Barriers and Challenges of Distance Education in the Reform Period:

Overview of Political Perspective

Meita Istianda

Universitas Terbuka

Abstract

One way to achieve the public welfare is through education. Therefore, the Indonesian government has made a breakthrough of political policy namely in the form of the implementation of distance education system to address the gaps of the higher education in Indonesia. This political policies started since the Suharto government era. After 30 years the policy is implemented, the results showed an increase in quantity of students in higher education, for example in 2010, the gross enrollment rate of higher education in Indonesia reached 21.6%. However, the increase in quantity does not coincide with an increase in quality. The results of distance education quality is still questionable.

This paper aims to identify the obstacles and challenges facing distance education from a political perspective. Is the the education politic policy in the reform era that opens the extensive application of distance education system in Indonesia higher education able to respond to the challenges in improving the quality of education in Indonesia? To answer these questions, the authors analyze the literature relating to the policy, the quality and output of distance education, as well as the capacity of the learning culture of the Indonesian people. The analysis showed that the obstacles and challenges facing distance education in improving the quality of education, primarily constrained by the aim of learners who get an education is more oriented to power and resources, rather than to understand the knowledge; as well as the culture of the people of Indonesia are weak learners. Suggestions for solving the problem is to change the society culture into a culture of learning. It required political policies that can move all elements of society to be aware of the importance of a learning culture.

Key words: education policy , the quality of education

Introduction

One of the variables in calculating the Human Development Index (HDI) is a variable education. If the educational variables showed high performance or quality, which means that the HDI has succeeded in improving the quality of human. Qualified human means human welfare. Due to the higher level of education will be an impact on increasing revenues. An educated will be easier to obtain a better job than the uneducated.

Increased public access to quality education is the mandate of the Indonesian Constitution (UUD 1945), as stated in his opening, namely, to protect all the people and the country of Indonesia, the intellectual life of the nation, promote the general welfare and participate in implementing world order based on freedom, lasting peace and social justice. Furthermore, in the body of the UUD 1945 mandated the importance of education for all citizens as contained in Article 28B Paragraph (1), that is, each person has the right to develop themselves through the fulfillment of basic needs, the right to education and gain the benefits of science and technology, art and culture, in order to improve the quality of life for the welfare of mankind; and Article 31, Paragraph (1), which mandates that every citizen is entitled to education.

Indonesian Government's efforts to improve access to education of Indonesian society, is not easy. State budget constraints, inadequate infrastructure, and geographical condition of Indonesia as an archipelago, a difficult challenge. In 1984, Indonesia experienced a shortage of capacity for graduate school (SMTA), who want to enter public universities (PTN), but the capacity of PTN only 4.5% of the 805,000 graduates of the SMTA, or about 36,000 people, while 95.5% or about 768,000 people had to be accommodated in the PTS with diverse qualities. It is estimated that over the years the number of graduates SMTA will increase steadily

in line with the improving economy. When capacity is not immediately increased, feared to

cause other problems, namely unemployment, social problems, and more. Responded that the

Indonesian government makes policy by establishing the Open University which is the higher

education system remotely. As a distance education, the Open University is expected to meet the

public interest that want to continue on to higher education (Sugiantoro, 2015).

Open University (UT) was formally established in 1984 began to accept students in

1986. During the period UT take part, up to now (30 years), showed an increase in student

participation is quite significant. For example, based on data from the official website of UT

until June 2, 2014 noted, there are 433 763 active student enrolled at UT and scattered in several

faculties.
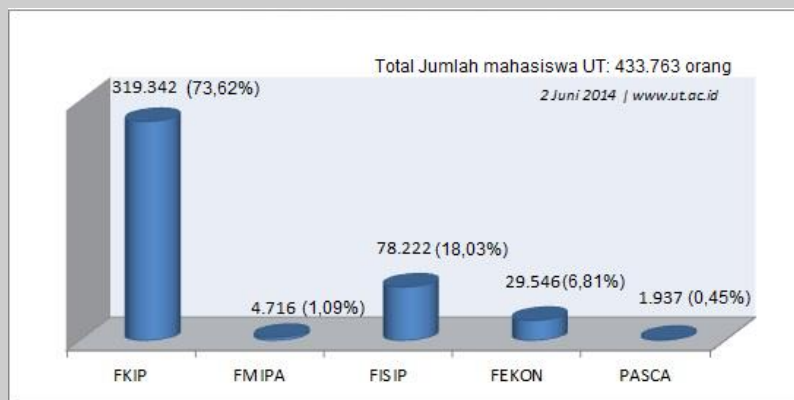
Students composition in UT, 2 Juni 2014 (Source: Official Website UT)

