

Managing Quality Assurance in a Mega University

Tian Belawati

Universitas Terbuka – Indonesia
tian@ut.ac.id

Ojat Darajat

Universitas Terbuka – Indonesia
ojat@ut.ac.id

This paper discusses how the Quality Assurance (QA) program has been adopted at a mega open university, as the road to quality. Various university policies that relate and support the role of quality and QA system for better educational programs are discussed to show that QA is a reliable means to ensure the improvement of an ODL institution. The UT case study in implementing internal QA system and inviting different QA agencies to validate its internal QA program are presented to sharpen the discussion.

Introduction

Traditional campus-based university and all conventional approaches are insufficient to analyze distance education (Peters, 1983). Due to the advancement of educational technologies (Keegan, 2000; Simonson, Smaldino, Albright, Zvacek, 2003; Simpson, 2002; Stella & Gnanam, 2004), the forces of the World Education Forum addressing access, equity, and quality to education, "Education for All," (Daniel, Mackintosh, & Diehl, 2007), and the provision of higher education have made Distance Higher Education (DHE) an important educational policy in many countries (Perraton, 2000).

Moore and Kearsley (1996) and Peters (2008) disclose that distance education has evolved through three different generations: correspondence study, followed by the appearance of the first open universities in the early 1970s, and the use of digitized distance education in the 1990s. The development of DHE goes back to the decision that the University of South Africa took to establish distance teaching university through a governmental decree of 1962 (Boucher cited in Holmberg, 1995; Schlosser & Simonson, 2006). Another significant landmark of the distance education at the university level has been credited to the founding of the British Open University or Open University of the United Kingdom (UKOU) in 1969, with its first student being enrolled in 1971 (Holmberg, 1995; Keegan, 1986; Schlosser & Simonson, 2006).

Many countries, irrespective of their economic and political ideologies, have adopted distance higher education as a strategic way for providing wider access and equity to the higher education provision (Zuhairi, 1994), including in Asian countries, such as Allama Iqbal Open University established 1974, followed by Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University (STOU) in 1978, and then UT Indonesia in 1984. Daniel, Mackintosh, and Diehl (2007) report that in 1999, there were approximately three million students enrolling at the Distance Teaching Universities (DTUs), and less than a decade later, this figure increased to over six million students. In Asia, 12 out of 15 open universities serve more than 8 million students. Currently, there are more than 50 open universities in the world (Peters, 2008), and 16 of them are what Daniel called 'mega universities' (Daniel, 1999). Table 1 lists the current large DTUs (usually called "open universities"), which employ the single-mode distance education system (Peters, 2008).

Table 1: The Profiles of Mega Open Universities All Over the World

Rank	Institution	Location	Founded	Student #
1	China Open University	China	1979	3,818,233
2	Indira Gandhi National OU	India	1985	3,000,000
3	Allama Iqbal OU	Pakistan	1974	1,806,000
4	Anadolu University	Turkey	1982	1,391,697
5	Payame Noor University	Iran	1987	1,070,000
6	Universitas Terbuka (UT)	Indonesia	1984	646,000
7	Bangladesh Open University	Bangladesh	1992	600,000
8	Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar OU	India	1982	450,000
9	Yashwantrao Chavan Maharashtra OU	India	1989	300,000
10	SCDL	India	1994	210,260
11	Open University (OU)	UK	1969	203,744
12	Korea National Open University	South Korea	1982	183,056
13	Sukhothai Thammathirat OU	Thailand	1978	181,372
14	Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia (UNED)	Spain	1972	180,000
15	Madhya Pradesh Bhoi Open University	India	1991	150,000

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MISSION

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In line with the emerging and significant growth of open universities, there are extensive debates throughout academia about what constitutes quality in open universities (Jung, 2008; Murgatroyd, 2008; Olcott, 2003; Warren, McManus, & Nnazor, 1994). Access paradigm has shifted toward a new paradigm that emphasizes the importance of interactive communication between students and tutors, and among students themselves (Belawati, 1999). While emphasizing the importance of ensuring quality, there is a growing commitment among distance learning providers to be involved in the Quality Assurance (QA) paradigm (Belawati & Zuhairi, 2007; Jung & Latchem, 2007; Mahajan, 2005; Parker, 2005).

This paper reviews the management of QA in open universities and grounds the heuristic practices of QA programs. The first part begins with a review of the current issues in defining the concepts of quality. The discussion will continue focusing on the idea of quality and QA, and describe how QA programs work in Open and Distance Learning (ODL). The discussion will highlight the problematic nature of defining quality and resultant tensions concerning QA. Finally, the strategic development and implementation of QA system at Universitas Terbuka (UT) Indonesia will be addressed at the end of the discussion. It includes self-evaluation, internal quality audit as well as external assessment and accreditation.

Reviewing Quality and QA in DHE

The concept of quality in education is much disputed and difficult to define (Harman; 1998; Harvey, 2005; Jung & Latchem, 2007; Sallis, 2002; Stella & Gnanam, 2004). DHE is multi-dimensional and involves complex systems. Stella and Gnanam (2004) identified 10 different manifestations of DHE provisions, each with a set of interlocked relationships between the institutional and community stakeholders. Since these institutions are typically highly decentralized, it is often difficult to engage the various stakeholders in discussions about dimensions of institutional quality. It is not only a question of setting standards but also very much an issue of who defines them on the basis of interests (Martin & Stella, 2007). How to integrate and accommodate those different perspectives of quality in order to make the definition and standards acceptable throughout the system is an obvious strategic challenge for DHE providers.

