The Role of Universitas Terbuka-Indonesia in Improving Higher Education Services in Indonesia

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Abstrak *This study examines UT Indonesia's experience and learning in an effort to expand the quantity and improve the quality of higher education in Indonesia. The aim is to comprehensively analyze the role of UT Indonesia in providing higher education services, increasing the outreach of higher education, and quality assurance. This study uses literature studies to assess, critique, and synthesize literature on research topics that allow for the emergence of new theoretical frameworks and perspectives. The review process includes four phases: design, implementation, analysis, and finally writing a review. Studies show that UT Indonesia has a very important role in optimizing the field of higher education for the community. UT's excellence as a distance university is largely determined by the quality of service in the form of student satisfaction. In addition, with the characteristics of the distance education system, UT can be considered as a solution to various educational problems, especially those related to equity and democratization of education, as well as expanding access to quality education for all levels of society across time and space. Lastly, high-tech learning models and quality assurance systems can be implemented based on ICT. It is important to use a quality circle approach in developing DE courses and learning materials for students. UT has an important role in improving the accessibility and quality of ICT-based education in Indonesia because of its cost effectiveness and flexibility in the implementation of learning.*

Keywords open and distance education; accessibility of education; improving the quality of higher education.

INTRODUCTION

Access to education as a human right and an important tool for inclusive and sustainable economic recovery (Kompas, 19 November 2022), was emphasized in the declaration of heads of state at the G20 Summit (Summit) in Bali in the field of education on 16 November 2022. There is a shared solidarity commitment, in particular to helping developing countries rebuild more resilient, technological, accessible and effective education systems. The statement made in the Bali declaration is important considering that the world, including Indonesia as a developing country, has experienced impacts in almost all areas of life, including education.

The challenges and problems faced by various countries, especially in developing countries, such as Indonesia, both during the Covid-19 pandemic and after the Covid-19 pandemic became increasingly severe. However, the need for relevant and sustainable higher education services to respond to future challenges is a necessity that must be responded to appropriately and quickly (Belawati & Nizam, 2020). The crisis has pushed people to make changes to their daily lives and try to adapt to new things caused by these changes. The impetus for this change was also felt in the midst of the coronavirus disease (Covid-19) pandemic crisis which began to be felt in Indonesia in March 2020. Every sector was affected and required to adapt, including higher education (Dwiartama & Ahmad, 2020).

One of the challenges during the Covid-19 pandemic related to improving the quality of education that needed to be addressed was the increasing use of technology (Indrawati, 2020). Access difficulties in online learning are one of the problems faced by students. This condition has an impact on universities to provide services in the learning process for students. Various findings show that many students in remote areas lack connectivity. They also have limited access to the equipment needed to use educational technology tools even though the use of technology by students is actually an easy thing because they are a generation that is sophisticated in the use of devices (technology savvy) (Sari & Fitri, 2020). However, the main challenges in the cyber technology sector are dependence on information technology and securing data from economic and social power attacks through cyberspace. In the future, 100 billion devices will be connected to the internet from various aspects of human life, thus changing the way humans work and live. The presence of a global network of smart machines will also dominate people's lives (Santoso, 2020).

With the spread of access to education and the conditions in Indonesia's territory that vary from one region to another, this requires more optimal attention in the use of technology to support the delivery of quality education. The importance of using technology was expressed by Blaschke (2012) who said that we also have an opportunity to support students in using technology to develop specific skills and networks that can later be transferred to working environments for lifelong learning. Education in its development cannot be separated from the influence of the development of globalization, in which science and technology are developing rapidly. The development of this technology has an impact on the learning process including the erosion of local culture and the weakening of control of education by the state and the emergence of fast-paced traditions (Setyawati, et al., 2021). The importance of quality in the implementation of higher education for educational stakeholders, both the community and institutions, has encouraged the government to establish a national accreditation and quality assurance agency. Public and institutional stakeholders seeking accountability in higher education have encouraged governments to establish national quality assurance and accreditation agencies (Belawati & Zuhairi, 2007). The main obstacle faced by Indonesian education, especially in the outermost and most isolated areas, is how to ensure that education

in Indonesia is evenly distributed and can be enjoyed by all parties (Syamsuar & Reflianto, 2018).

From the discussion that has been described previously, this article will then examine how the role of Universitas Terbuka - Indonesia in improving higher education services in Indonesia.

