

Lessons Learnt from Tutors' Perspectives on Online Tutorial's Policies in Open and Distance Education Institution

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Abstract : Every institution has to develop, implement, and control its policies to ensure the effectiveness of the institution. In doing so, all related stakeholders have to be involved to maximize the benefit of the policies and minimize the potential constraints and resistances. Open and distance education (ODE) institution is no different. As an education institution, ODE institution has to focus their attention to fulfilling academic needs of their students through open and distance measures. One of them is quality learning support system. Significant stakeholders in learning support system are tutors since they are the ones who directly communicate with students. Tutors are commonly seen as objects whose main responsibility is limited to implementing policies decided by management in ODE institutions. Nonetheless, tutors' perceptions of tutorials are believed to influence tutors' performances in facilitating learning support. It is therefore important to analyze tutors' perception on various aspects of learning support. This paper presents analysis of tutors' perceptions on policies of tutoriala in ODE institution using Policy Analysis Framework (PAF) modified by King, Nugent, Russell, and Lacy. Focus of this paper is on on-line tutors, those who provide tutorials via Internet. On-line tutors were chosen to stress the increasingly important used of Internet in ODE system. The research was conducted in Universitas Terbuka (UT), Indonesia. UT is purposely selected because of its large number (1,234) of courses offered and large area coverage (6000 inhabited islands). These posed UT in a unique position where learning support system has, to some extent, to be standardized while at the same time it has to be able to cater the needs of different courses in different places for students with different backgrounds. All 598 listed on-line tutors were sent the research questionnaires. Around 20% of the email addresses could not be reached. Tutors were asked to fill out open-ended questionnaires on their perceptions on definition of on-line tutorial, roles of tutors and students in on-line tutorials, requirement for on-line tutors, learning materials, and student evaluation in on-line tutorial. Data analyzed was gathered from 40 on-line tutors who sent back filled-out questionnaires. Data were analyzed qualitatively using content analysis from all 40 tutors. The results showed that using PAF as entry point in choosing learning support services as area of policy with delivery learning materials as the issue at UT has been able to provide new insights of aspects need to be consider in formulating policies in online tutorial and in learning support services. Involving tutors as source of information could be proven to be productive. In general, tutors had clear understanding about definition of online tutorial, roles of tutors and roles of students, and requirement of tutor. Tutors just need to be more involved in the policy formulation since they could provide data on students and problem faced in online tutorial. However, tutors need an adjustment in student evaluation which according tutors too focus on administrative aspects and subjective.

Keywords : distance education, on-line tutorial, tutorial policy, tutors' perspectives

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