Defining Quality and Quality Assurance

The concept of quality is likely to be perceived as multifaceted. To name a few, quality can be seen as "conformance to requirements" (Crosby cited in Darajat, 2013, p. 31), "best for certain customer conditions" (Feigenbaum cited in Darajat, p. 2013), and "fitness for use" (Juran, 1988, p. 1.1). From the range of ideas of quality, Zeithaml, Parasuraman, and Berry (1990) argue that the term of quality can only be determined by customers who are recognized as the final authority on quality.

In higher education, the term quality also appears to be difficult to conceptualize (Jung & Latchem, 2007; Martin & Stella, 2007). As debates and interests grow, new perspectives of quality emerge, which extend the meaning of the existing definitions. Some authors articulate that quality is even more elusive in the higher education. Various stakeholders have different perspectives of quality (Harvey & Green, 1993; Jung & Latchem, 2007; Weber, 2007). Martin and Stella (2007) assert that "the concept of quality is much disputed in higher education and often used by stakeholders in order to legitimate their specific interest" (p. 30). The conflicting definition of quality in education has also been addressed by Vasceanu, Grunberg, and Parlea (2007) who contend that:

Quality in higher education is a multi-dimensional, multilevel, and dynamic concept that relates to the contextual settings of an educational model, to the institutional mission and objectives, as well as to specific standards within a given system, institution, program, or discipline. Quality may thus take different, sometimes conflicting, meanings depending on the understanding of various interests of different constituencies or stakeholders in higher education. (p. 70)

The government may be more interested in graduating as many students as possible with reducing costs (Vroeijenstijn, 1995). The university may judge the quality according to the quality of research performed by all academic staff (Martin & Stella, 2007). On the other hand, learners will address the quality to personal interest, individual development, and preparation for a position in a society (Vroeijenstijn, 1995).

The robust discussion emphasizing the interests towards quality can be traced back to the public demand for quality in the mid-1980s. It had been driven by the increasing number of people entering higher education in 1970s, which lead to the British Government reforming higher education (Green, 1994). Green also contends that "The traditional concept of quality is associated with the notion of providing product or service that is distinctive and special, which confers status on the owner or user" (p. 13). She also discloses other four concepts of quality in education: conformance to the specification, fitness for purpose, effectiveness in achieving goals, and meeting the customers' stated or implied needs. These five different approaches to viewing quality have also been addressed by Harvey and Green (1993). They identify that quality in higher education has been defined as: exceptional, consistency, fitness for purpose, value for money, and transformative.

Along with the problematic nature of defining quality, the perspectives of QA have also been identified with no universal definition. The concept and practice of QA has also been used very loosely with other related terms, such as quality control, quality assessment, quality audit and accreditation (Martin & Stella, 2007), with no general consensus on the exact meaning of each of terms. However, broad definitions of QA can be found in the literature. For example, Harvey and Green (1993) contend that QA refers to "those mechanisms and procedures designed to reassure the various stakeholders in higher education that institutions accord a high priority to implementing policies designed to maintain and enhance institutional effectiveness" (p. 178). A more inclusive definition is provided by Vasceanu, Grunberg, and Parlea (2007).

Quality Assurance: An all-embracing term referring to an ongoing, continuous process of evaluating... the quality of a higher education system, institutions, or programs. As a regulatory mechanism, quality assurance focuses on both accountability and improvement, providing information and judgments (not ranking) through an agreed upon and consistent process and well-established criteria. Many systems make a distinction between internal quality assurance (i.e. intra-institutional practices in view of monitoring and improving the quality of higher education) and external quality assurance (i.e. inter- or supra-institutional schemes assuring the quality of higher education institutions and programs). (p. 74).

For Vasceanu, Grunberg, and Parlea (2007), QA in higher education requires a dynamic process involving internal approaches to the institution and some external agencies. It is a never ending process for "maintaining and improving quality, rather than simply a system of evaluation and checking for errors" (Warren, McManus, & Nnazor, 1994). QA in higher education also involves systematic and integrative management procedures employed to assure quality (Harvey & Green, 1993; Sallis, 2002; Jung 2004; Jung & Latchem, 2007).

Currently, ODL providers are getting influenced by unpredictable trends that demand for ongoing changes. Organizational changes and emphasis on managing quality are becoming a strategic issue to survive and prosper (Melton, 2002). Weber and Dolgova (2007) state that "The new competitive climate has now made the concept of quality—in the sense of quality assurance—which has long been omnipresent in the field of research, one of the key themes in the present debate of

knowledge solutions development (i.e. frameworks, strategies, plans, tools, etc), knowledge transfer and mentorship at both individual and institution level in the following key areas:

- Leadership Development and Governance in Higher education
- Strategic Planning and Performance Management
- Quality and Accreditation
- Innovation in Teaching and Learning, including technology integration in Higher Education
- Research in Higher Education

The Center through its headquarters located in Dubai, UAE and its two branches in the UK and Malaysia is associated with an impressive pool of international experts at the disposal of its clients and is guided by the knowledge and expertise of a formidable international leadership advisory board whose membership includes some of the best leaders in higher education.