METHOD

The research method used is qualitative research with a type of literacy study. Literacy studies relate to methods of collecting library data, reading, taking notes, and managing research materials by collecting several previous studies to analyze the role of Universitas Terbuka-Indonesia in improving higher education services in Indonesia. Library sources in the form of documents, books and journal articles that are relevant to the topic of this study. Analysis is carried out on the data obtained and then poured into chapters and sub-chapters so that they answer the topic of the problem.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

With UT's work since 1984, the role of the Open University is very important in improving higher education services in Indonesia. The rapid progress of science and technology in the field of education, both concerning information, communication and instructional fields, has made it possible to provide new ways of providing educational services in addition to the conventional face-to-face methods that have been known so far. With the help of technology that has advanced rapidly, the way of delivering education and the learning process has improved so as to allow increased flexibility and accessibility for users or students. The Open University as an open and distance education institution (PTJJ), which is currently developing very rapidly, can be an alternative learning process in meeting the needs of stakeholders in terms of the availability of education, especially at the higher education level. The Open University has a very important role in optimizing the field of higher education both in terms of quantity and quality aspects, including aspects of Higher Education Services, increasing the outreach of higher education, and Quality assurance (QA).

The Role of Universitas Terbuka-Indonesia

Higher Education Services

Various regulations in the field of higher education in Indonesia have been made in the framework of increasing the number of students as well as equitable access to higher education, as well as improving the quality of higher education to produce graduates who can play a role and contribute to improving the welfare of society and the national economy. Ninety percent of future jobs will require digital skills, spread

across system architecture or digital technology expertise, technicians, and operators. (Santoso, 2020). To be able to produce productive Human Resources with adequate digital literacy skills, a learning system that is adaptive to advances in technology and a learning culture that promotes flexibility of learning methods for students and the community is needed.

The system and implementation of higher education in Indonesia refers to the mandate of the 1945 Constitution to educate the nation's life, which is then technically spelled out in various laws and regulations starting from Law no. 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, Law no. 12 of 2012 concerning Higher Education, Government Regulation No.4 of 2014 concerning Implementation of Higher Education and Management of Higher Education, and Minister of Education and Culture Regulation No. 3 of 2020 concerning National Higher Education Standards. The essence of the goals of higher education is increasing and equalizing access to higher education, as well as improving the quality of higher education to produce graduates who can contribute to improving the welfare of society and the national economy (Belawati & Nizam, 2020).

Higher education as a formal educational institution has a very important role in producing quality human resources who are ready to face the challenges of the world of work. Intense competition in the world of work has made people more careful in choosing a university and they are sure that the university chosen will meet their expectations. The demand for the quality of higher education services requires higher education institutions to always try to improve the quality of higher education. The implementation of good higher education services for students will be able to describe the quality of the tertiary institution. Quality of service in the administration of higher education can be considered as one of the ways to achieve higher education excellence because the success of a tertiary institution is largely determined by the quality of the service provided, where quality service can be seen from customer satisfaction, in this case student satisfaction (Agustika, et al., 2017).

Higher education is an industry that interacts directly between service providers and service users. Academic services provided by tertiary institutions are educational services that are directly related to students from tertiary institutions. Academic services are said to be of quality if they are in accordance with the needs of their customers. The quality of academic services is the value given by the customer to what extent the academic services are provided. Customers, in this case students, will say that the academic services provided by higher education institutions are of high quality if they meet their specifications. (Amin, 2017).

Increasing the Outreach of Higher Education

The Distance Higher Education system is able to serve a larger number of students, more flexible, and also cheaper, who previously could not participate in the learning process at face-to-face educational institutions. Thus developing countries whose education sector is still below developed countries can catch up through these

distance universities. The development of quality human resources in developing countries can be carried out through the Distance Higher Education system (Nugraheni, 2009).

Indonesia's vast territory of 5,193,250 km² (land area 1,919,440 km² and ocean area 3,273,810 km²) with Indonesia's geographical conditions being separated by sea, area size and population distribution is material for consideration for the government that increasing access to higher education This height must be done remotely (distance education). One of the goals of establishing Universitas Terbuka (UT) is to increase the reach or improve community access to tertiary institutions (Soleiman, 2010). The vision and mission of UT provide opportunities for self-development through education, provide on-site learning opportunities without having to come to a particular school and develop professional academic education programs. The UT implements an open and distance learning system that has proven effective in increasing the reach and equity of quality higher education opportunities for all Indonesian citizens, including those who live in very remote areas (Afnidar, et al., 2014).