An increasing community participation in the higher education, the establishment of Open Distance Learning policy shows quite effectively answer the needs of the higher education community. However, the increase in the participation, do not necessarily reflect the quality of graduates produced. Rusfidra (2006) in his mention of a debate about the quality of distance education. Although Indonesia has a great potential in developing distance education system, but there are still plenty of indication in the community that distance education is regarded as a second-class education, even if such an assumption is not entirely correct.

Another charge is the accusation low quality of distance education graduates compared face-to-face education. Although the accusation were denied by Selim (1989). In Australia, the study results Selim (1989) in Suparman (1989) shows that the achievement of students of distance education was better than conventional college students. Similarly, the findings Sunarwan (1982), there are no significant differences in learning achievement between student who uses modules and face to face teaching. Although it has the advantage, but the distance education system developed UT is not free of criticism, especially regarding the quality of the graduates. For example, one criticism it is news in Kompas, May 9, 2005, entitled "distance education does not guarantee competence of teachers".

Although there is no doubting the quality of distance education graduates, the government believes that the distance education system is a system suitable for Indonesia. Especially now, distance education system supported the development of information and communication technology is sophisticated, reinforce that the quality problem is not an issue that can not be resolved. Finally, the government gives ample opportunity for other universities to conduct distance education system. The government policy, stipulated in the Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture no. 109/2013 on the Implementation of the Distance

Education in Higher Education. This paper discusses the challenges and obstacles of distance education systems in improving the quality of education in Indonesia.

Distance Education from Political Perspective

Political term, derived from the term Platonic namely politeia, which means the Republic. The term politeia then raised also by Aristotle. Politeia, when referring to the tribe of the word comes from the Latin word Politicus or significant Greek community in a city, or state "town". The word is experiencing absorption into English "politics" means a set of principles, circumstances, means and tools used to achieve the goals and ideals of particular.

Politics, according to Noer, is any activity or attitude that is associated with power and are trying to influence, by altering or maintaining, an arrangement of shapes society. While Ki Supriyoko (2003) say politics is a means or method to influence people or others to achieve group goals. If politics is associated with the concept of education, meaning education viewed from the perspective of how education is done to alter or maintain a society, or achieve group goals or country. Thus, political education are all efforts made by the government of a country in the form of policy or regulatory legislation to provide education to achieve state goals.

Education is a basic human need that must be met by every human being, as well as food, clothing, housing, and health. Education is part of the political problem is defined as (managing the affairs of the people) is based on the ideology that carried the country. Therefore, the political education of a country is determined by ideology (worldview) that carried the country. Thus, political education can be understood as an educational strategy designed state in order to create quality human resources aspired (Sarnoto, 2012).

National education policy carried out by the method or approach is based on Pancasila, UUD 1945 Constitution, and the Indonesian culture to influence a particular party, in determining the policy, in order to achieve national education goals. Indonesia's national education policy-oriented first, how the national education goals can be achieved. Second, how the methods to achieve educational goals, for example on education budgets, public policy, public participation, and so on. Third, the extent to which the achievement of educational outcomes as quality of Indonesian human forming, supporting national economy, forming the nation's character, and so on.

According to the Law on National Education System (Education) of article 1 of Law No. 20 of 2003, education is a conscious and deliberate effort to create an atmosphere of learning and the learning process so that learners are actively developing the potential for him to have the spiritual power of religion, self-control, personality, intelligence, noble morality, as well as the skills needed him, society, nation and country.