CLICKS has also a strong emphasis on research and development and engages in publishing best practices, reports and working series as well as organizing conferences and setting up networks to promote the dialogue between and among Higher Education various key stakeholders.

higher education policy" (p. 9). It is no longer enough to develop well-learned teaching materials and leave the impersonal workings of the marketplace to ensure its success with customers. But they must themselves ensure to comprehend globalization of education that calls for QA (Martin & Stella, 2007).

As ODL providers operate as open system and interact with local and global context, Jung (2004) discloses that methodologies intended to improve quality have focused on a particular dimension such as inviting external expert, conducting evaluation research, and introducing internal review process. Various methodologies have also been taken in various areas of QA framework—such as, policy and planning, management and administration, and program design and development. According to Chapman and Carrier (1990) these methodologies often fail because they may not recognize or address the interacting nature of these components. Specific areas of a QA framework are treated as if they were disconnected from the larger context of interwoven pressures that characterize complex social system. Thus, the critical challenges for universities is to identify the interrelated contexts in which the QA program must be operated and respond to their strategic stakeholders to balance the different interests in order to achieve a common understanding of educational quality.

Quality and QA Criteria in Mega Universities

Stella and Gnanam (2004) contend that any assessment of quality in DTUs should be made with reference to a set of criteria. Although the criteria to assess the quality are basically the same for both campus-based and mega open universities, the subtle difference in the context needs to be elaborated. Mega open universities have different characteristics, which are significantly different from conventional universities. Therefore, quality criteria for mega open universities should comply with the policies and educational quality criteria that support the 'openness, flexibility, and accessibility' of distance education system. In other words, mega open universities would potentially encounter very difficult quality agendas when their practices have to comply with their government's conventional quality scenario (Darojat, 2013).

The implementation of QA in open mega universities is also characterized by the industrialization of teaching (Peters, 1988; 2007; 2008). Otto Peters (1988) argues that distance study is a form of learning complementary to the industrial and technological age. Therefore, the principles of industrial production should be applied to the analysis of distance education. Distance education (Der Fernunterricht) is rationalized by application of industrial techniques, including planning, division of labor, mass production, automation, standardization, and quality control. For Peters (1983), open universities are seen as a rationalized method of providing knowledge by applying industrial principles and extensive use of technology that allows a large number of students to participate in university study simultaneously, regardless of their place of residence and occupation. By implementing these industrial techniques and specific technologies, teaching is produced as a commodity, which can be mass-produced and distributed to students in a region, state, nation, or groups of nations. If standardized procedures are followed in production and administration of such courses, the outcomes are reliable and effective, and learning can be ensured (Moore & Kearsley, 1996). His arguments have led to the conclusion that DE is the most industrialized form of education (Peters, 2007). Peters acknowledges that the theory of industrialization has disadvantages, but in any exploration of teaching, the industrial characteristics of open universities need to be taken into account in decision making for quality criteria.

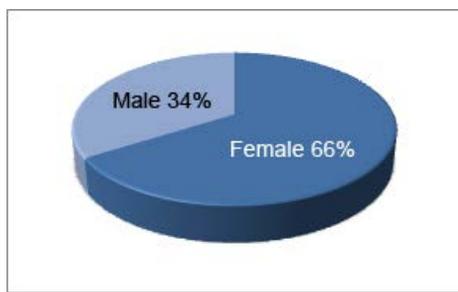
Warren, McManus, and Nnazor (1994) reveal that the initial investigation of criteria and focus of QA in open universities had been conducted by Nunan and Calvert in 1992. They found that QA in DTUs had been focused on two key areas: the processes and production of course and program materials, and the delivery of distance education to learners. Currently, the more wide-ranging information of QA areas in mega open universities has been disclosed by Jung (2004) based on the survey of eight mega universities and other six distance education providers. For example: in Open University of United Kingdom (UKOU), they include: institutional management of quality and standards, framework for academic quality and standards, internal review, assessment and awards, collaborative awards, student support and guidance, staff, and accountability to stakeholders. Meanwhile, in Athabasca, they include: openness, flexibility, quality courses, programs and student support services, organization and people, provincial, national, and international positioning, and fiscal health. The framework of QA areas has also been identified by different institutions, such as Commonwealth of Learning (COL), and AAOU. They provide general QA frameworks, which allow them to be adapted and tailored by different ODL universities with different cultural and educational contexts. Their QA frameworks are general enough for ODL providers to adopt and meet these QA criteria. These criteria are not absolute and are open to varied interpretations (Murgatroyd, 2008). To ensure the expected benefit in adopting frameworks and to help ODL providers in using the QA tool, these frameworks have also been equipped by performance indicators and sources of evidence (COL, 2009). Universitas Terbuka (UT) Indonesia, for example, has advanced to adopt and contextualize the AAOU QA framework by developing various QA manual jobs, which illustrate the standard operational procedures to enhance quality in different criteria that fit its local context and are eligible for international accreditation (Belawati & Zuhairi, 2007). The following discussion focuses on how one of the mega universities, UT, manages QA program as its strategic road to achieve quality.

Case Study: Managing QA at Universitas Terbuka

UT is the state university and the only university using a distance learning system in Indonesia. UT has been designed by the government to provide services for qualified higher education, especially for those in our society who, for some reasons, cannot join conventional higher education, as they are living in remote areas. UT, with its accessible capacity, which is different from conventional education institutions, is able to provide higher education services for all members of the society living in urban and remote areas.