One of UT's development efforts involves increasing the reach of educational services without being limited by place and time. In addition to regional coverage, the main focus of development in this field is expanding service access points, improving service quality, improving partnership networks, and enhancing UT's image in society. Access to UT services has been extended to the sub-district level, including through collaboration with various stakeholders. Other collaborations are carried out by expanding UT's partnership network with various government and private agencies, as well as with other universities in Indonesia and international institutions in Asia and the World, with the main objective of increasing student enrollment rates (Kusmawan, 2011).

UT which implements the Distance Higher Education system was established by the Government of Indonesia to carry out the mission of expanding coverage or increasing opportunities for access to higher education. It is hoped that the presence of an online learning model can increase community involvement in a larger number. Through online learning as its main mode, the Distance Higher Education can serve a larger and more equitable number of students (Darojat, 2019). The distance education system, is an innovation of the 21st century based on ICT. The distance education system is an education system that has broad reach across space, time, and socio-economics. The PJJ system opens access to education for anyone, anywhere, anytime, learn with anything, and learn in any way. With these characteristics, the distance education system is often considered as a solution to various educational problems, especially those related to equity and democratization of education, as well as expanding access to quality education for all levels of society across time and space (Warsihna, 2013).

Quality assurance (QA)

Quality assurance in the implementation of distance higher education is an important aspect for UT in implementing quality education services. The application of QA as an innovative management strategy is an effective approach to achieve excellence and quality of higher education services. (Belawati & Zuhairi, 2007). The determining factors in efforts to improve the quality of tertiary institutions in facing the ASEAN Community include: vision and mission; rule; governance guidelines; student bodies; human Resources; infrastructure; university tri dharma; international cooperation; visiting lectures; and Asian issues.

In addition to its broad reach, the quality aspect of education is also very important. Long Distance Open Education Institutions must also fulfill their duties in delivering education to students with good quality, through planning a good learning process, which includes products, delivery methods, processes, and services to students, these educational services can meet the needs of their customers. Quality has become an important consideration for stakeholders in selecting educational institutions. Thus the PTJJ institution must respond appropriately to the changing needs of the community, among others by implementing a quality assurance system. Quality assurance is a process of continuous improvement that is systematic and comprehensive in meeting stakeholder expectations (Nugraheni, 2009). If related to quality regionally, the determining factors in efforts to improve the quality of tertiary institutions in facing the ASEAN Community include: vision and mission; rule; governance guidelines; student bodies; human Resources; infrastructure; university tri dharma; international cooperation; visiting lectures; and Asean issues (Nulhaqim & Akhmad, 2016).

Quality assurance (QA) aspect is very important in improving organizational efficiency and effectiveness as well as public accountability. Organizations must be ready and able to adapt, change, and innovate in implementing QA in a clear and transparent manner, so as to be able to meet customer expectations. The application of a QA system and clear procedures and well-defined activities means that UT educational institutions can meet high standards of quality standards. Two important aspects of QA are the importance of implementing internal and external audits which must be carried out so that institutions can track performance, overcome weaknesses in achieving organizational success. UT must be fully responsible to all stakeholders whether they are government officials, taxpayers, employees or students. UT as an ODL institution must be open to change and innovation, and ready to adapt and engage in partnerships and global competition (Belawati & Amin, 2007). The existence of information technology must be able to bridge access to learning while maintaining the quality of higher education. Utilization of Information and Communication Technology for learning in Higher Education will further encourage the progress of learning in Indonesia (Santoso, 2020).

In carrying out quality assurance, various efforts have been made by UT regarding academic aspects and educational services. High-tech learning models and quality assurance systems can be implemented based on ICT. The quality assurance system can be supported by human resources who also have high skills in the ICT field. The quality circle approach can be applied. It is important to employ the quality circle approach in developing DE courses and learning materials. The quality circle consists of the course writer who is a subject matter expert, a subject matter specialist who is another subject matter expert who peer reviews the soundness of the course and its contents, an instructional designer who ensures the presentation of material is effective, a a media specialist who recommends appropriate delivery mediums, and a language editor who performs copy and substantive editing. In sum, whatever the technology used to deliver instructional content, the 'quality circle approach' to course development should be standard practice (Pena-Bandalaria, 2007).

CONCLUSION

Like other developing countries, Indonesia still faces challenges in implementing higher education. Universitas Terbuka-Indonesia (UT) as an institution that organizes a distance education system has a duty to improve higher education services both in terms of quantity and quality. UT can play a role in improving higher education services in Indonesia in terms of Higher Education Services, increasing the outreach of higher education, and Quality assurance (QA). The use of technology is very important in helping improve higher education services in Indonesia considering that Indonesia's territory is very large.

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