In the context of improving the quality of human resources, access to higher education becomes very important. Meanwhile, the increase in the capacity of universities to improve the physical access is not easy to do, because it is restricted by geographical constraints and financial resources of higher education. Thus, the desire to improve access to education as a key trigger for delivering education through distance education system. Implementation of the distance education system is expected to be able to open up access to education for anyone, across space and time, as well as socio-economic constraints. Based on the paradigm of this access, distance education system to apply the principle of industrialization is the nature of mass education to achieve the economic benefits.

For continuity of access to distance education system, then the system is highly dependent on the development of communication and information technology. rapid, making distance education system as a flexible education system that can increase the openness of education, can minimize the limitations of time, space, and economic and demographic constraints (such as age) someone to get an education. Thus, the separation between teaching to learning activities that give rise to a range of psychological and communication in the learning process can be minimized, and access to education is increasingly open to anyone.

The flexibility of distance education system has allowed the continuing education open to the entire community. These phenomena have fostered the expansion standpoint, that the distance education system is not simply an alternative method of learning, but it is an option for anyone education system. Distance education system could be a way of distributive justice and equal rights for the opportunity to participate in the educational process. Characteristics of distance education system that is flexible is able to distribute education to remote areas are still difficult to reach by other education systems.

The breadth of the coverage of the distance education system today is also supported by the use of information and technology (IT). Ease IT used intensively in the distance education system, as well as the concept of the physical separation between the activities of teaching learning activities in distance education system has opened up the possibility of the use of educational facilities more widely. Education is for everyone anywhere and anytime. Through distance education system of education access issues can be resolved. But the problem, in general the quality of education and competitiveness of college graduates in Indonesia -not only graduated system of distance education, but the education system in general - is far behind both at international level and even at the level of ASEAN. The quality of universities in Indonesia,

reflected by graduates who are not ready to use, low English language skills, ability to cooperate is low, low innovation capability, creativity is low, all resulting in lower competitiveness of graduates. University graduates do not have enough work experience. Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) report on higher education in Indonesia, launch, universities in Indonesia, including a university behind. World Bank survey, which mentions, 20% -25% alumnus of universities in Indonesia must receive training before working (Paramitha, 2012). The findings of Asiaweek, 2000 (Nugroho, 2006) showed the competitiveness of universities in Indonesia are low. There are still a lot of Indonesian Universities targeting only for the quantity of students, opening new study programs, open special classes such as the employee class, class distance, class week end / Saturday-week class or executive class.

Barriers and Challenges Distance Education in the Reform Period

The government's policy of providing higher education for all Indonesian people, politically has precedence. The presence of the distance education system is one part of the political decision. Earlier, it has been described how the educational system remotely questionable quality. Apart from the agreement and not that of learning through distance education system has not been able to boost the quality of graduates, the development of distance education systems more attractive by many parties. The period of the Reformation, has also brought a change in the manner in education, particularly related to the development of information technology (IT). The IT development, influence teaching and learning systems in distance education system, so that the orientation of teaching and learning and teaching materials driven source-based IT. Use of IT in society not accustomed to using the Internet becomes an

obstacle for the distance education system. Some of the major obstacles in the implementation of the activities of distance education is the first, the availability of learning materials that can be accessed by learners through the infrastructure and facilities available. Availability of learning materials is not directly proportional to the infrastructure and facilities available. Internet infrastructure are unequally distributed throughout Indonesia. Internet access in Indonesia is still relatively slow and expensive (Emyana Ruth, 2013). Currently, in the Asia-Pacific region, Indonesia is the country with the slowest Internet access, which is an average of 1.6 Mbps (megabits per second). India, Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore, well above Indonesia. The average speed of the Internet they have exceeded 5 Mbps. Not only the speed, availability of Internet access on islands far from the island of Java was problematic. As a result, created a contradiction. The high demand for Internet access is not accompanied by growth in access and infrastructure. (Tempo, 2014).

The second obstacle, is in respect of interest learners to participate in education. Interest learners still oriented to the power and resources, rather than to understand the knowledge. It is associated with the culture of learning is weak. What is meant by orientation to power and resources, are only associated with the success of the education they receive a diploma that will be "sold" to obtain decent work (Martono, 2010). Azyumardi Azra (1994) says that students in Indonesian universities to learn first of all is to pursue status and a diploma, not skill, skill and professionalism. As a developing country, economic issues remains a constraint part of most Indonesian people, so that a diploma is the main provision to find a job that affects the economy better.