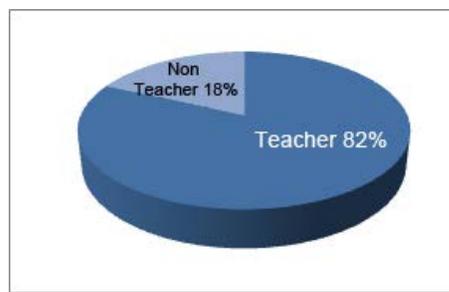
As of 2010, UT was serving more than 600,000 students all over Indonesia. UT has a well-built, centralized management system with its site office located in Jakarta, supported by 369 academic staff and 567 administrators. As ODL provider, UT is also equipped with 39 regional centers spread out over 34 provinces run by 400 academic staff and 498 administrators. The Figure 1 and 2 below show the total number of UT's student body based on gender and profession. The increasing number of student body is in accordance with the implementation of QA system at UT in 2004 and the establishment of the Indonesian Government policy to upgrade elementary school teachers in 2005.

Figure 1: Male and Female Students



Number of Students (per 2010.2): 646.467

Figure 2: Teacher and Non Teacher Students



Number of students (per 2010.2): 646.467

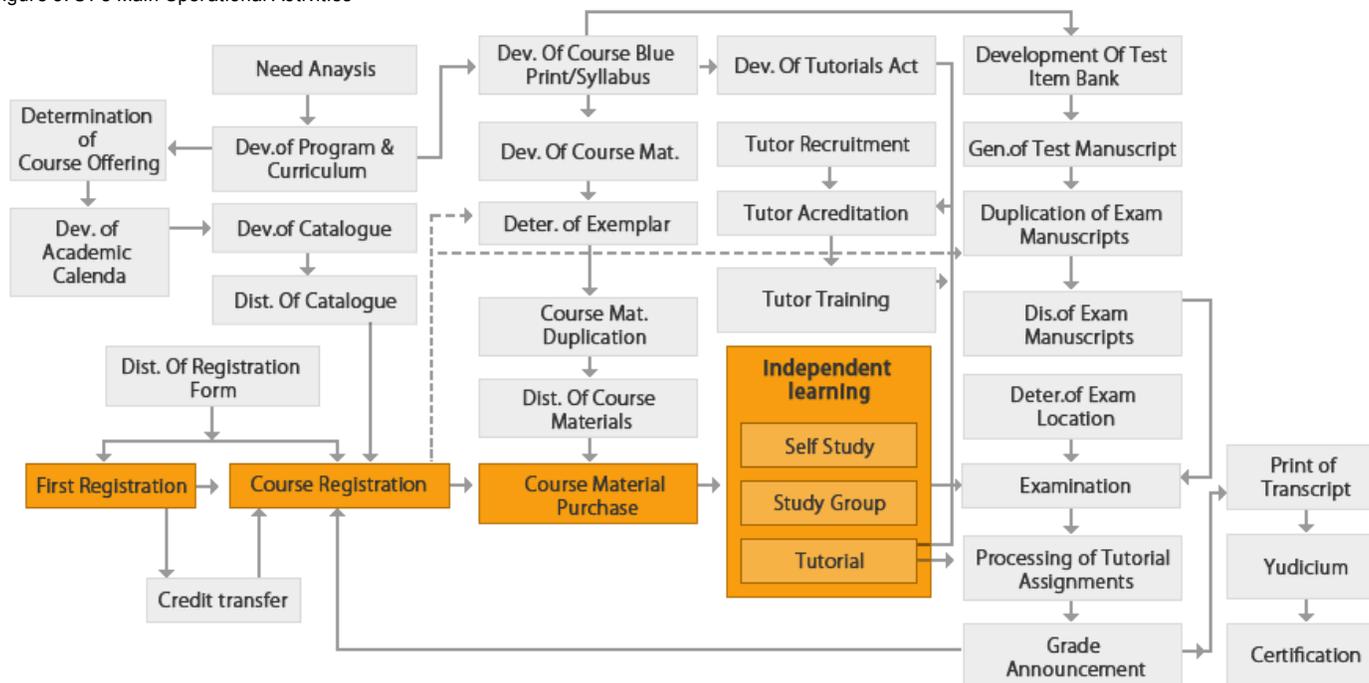
UT has set a vision to be one of the centers of excellence in researching, developing, and disseminating open and distance higher education in Indonesia. UT was also initially established to provide wider and equal opportunity of access into higher education to all people throughout Indonesia who otherwise have constraints. Specifically, UT is aimed to provide:

- Wider opportunities of higher education to high school graduates;
- Second chance of higher education to adults; and
- "In-service training" to primary and secondary teachers.

UT's Major Operational Activities

UT's main operational activities generally can be divided into two categories: namely, activities that are managed by UT and its regional offices (ROs) and a number of activities that should be performed by students (See Figure 3). They are ranging from, registration services, teaching and learning provisions and support services, examination processes, to certification. As the university now focuses on academic quality, learning materials and learner support services is now becoming a strategic issue. The production of printed materials, for example, is a long process involving various parties; it may include subject matter specialists, instructional designers, typists, reviewers, and a publishing centre. Until recently, UT has produced 974 titles of printed/ non printed materials written by 1,100 writers. The quality of printed learning material consists of four indicators. They are: a) contents relevant to the syllabus, b) covering all components self-learning material (introduction, discussion, including examples, illustrations, and so on), and c) conformance with the standard of writing. The quality of the learning materials also includes the quality of writing, picture, and physical performance. By adopting QA programs with clear standards and procedures on the one hand, and the common share of continuous improvement philosophy on the other hand, the conformance to the standards was increased as gains were evident from the student feedback.

