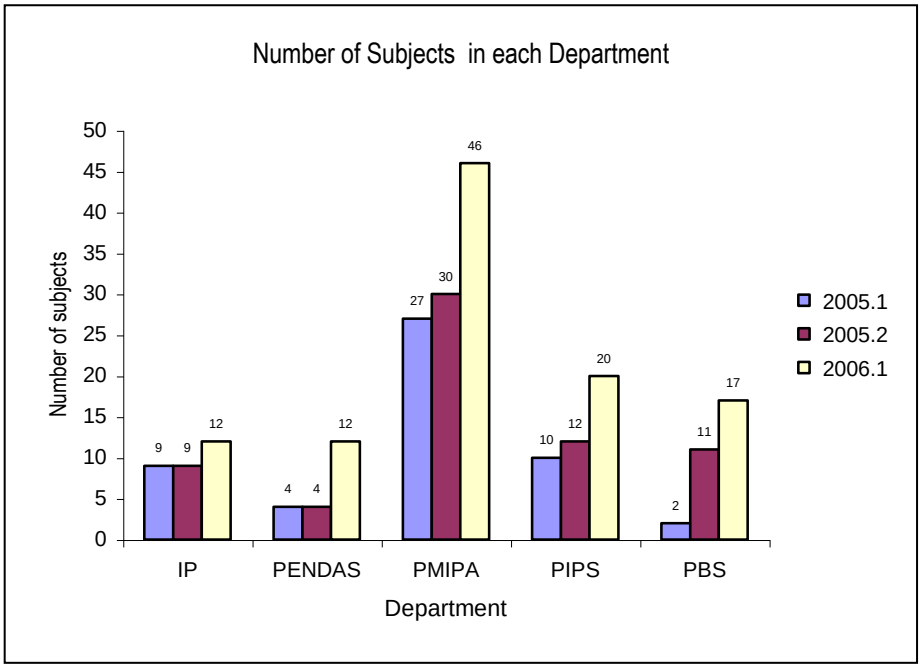

Figure 3. Number of Subjects in each Department

The Involvement of Student and Academic Staff in OT Program

To raise student participation in OT, FKIP-UT is then put this online activity put e-learning into practice. As shown in Figure 4 that number of students registered as program users during the last 3 registration period has increased significantly. But unfortunately, not all students actively used the OT service as means of learning. Apparently most of them are students who register as program users only, but not actively put OT as part of their distance learning activity (FKIP-UT, 2006).

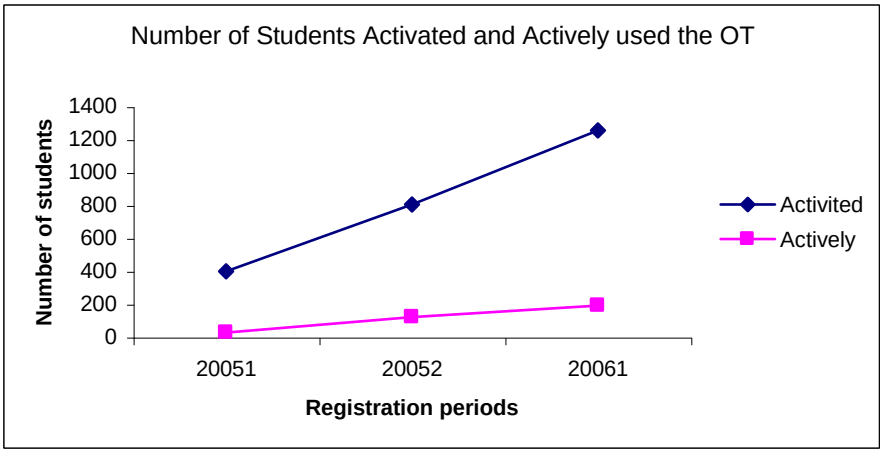

Figure 4. Number of Students Activated and Actively Used the OT

Numbers of students activate (access) the OT and actively adopt e-learning into practice through OT program for 3 registration periods are as seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Number of students activate and actively practicing E-learning through OT Program during 3 Registration periods

Registration Period	Number of Student	
	Activated	Active
2005.1	401	29
2005.2	806	123
2006.1	1257	192

Table 1, above shows that even an increasing number of students accessed and actively adopted e-learning into practice are growing, but in total the tendency does not increased significantly. On the other side, although many courses have been uploaded to internet to facilitate OT, but number of students practicing e-learning or OT are still relatively low.

