

MOBILE LEARNING: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES AT UNIVERSITAS TERBUKA

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Abstract

Universitas Terbuka (UT-Open University of Indonesia) has 399.254 active students during registration 2011.2. Students come from 37 regional offices. Excellent service continues to be improved. One of them with socializing the use of cell phones to provide information in mobile. Noteworthy aspect is the cooperation between the institutions of distance education with a cellular provider. This paper will discuss the opportunities and challenges in using cell phones for mobile learning at Universitas Terbuka.

Keywords: mobile learning, opportunities, challenges

INTRODUCTION

Government in this case the Ministry of Education and Culture has set up how the learning process at universities in Indonesia. The Indonesian government banned the establishment of long-distance classes. Prohibition began with the issuance of Higher Education Directorate General (DG) in 1997 with a number letter 2559/D/1997. Ten years later the ban was reinforced by the number letter 595/D5.1/2007 in February 2007. Three months later the same year the DG reinforce the ban on long-distance classes by issuing circulars numbered 058/003/22/KL/2007. Finally, four years later after issuing circulars, DG re-issued a circular letter number: 1017/E/T/2011 dated 15th of July 2011 about licensing and prohibition of this learning process refers to the regulation of the Minister of National Education number 20, 2011 (replacement rule number 30, 2009 about the same thing).

Colleges that will build the facilities and infrastructure for the learning process the same quality as its parent campus and directly adjacent to the districts/cities in places where the program is allowed if permitted notify the DG for state higher education and coordinator for the coordination of private colleges for private higher education. This notice is required for supervision, coaching and development of universities.

Education and training for long distance is open education with a structured learning program is relatively tight and the pattern of learning that takes place without a face-to-face (f2f) or separation between the instructor by the participants (Sadiman, 1996). Besides that, long-distance training is a model of learning without being bound by space and time with a little help from others (Warsito, 2011)

Distance education is not education that off without any control or organized. Distance education is self-organized learning systematically. Guidance to training participants, presentation materials, learning and monitoring the success of training participants conducted by instructors who each have specific responsibilities (Suparman & Zuhairi, 2004).

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Universitas Terbuka (UT-Open University of Indonesia) has had a legal basis for organizing long-distance classes in Indonesia. Since UT is only allowed to hold a higher education distance. UT academic services are grouped into two groups namely the registration and testing as well as learning service and learning materials support. Every services department must relate directly with students. Students come into the office to register the course as scheduled academic calendar, get academic advising and guidance of online tutorials.

There are four types of tutorial are provided for UT's students. They are have advantages and limitations.

1. Face-to-face tutorial, can only be followed by students who live around the location of tutorial. Sometimes the obstacle is the execution time does not allow for student to follow f2f tutorial. The advantage, the student can deal directly with the tutor to overcome difficulties in the understanding of learning materials.
2. Written tutorial, feels too time-consuming, because the waiting time is long enough. Sometimes the student have solved the learning problems before analysis or answers from the tutor arrives. The advantage, written tutorial can reach a wider area, so that students who live in remote areas may consult with the tutor.
3. Radio or television tutorial, felt less interactive and limitations of hours of broadcast airtime. The advantages of this medium can be accepted by nearly every student and good for stabilization of the material or enrichment materials
4. Online tutorial, limitations users who have access to the internet. Because internet have not been able to reach all areas in Indonesia. Although the actual online tutorial can answer that is often complained of interactive problems by learners and education observers (Meilani, 2007). In addition, the online tutorials allow students to communicate and interact with tutors anywhere. With the online tutorial, it is expected the two-way

communication in distance education and making learning materials was more humane (Suparman, 2004).

Furthermore, Universitas Terbuka began to pioneer for a better service to students and to help their access information and support to learn without barriers. One is by moving the mobile learning. Mobile learning using tools of information technology (IT) and mobile phones, such as cell phones, laptops and tablet PCs, in teaching and learning (Tamimuddin, 2007). In line with Sheng-Hung (2011) that “in mobile e-learning, mass information and content management are uploaded and downloaded from the database central by registered students, lecturers, and tutors. Therefore, it is essential to provide mobile users with access to real-time relevant enterprise information, such as latest educational information, and the ability to act on that information anytime and anywhere”.

Students can access materials, direction and applications related to learning, no matter when and where-else. Learning is a complex process that happens to everyone who lives, since she was a baby up to the grave. In recent years, the era of globalization is one of the triggers for the use of technology as much and as good as possible. The use of cellular phones in Indonesia developed around the 1990's. Cellular phones have not been fully utilized by universities, both conventional and distance universities. Utilization has been limited to announcements that are informational only.

Ease of mobile phone ownership and broad coverage to remote villages be an important reason for UT to make mobile phones as a tool and means of supporting distance education. This paper focuses on the problems of mobile learning in terms of opportunities and challenges to help students in the information, services, and learning support to understand the material.

MOBILE LEARNING: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Opportunities uses mobile learning at UT can be seen from the managerial aspects. UT's vision became pre-eminent institution of distance education in Asia in 2010 and at world level in 2020. Four aspects of UT's quality are (PKH, 2011):

1. Quality of Products

The quality of products varies from one institution to another institution that depends on the priorities, resources, size, potential learners. Quality of products includes learning materials, the number of graduates, number of participants who passed the final examination, the number of graduates accepted at other universities for further studies.