Figure 3: UT's Main Operational Activities



The students' engagement in a number of UT's main activities, such as the production of learning materials, registration, and tutorial services, is very important for the reason that students are the final people who will judge the quality of their learning process. UT monitors the students' satisfaction periodically. UT randomly asks students to fill in questionnaires concerning registration, learning materials, learning supports, and examinations. Management urgently needs to know whether students are really satisfied or not with the services provided. These students' feedback will then be used for continuous improvement. The students' engagement in the QA program provides benefits by way of revising policies, standards and procedures, and upgrading of human resource development.

In accordance with its policies, UT has developed and employed a variety of learner support services to support students' success. UT has remained fully focused on developing numerous blended teaching deliveries to support the students' independent learning process. Blended teaching activities involve developing and distributing the self-explanatory power of its printed materials, supplemented by study guide and VCD/DVD, F2F and online tutorials, and broadcasting tutorials via radio and television programs. In general, however, there have been three major instructional deliveries including self-directed learning, F2F tutorials, and online learning. F2F tutorial deliveries have been provided based on the course requirements (teacher student professional development program) as well as based on the students' requests. F2F tutorial services have been organized by UT's regional offices. F2F tutorials have been regarded as the major mode of learning support services. To ensure the quality, UT starts with planning that includes selecting the subjects, identifying qualified tutors and determining locations that are easily reached by participants. The implementation of F2F tutorial sessions are controlled, monitored and evaluated by regional offices, students and sometimes by other stakeholders. The processes of F2F sessions are also audited by external auditors. The results of these quality assessments are recorded and analyzed for appropriate improvement so that the implementation of F2F program in the upcoming sessions is better. The implementation of F2F sessions is now supported by 22,653 tutors for about 214 courses serving 365,781 students in 446 cities all over the country. To ensure the quality of F2F tutorials in promoting students' learning, the University has developed and reviewed its quality guidelines and tutorial kits. The main purpose of developing this tool is to standardize the management of F2F services.

Meanwhile, online learning deliveries are now becoming a more popular mode of teaching and have been regarded as major and prospective teaching modes for future development. UT has implemented online services including those designed for tutorials, web-based supplementary materials, self-exercise tests, and online counseling. Online learning services are used to decrease the constraints of distance and time. The number of online courses has increased in response to the students' demand and the availability of access points in different regions all over the country. It has been found that since 2005 until 2008, online courses increased significantly from about 375 courses to about 560 or so. In 2009, however, the number of online courses decreased due to the change in UT policy that some online practical courses will no longer be offered through online learning (UT, 2010). In 2013, however, all academic staff became very busy in implementing the new policies of offering online learning services for all courses. These preparation steps included developing online tutorial scripts and conducting online tutor trainings through internal and external academic staff. To support this delivery mode, UT employs 575 online tutors to serve 13,609 students for 552 courses.

To support student success, UT has engaged in various support activities. Academic and non-academic counseling services are conducted both at UT's head office and regional centers. Students are encouraged to communicate with tutors or academic staffs at the relevant faculties for help in academic matters. The Office of Student Services has been declared as an important unit for providing support services at UT's head office. However, students are also encouraged to use support

Student Service has been designed as an important unit for providing support services at UT's head office. However, students are also encouraged to use support services at UT's regional offices. To provide these support services, regional offices have been assigned a number of staffs who are responsible for learner support in different districts (Penanggung jawab wilayah). UT has also developed a digital library for providing its students access to e-journals, thesis, dissertation, and other research reports.

As a mega open university, UT also has a big deal in implementation of the final examination. Operational scale of final examination per semester can be illustrated as follows:

Table 2: Operational scale of final examination per semester

In Indonesia			Abroad		# of Student-Course Exam Processed
# of Cities	# of Exam Rooms	# of Students	# of Cities	# of Students	
741	21,781	456,231	12	369	2,136,259
# of Exam Supervisors/Proctors					40,421

Final examination has been regarded as one of the strategic issues at UT. This is because the student's progress in study is mostly assessed by this process. UT has developed a number of quality guidelines, including standard operating procedures, for preparation, implementation, and announcement of the examination results. Table 2 shows that per semester UT uses 21,781 exam rooms in 753 cities in Indonesia and oversees 456,600 students utilizing 40,421 proctors.

Development of UT's Internal QA System

UT has initiated and implemented a QA system for more than 10 years. It established a task force for internal QA system in 2001. The aims of the QA Committee are as follows:

1. Searching for QA framework: Selecting AAOU draft of QA framework (in the format of 'statements of best practice')
2. Adapting selected QA framework: Developing self-assessment instrument for each statement
3. Coordinating the quality self-assessment throughout the university at each management level, step-by-step, with 'self-assessment' starting at the lowest unit level (e.g., academic department), moving higher up the university hierarchy, mounting into university level based on consensus
4. Analyzing the self-evaluation results

Adapting AAOU QA framework led to the development QA policy manuals, classified into nine QA areas, reflecting the comprehensive needs of UT quality guidelines including:

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

The use of the UT's internal quality system can be regarded as an important departure by UT for starting self-assessment processes. The use of self-assessment is an excellent first diagnostic step on the path to quality (Sallis, 2002). It refers to the study of institutional processes and practices by members of the respective institutions (Maniku, 2008). According to the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM), as cited by Sallis (2002), self-assessment is:

A comprehensive, systematic and regular review of an organization's activities and results... The self-assessment process allows the organization to discern clearly its strengths and areas in which improvements can be made, and culminates in planned improvement, which is monitored for progress. (p. 148).