Status and number of students responding the e-learning courses can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2. Number of Accessed and In-accessed OT Courses

Registration Period	Number of OT Subjects/Ourses			
	Subjects matter offered	In-accessed	Accessed by 1 – 10 students	Accessed by >10 students
2005.1	52	40	12	0
2005.2	66	36	27	3
2006.1	107	59	40	8

Based on OT experience during the registration periods researched, Table 2 shows that a number in-accessed course is bigger than the accessed courses. A number of 40 courses during 2005.1, 36 courses during 2005.2 and 59 courses during 2006.1 are not accessed even by a single student. A number of 12 courses during 2005.1, 27 courses during 2005.2 and 40 courses during 2006.1 are accessed by 10 until 40 students. Only 3 courses during 2005.2 and 8 courses during 2006.1 are accessed by more than 10 students.

Compare to the data in Table 2, Table 3 shows that number of tutors showed at OT is bigger than the missed (unshowed) group. This finding shows that many staff are still not ready to manage OT. It is indicated that few staff still have no commitment toward e-learning activities. But fortunately the number is lower than the appeared one.

Table 3. Number of staff (tutor) involved in the OT program

Registration Period	Number of Tutor in each course	
	Missed	Appeared
2005.1	6	46
2005.2	10	41
2006.1	21	86
Total	37	173

The development of ICT has motivated the faculty members to enhance the quality of distance/individual learning but on the other they are demanded to be more professional to integrate ICT into instruction (Sardjiyo & Paulina, 2006). The preparation of faculty members in practicing e-learning through OT Program should be viewed not only from number of courses being onlined/uploaded, but more importantly from the willingness of faculty members to manage the OT Program. The development of ICT has motivated interaction between students and tutor also. The purpose of interaction here could be both social and instructional in nature. As a part of social interaction, the tutor provides counselling support, encourages learners, and motivates them (Charles, 2006).

Many courses being uploaded to fill OT Program (latest data: 107 courses uploaded during 2006.1 registration period), in which each course is completed with 8 Initiation and 3 assignment Materials (FKIP-UT, 2006). However these activities are still not yet resulted in a commitment from all faculty members, since some tutors do not regularly maintained the tutorial process. Therefore, in connection with this issue, the involvement of faculty member is very much needed in maintaining the continuation of the OT. Through the programmed-interaction, organized, controlled and appropriate support system, hopefully the quality of tutorial service for distance students will be improved. According to Stevenson and Sander (Charles, 2006) there are some qualities of a good tutor, such as (a) must be sensitive to students' problems, (b) is a good communication, (c) provides detailed feedback, (d) gives constructive criticism, (e) has a good sense of humour, and (f) is available and helpful.

Learning support activities through online channel designed by FKIP-UT has shown an increasing of involvement both student and faculty members in the 3 registration periods. The learning activity of students in OT that is considered as low will impact on the inefficient and ineffective for the management of the program. In DE system or e-learning the preparedness of students is very important, student should be computer literate to operate computer, should be efficient in managing learning schedule and should have accessed to internet. Besides, experienced in practicing ICT is very important. The non-active students in OT are presumed as student inability to operate computer and to access internet. According to Churton (2006), to make use of the e-learning instruction effectively, students should be familiar with computer on works, able to adapt with variety of instructional pattern/ design, and has high motivation in learning.

In general, electronic media equals to high cost. Research conducted by Padmo and Anggoro (2003) reported that 81% out of 405 respondents said they felt having financial problems in using computer as media of learning, 66% in e-mail, and 70% in web. Other than financial problems, 67% of respondents said that time constraint in practicing computer-based media such as e-mail, web, and so on has become one of the most serious problems. This learning practice is considered by respondents as time-consuming.

In any education, constraints and involvement of learner should be considered and put in top priority because flexibility in DE is an important factor for policy making, based on the fact that most students in FKIP-UT live in remote and rural areas. So it is beyond the covering of network system.

CONCLUSION

FKIP-UT is very intent in uploading learning material to be accessed by its students. Many courses being uploaded to fill OT Program (latest data: 107 courses uploaded during 2006.1 Registration Period). Each course is completed with 8 initiation materials. Even though UT has issued many courses for OT, but the access of students in e-learning is relatively low. Another thing

the involvement both student and faculty members for OT tends to increase since 2005.1 registration period.

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