2. Quality of process

The quality of the process is more difficult effort than the quality of products. Management and decision-making process is more difficult to measure because it takes time to note the positive and constructive for the institution. It includes such things as: the process of learning, learning activities, learner guidance, coordination with the development of curricula and learning materials about the author, partnerships with external customers, the development of

communication networks with regional offices as well as management information systems.

3. Production and Learning System

Learning system includes the production, printed and non-printed learning materials, exam materials, scheduling, warehousing and supply of control learning materials, delivery learning materials to students, and broadcasting radio and television programs. Production as like industrial management activities which resemble assembly-line procedures, professional skills, and control schedule deadlines.

4. Quality of Philosophy

The quality philosophy includes the vision, mission, policies, institutional culture, governance, work culture and public image. Initiate changes and ensure staff focus on the activities and priorities on the goals and mission of the institution. Consultation and communication between management and staff required for socialization and internalization of the philosophy of the institution.

The pattern of work that focuses on the achievement of quality standards require follow-up and guidance from top management constantly. One of them began pioneering policy toward mobile learning for all students of UT. Utilization of m-learning opportunities is a large number of students. UT's active students at the time of registration 2011.2 are 399.254. The next opportunity is the breadth of the working area of UT. UT's students are not doing the activity in the UT Center, but in the regional offices in all 33 provinces. Regional office as the office of academic services and so on. One province can have 2-3 units of regional offices such as East Java with an area of territory reaching 47.922 km² have three regional offices. They are in Surabaya, Jember and Malang.

Internet presence has been exploited by UT to provide learning support by online tutorial. The weakness of online tutorial is not all regions in Indonesia can access to internet easily. As research conducted by Daulay (2009) showed that the cooperation of the utilization of information and communication technology (ICT) Center-network consists of schools, education offices, students and teachers and college-has not been going well and UT's student participation in the ICT Center facility utilization is still low. The ability and confidence of students in using the internet is still limited. In line with the results of research Padmo (2007) that showed a significant relationship between sense of self capable students in using the internet network and the level of awareness of e-learning students.

Therefore, one way to help students in the learning process is to use a particular mobile phone especially short messages services (SMS) facility. As raised by Sembiring (2009) the use of SMS as a way to establish rapport with the aim of avoiding the distance between students and universities both central and regional offices. Media that can provide extensive benefits is SMS because SMS users in Indonesia is growing more rapidly.

The first phase was done by UT in pioneering mobile learning is to instruct all regional offices to always remind students provide mobile phone number when filling the personal data. Each regional office collect and update the

cell phone number of students in each registration period by using the SRS application.

SMS learning can be remainder about the deadline for registration, exam time information, mark, and also materials of courses. In principle, there is no difference between SMS learning with f2f tutorial. SMS learning which contains the material and assignments are sent to students via SMS. Students must register the course and their mobile phone number. So that, if they register automatically be connected with mobile number and get material with related to registered subjects.

Information by SMS is mass, quickly, accurately and not wasteful of time. Bulk SMS can send by SMS sender use the id or name, company name, organization, or anything else. Deliver SMS messages via the internet that can send SMS to 1000 or more than 5000 destinations within a few seconds with one klik. SMS Broadcast/Blast can send SMS with sender id/name and can be accessed through the website or software.

The working principle of this SMS (<http://elib.unikom.ac.id>) is that each network has a service center (SC). The message is not sent directly to the destination but in the first store in SC becomes the interface between public land mobile network. SMS transmission can occur even if mobile station (MS) is doing the communication with the MS to another.

SMS broadcast service is to make communication effective and efficient. All costs charged to the sender SMS broadcast. SMS can be sent by using the name of UT as a sender. Bulk SMS sender with this alpha, can be sent to all operators in Indonesia and overseas. SMS Broadcast recipients will not suck pulse.

Some disadvantages to using the SMS learning. These disadvantages can be challenges in the use of mobile phones for distance learning. Among these challenges is the maximum number of sender id is 11 characters. Number of characters in an SMS limited to 160 characters, but now has developed into 480 characters. The cost is relatively expensive if the members/students is not too much. It can not be done for another providers.

The next challenges is the learning support. Initiation material should be prepared as possible by making use of a limited character. As with f2f tutorials or tutorials online, there are materials to be presented to students as well as the tasks required at the meeting of 3, 5 and 7 shall be followed by students.

The fact is very different between the SMS Broadcast and SMS Premium. SMS Broadcast is usually intended to convey a message. SMS Broadcast can not reply to/in-reply (Puspita, [ttp://blog.ciptamedia.com](http://blog.ciptamedia.com)). So that, interaction between students and tutors is not running.

Futhermore, need to socialize the use and ability of students to access. Any sophisticated or as simple as an application of learning will be useless if students do not know it. It always need to socialize in any activity undertaken by regional

office. Such as new student orientation activities and intensive monitoring of tutorial.

CONCLUSION

Opportunities using cell phones at UT are managerial aspects, the potential quantity of students and breadth of the work area, also the potential widespread use of cell phones in Indonesia. Challenges can be seen in the aspect of supporting facilities such as IT readiness, collaboration with providers, learning support, also socialization of use and the ability of students to access.

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