

Delivering Distance Educational Services in Difficult Areas: Universitas Terbuka's Case

Authors : Ida Zubaidah

Abstract : With the advancement of information and communication technologies, in many cases, geographical distance is no longer considered as a main barrier in distance education. Geographical distance, even from a continent to another, between students and their instructor or students and their campus can be connected by the Internet, telephone or any other means of communication technology. Managing distance learning in an archipelagic country like Indonesia, however, has some different stories. Comprising more than 17,000 islands and 6.000 of them inhabited, Indonesia is considered as one of the most archipelagic countries in the world. In some areas or islands that have adequate public transportation and communication facilities the courses can be delivered quite well. In other areas that geographically very remote and dispersed islander, Universitas Terbuka, an open university in Indonesia, has to have very different strategies in overcoming the specific and even emergency situations in learning delivery. This ongoing research paper aims to share experiences of how Universitas Terbuka makes serious and unique efforts in overcoming the barriers and obstacles in providing educational service in part of difficult areas, especially in eastern areas of Indonesia. The data collection methods are observation of sample areas and in-depth interview with the head of regional offices of Universitas Terbuka in eastern Indonesia, staff, and tutors. Conducting educational deliveries in in difficult areas with no regular and adequate transportation has made the regional office have specific strategies in making the learning process run as smooth as possible. Sending a tutor to an area to meet some students and conducting a series of tutorial, which are supposed to be weekly, in several days is one of the strategies. Recruiting local people to manage the students in the area is another strategy. The absence of regular transportation from island to island, high tides, hurricanes, are among the obstacles faced by the regional offices in doing their job. Non geographical barriers such as unavailability of qualified tutor, inadequate tutor payment, are problems as well. The learning process, however, has to be done in any way, otherwise the distance education mission to reach unreachable cannot be achieved.

Keywords : distance education, Terbuka University, difficult area, geographical barrier, learning services

Conference Title : ICE 2015 : International Conference on Education

Conference Location : London, United Kingdom

Conference Dates : December 10-11, 2015