Martin and Stella (2007) further clarify by explaining that in the self-assessment process, faculty, together with administrators, should discuss the strengths and weaknesses in their respective units, and identify the causes of possible shortcomings.

The underlying assumption behind the use of self-assessment is that an educational institution that really understands itself in terms of its Strengths, Weaknesses, Potential Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) is likely to be more successful in employing its educational mandate than the one without self-awareness (Martin & Stella, 2007). To support the implementation of its internal quality system, UT has developed its own QA guidelines and a framework for use. Belawati and Zuhairi (2007) clearly disclose that:

The year 2004 was a significant milestone for UT, as that is when UT finally put its words into action. 2004 saw UT using its QA manuals consistently; it saw UT implementing its QA system using tangible annual action plans to support continuous improvement (p. 7).

One of the strategic issues in UT at that time was the need to have a QA framework, which can be generally acceptable and be readily available to Indonesian Government and international QA agencies. Such a framework will be useful to ensure the sustainability of UT's educational programs. Currently, the QA framework includes 10 crucial sectors, as follows: policy and planning, human resource provision and development, management and administration, learners, program design and development, course design and development, learner support, media for learning, learner assessment, and research and community services (UT, 2010).

The QA system at UT is an internal mechanism aimed at assuring the quality of the process of education in order to achieve its ultimate goal of having well educated people. The quality of the process of education not only refers to the quality of teaching and learning processes, but also refers to the better quality of instructional media, such as printed and non-printed materials and curricula in general. The implementation of a QA system is intended to increase the conformance of the learning materials to the predetermined quality criteria. The development of the learning materials has become a crucial issue for two reasons. First, more than **25% of the UT budget** has been invested in learning materials. Second, there are a lot of defective products, especially with regard to printed materials. It is hoped that the adoption of the QA program will decrease the amount of defective products and increase conformance to the standards.

The implementation of a QA program involves a number of activities: developing QA policies, developing evaluation methods, establishing the QA job manuals

The implementation of a QA program involves a number of activities: developing job manuals, developing evaluation methods, establishing the QA job manuals (standards and procedures), implementing and revising standards and procedures, and continuing evaluation for QA implementation (Belawati & Zuhairi, 2007). The university also takes a very important step before implementing the QA program: promoting and providing training QA programs for all people within the University. This activity has been carried out after establishing the QA job manuals. They cover all functional areas within the university. It is important that faculties and administrative staff in the university share the same perception about what quality and QA really means. They should know how to begin and advance quality and QA continuously in their daily work. Shifting an organization's outlook is one of the major tasks when undergoing 'innovation'. In this first step, such change requires support and commitment from top and middle managers at all levels.

Quality job manuals in the form of Standard Operational Procedures (SOP) in performing QA system have been used as major tools in training programs. SOP shows how the work flows from the beginning until the end. It also maps out the interrelationship among units or individual tasks within the system. It is broadly stated that SOP reflects the value chain activities of UT within the road of the QA system. Vigorous discussion to achieve common perception about standards and procedures is becoming very important at this moment in respect of sharing feelings and beliefs around the QA program. The orientation not only focuses on how to implement the job manuals, but also on how to measure achievement in all processes and outcomes. This step is very important for two reasons. First, this orientation provides people with more understanding of QA job manuals that will lead to more confidence in the use of the right management and educational methods. Secondly, this orientation is a room for staff engagement in the QA program. At this moment, people can express their knowledge and attitudes about the given QA job manuals.

The next critical step in implementing QA system is the establishment of a QA center known as Pusat Jaminan Kualitas or Pusmintas). The university established the Quality Assurance Center in 2003. The center coordinates the development of QA manuals involving in-depth discussions with UT staff in various units (involving about 200 people) and has systematically documented the UT's operational activities and procedures. By 2010, there were 71 active manuals for different QA areas as follows:

1. General: 17 Manuals
2. Course and Examination Materials' Development and Distribution: 17 Manuals
3. Academic Administration: 6 Manuals
4. Student Service and Operations at RO: 25 Manuals
5. Promotion and Partnership: 6 Manuals

This QA Center is also responsible for coordinating all the departments in the university in order to execute the QA standards and criteria. With the Human Resources Development Center, the QA Center has organized in-house training sessions for academic and administrative staff in order to increase their competencies when acting as internal auditors for UT's quality assurance program.

External Assessment and Accreditation

The influence of Indonesian Government on UT's QA system can be classified into two dimensions. The first dimension has to do with the establishment of study programs and the second aspect concerns the government's role in accreditation. UT and all higher education institutions are required by law to follow the guidelines developed by the DGHE [Directorate General of Higher Education]. This guideline provides quality standards to be taken when proposing new study programs. For this purpose, UT should confirm its quality standards of study programs by referring to the Director of DGHE's Decree Number 108/DIKTI/Kep/2001 and the Minister of National Education's Decree number 234/UJ/2000. All new program developments must be submitted to DGHE for getting their approval. UT cannot establish and offer new study programs without the permission from DGHE.

Concerning the government role in accreditation, UT has long been involved in quality assessment by National Accreditation Board of Higher Education (Badan Akreditasi Nasional-Perguruan Tinggi or BAN-PT). Regarding the adoption of national quality accreditation, it may be important to note that at the initial stage, UT just conducted self-quality audits called Simintas; this is from us, by us, and for us according to quality standards that have been set by us. However, we know that we need to get verified what we are doing by others. Therefore, we invite external parties and our first external auditor is BAN-PT in the name of government.

We invite BAN-PT to certify all our study programs. In the previous quality assessment, there were many quality standards that did not correspond well with quality characteristics employed by distance teaching institutions because the quality standards were commonly used for conventional universities. It was found that 17 study programs of four faculties were accredited in 2007; of them four study programs were accredited "B", while the other 13 study programs were accredited "C". The accreditation marks received by UT were based on the instruments used to evaluate the face-to-face teaching and learning process. UT has submitted an appeal for a re-evaluation and accordingly, UT is collaborating with BAN-PT in developing the instruments suited for open and distance education system (UT, 2010). The new instrument for accrediting distance higher education has been completed and BAN-PT has developed a specific instrument for distance higher education. However, some criteria do not correspond to the context of UT. For example, one quality criterion suggests that students must complete their bachelor degree within four years. UT is a DTU that provides a lifelong education for the nation. Unlike students in conventional universities, it is not necessary for students at UT to take 15-20 credits per semester and to complete their study within four years.

External Quality Audit by International QA Agencies

To validate its internal QA system, UT has decided to invite other external assessors: the International Council for Open and Distance Education (ICDE) and the International Standardization Organization (ISO). In 2004, UT's QA manuals were updated in line with the university's target for ISO 9001 in some of the UT's core business activities, such as course material services, academic services, regional offices' learning services, and academic administration services. The adoption of ISO was aimed to assess management processes that we define by ourselves. The decision to employ the ISO 9001 has been taken to improve quality management in different units including UT's 37 regional offices. To support the adoption of ISO quality management system, the university revised 112 job quality manuals used for initial self-quality assessment and reduced up to 76 undated quality procedures, representing a more efficient use of manuals (UT, 2010).

In addition to adopting the ISO, UT has also involved the ICDE Standard Agency (ICDE-ISA) in 2005. UT invited ICDE-ISA to conduct an assessment with the goal of achieving the International Certificate of Quality. The focus of the assessment by ICDE-ISA was to examine the quality of administration and practices in the field of distance education. We want to see that we are doing what we said concerning various core businesses in open and distance learning, such as course development and learner support services. ICDE has its own criteria that are different from quality standards requested by BAN-PT and not necessarily exactly the same as our quality assurance system. ICDE gives a list of questions that we have to answer in a portfolio. From the list of questions, we will know what the ICDE concerns are in assessing quality. When ICDE conducted a quality review, they also examined what actions have been taken following their previous recommendations five years

ago. The university undertook various actions as its response to the recommendation of ICDE quality auditor, such as improving capacity building in external communication, tracking students' study progress, and developing digital library services.

From the foregoing discussion, it seems clear that to survive and prosper, an ODL University must involve in QA paradigm. The need for implementing a QA program is a critical issue that facilitates the university's road to quality in the endeavor to provide better quality of service to the students. The QA program is important for UT for some reasons: the need for accreditation, provide better quality of service to students and increase student satisfaction, reduce costs, and increase the conformance of learning materials to the standards. In addition, the more competitive nature of the education market among higher education organizations has also encouraged UT to adopt a QA program.

From the time UT has implemented the QA program, the conformance of products to standards has increased. In addition, the QA program has helped UT to maintain student satisfaction. An unexpected impact of the implementation of QA program is the changed organizational culture. By undergoing the QA program, UT has managed to prosper and flourish from year to year. The university now enjoys significant increase of student body, generating a profitable education market. Currently, UT has gained a big number of its student body and is still a part of 'the Mega University' in the world.

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Do you believe that the criteria for assessing quality in traditional campus based universities shall be the same as the ones for assessing mega open universities?

- Yes No

In your view which of the below represent the most significant driver(s) for the emergence of open mega universities world widely?

- Globalization pressure
- Demographical growth
- Provision of wider access
- Technological advancements
- The need for affordable education

Do you think open learning can offer in in comparison with traditional campus based learning:

- The same quality of learning
- Superior quality of learning
- Inferior quality of learning

In your view which dimensions are most crucial to the success of open learning

- A clear institutional vision and strategy
- Well-designed and structured learning material
- Teaching, learning and assessment practices
- Well deigned and responsive students support infrastructure
- Good internal QA and continuous enhancement systems

What are the most significant challenges in your view that will encounter the implementation of blended and e-learning in your institution?

- Students' readiness
- Instructor skills and competencies
- Technology infrastructure availability
- Support for instructors
- Quality assurance

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In News

#1 [CLICKS' CEO at Conference in Casablanca, Morocco](#)





On May 7th, 2014, Dr. Narimane Hadj Hamou participated in the Zakoura Education Conference, “E-Education: The School of Tomorrow” in Morocco. She spoke on the topic “The Implementation of e-Learning in the Arab Region: Lessons & Perspectives”. The presentation demonstrated how ICT can contribute to the improvement of the education system and optimize the cost of education. Over 300 participants, including the Minister for Education, Morocco, attended the event.

#2 CLICKS Signs an MoU with Higher Education Academy in the UK to Support Quality and Excellence in Teaching and Learning

CLICKS Signs an MoU with Higher Education Academy in the UK to Support Quality and Excellence in Teaching and Learning

The Center for Learning Innovations and Customized Knowledge Solutions (CLICKS) has recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Higher Education Academy (HEA) in the United Kingdom. The MoU, which was signed earlier this month, is part of the continuous efforts of the Center to support quality and excellence in teaching and learning across universities and colleges within the Arab Region.

The MoU will provide a great opportunity for supporting professional development among faculty members and teaching staff. In addition, it will encourage the transfer of best practices and ‘know-how’. This will enable collaborative work and research for supporting the higher education community within the region.

Dr. Narimane Hadj-Hamou, CEO of CLICKS, said: “We are delighted to enter this collaboration with the HEA and feel this will present a great opportunity for us to work together to better serve the region. Our collaboration covers a range of activities, including offering joint public and tailored capacity building programs. These will serve not only the faculty and teaching staff, but also leaders of higher education responsible for driving and continuously improving the quality of teaching and learning, and the overall students’ experience. The scope of work will involve helping universities, colleges and authorities in developing strategies, frameworks and standards to govern the quality of teaching and learning”.

Dr Mark Jones, Director HEA Services, on the other hand, said: “The Higher Education Academy is pleased to sign this MOU with Clicks, as we seek to expand our collaborative partnerships in the MENA region and raise awareness of the ways we support universities to raise the teaching quality standards.”

About the HEA

The UK’s Higher Education Academy (HEA) is an agency that supports excellent learning and teaching in higher education. It is a national, independent organization, funded by the UK Government and by subscriptions from higher education institutions in the UK and overseas. It is committed to improving the student learning experience by raising the status of teaching, enhancing professional teaching practice, and maintaining networks and communities engaged in teaching enhancement. HEA works in partnership with universities, their staff and students, sector agencies, and funding bodies to support both institutions and individuals in raising quality standards.

Central to the work of the HEA is the UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF) for learning and teaching in higher education. The UKPSF helps institutions link their professional development programs with best practices in the area of teaching and learning support. It is used to support discussions on teaching, to evolve institutional policy and practice around career progression and promotion, and to reward and recognize individual teachers.

#3 Call for Institutional Best Practices

The Higher Education Leadership Forum is one of the very few networks established in the MENA region to address higher educational academic leaders. The Forum, through its various meetings, aims at providing a regional platform to discuss latest trends, developments, and issues pertinent to the field; share experiences; and identify future directions for higher education. Furthermore, and given that institutions of learning today operate within a global world, the Forum will also invite international participants and experts from other parts of the world to share their experiences and the lessons learnt.

Every Forum meeting will be planned around a theme of relevance to the latest global and regional trends in higher education. The 2015 Forum will be organized under the theme “Towards Transformative Higher Education in the MENA Region: The Role of Innovation in the 21st Century Digital and Knowledge-Based Society”. The theme was selected based on the essential role higher education plays in supporting the long-term economic growth of nations through nurturing creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurship.

Throughout the different activities planned during the two days’ Forum, a number of important sub-topics and concepts linked to the theme will be discussed. These include, but are not limited to, the importance of creating innovative climates, the use of technology as one of the fast growing innovations impacting higher education, achieving excellence through research and innovation, innovative ways of supporting learners in the 21st Century, and so on.

Important Deadlines

- Abstract Submission Deadline: 1st of November, 2014
- Full Best Practice Submission Deadline: 1st of March, 2015.
- Deadline for submitting power point presentation: 1st of November, 2015

For more information about Submission Guidelines, please [click here](#)

#4 CLICKS Announces Schedule of Public Programs for 2014–2015.

CLICKS is pleased to announce its schedule for Public Capacity Building programs for the academic year 2014–2015. All public programs offered through

the Center specifically cater to Higher Education (HE). They are meant to address the needs and challenges facing universities, colleges and other HE education authorities within the region and beyond. Our programs are in line with the latest developments and trends in the field. Through these programs, CLICKS attracts renowned experts who combine both international expertise and a good understanding of the higher education system within our region. For more information about the programs, please do not hesitate to contact us at inquiries@cli-cks.com

Workshop Leader	Workshop Name	Workshop Dates	Registration Link
Prof. Martin Henson	Leadership Development in Higher Education	21 st -23 rd , October 2014	Register Now
Prof. Clare Morris	Quality & Accreditation	23 rd -25 th , November 2014	Register Now
Prof. Grainne Conole	Educational Technologies	09 th -11 th , January 2015	Register Now
Mokhtar Benhadria	Benchmarking for Best Practice in Higher Education	20 th -22 nd , January 2015	Register Now
Prof. Carmel McNaught.	Excellence in Innovative Learning & Teaching	27 th -29 th , January 2015	Register Now
Prof. Martin Henson	Research in Higher Education	10 th -12 th , March 2015	Register Now
Prof. Susan Stevenson	Planning & Successfully Leading the Implementation of a Strategic Vision	28 th -30 th , April 2015	Register Now
Dr. Narimane Hadj Hamou	Governance in Higher Education	05 th -06 th , May 2015	Register Now

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