Interest learners to learn, are motivated by a diploma, rather than knowledge or professionalism, according to the data demand for Internet access. Results of research Astutik

Nur Qomariah (2009: 13), revealing Internet usage behavior, that use more internet activity is for pleasure (leisure / fun activities) than for other purposes such as information retrieval (information utility), communication (communication), and transactions (transactions). The findings, strengthens the opinion Ferguson & Perse (2000) in Giles (2003: 267), which found that Internet users are not using the Internet for the benefit of information search on subjects. Young (1998) and Griffiths (1999) in Giles (2003: 268) says that internet use more devoted to the interest-establishing social relationships rather than the collection of information about the subject.

Refers to the phenomenon that (resistance) in the distance education system, the challenges faced by distance education system today is the first, how to improve the provision of satellite network / internet. Because learning materials are provided in the virtual world and must be downloaded by learners, the Internet became an important part in the learning process. Thus, the Internet should be accessible anytime and anywhere if necessary.

The second challenge, an Internet-based distance education is more on the issue of the learning culture. As discussed above, the phenomenon of students in Indonesia are oriented more on knowledge than the diploma itself. Therefore, it is necessary to reform the learning, in terms of a learning culture. There are two aspects in changing the culture of learning when associated with the development of IT, namely changing the learning culture itself, and how to transform a culture of learning that the internet-based learning culture.

Learning culture associated with the culture of reading. In the era of globalization with advances in technology, most people tend to listen and talk rather than viewed followed reading. In any educational institution, oral traditions dominate the teaching and learning process, so that reading and would like to have books of science is not a priority, or not at all

functioned efficiently. The fact is, there are two alternative options, that is, when people are

faced with the books of science and films have interesting, people will tend exhausting sense of

sight (eyes) to watch movies for hours rather than read books of science (Hadi Nurahmad 2008).

Referring to the idea Mudjito (2001), to motivate a person to have a culture of reading

and learning is high, can be done by, first, building a reading society through community

awareness. Community simplest, is the family. Second, educators are not just transferring

knowledge, but asking the students to read on their own and seek additional knowledge for

himself. Third, provides various types of libraries in cities and regions of Indonesia with a

collection of quality and good service. Fourth, the mass media constantly help drive interest in

reading from various walks of life. Fifth, only individual effort, and both public and private

institutions that have the initiative to participate and perform activities related to the public

interest.

In the IT era, a culture of reading and learning through a revolution that relies on

Internet-based reading culture. Dyah Sulistyorini (2010) states that the community of learners of

all time is not a human being who just reading, writing and arithmetic, but how people can

survive because it has a set of problem-solving skills by using information. Therefore, learning

society should also be encouraged to transform into an information society literacy learners.

Information literacy skills is one of the six categories of "survival literacies" in the 21st century.

Information literacy completes basic literacy (reading and arithmetic) with computer literacy,

media, distance education using technology and cultural literacy.

Anies Baswedan, Minister of Education and Culture of Indonesia, stated in the

International Seminar on "21st Century Learning in the Ministry of Education and Culture", that

technology, knowledge and information into the demands that need to be controlled by the

people of Indonesia (Fizriyani, 2016). Indonesia has entered the era of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) which the competition is intense. According to him, the technology clearly has tremendous benefits for life including education. Technology can settle various issues of inequality such as matters relating to education. That is the challenge that must be conquered, in conjunction with education providers in the long history of the Reformation, in which technology plays an important role in the learning process.

Conclusion

In the Reformation period, one of the media is growing rapidly as a medium of learning is the internet. Internet is a modern information and communication media. Reform of learning, which is required of government requires the support and commitment of the central government, local government, and educators and learners. IT developments in Indonesia, especially in the world of education is still not optimal compared to neighboring countries such as Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand. There are several obstacles and challenges that are still felt by the people of Indonesia as already reviews. From the political perspective of education, these problems mainly tipped on government policies, in the field of education. Therefore, the associated barriers and challenges faced by the education system remotely, then politically, the government should be able to produce a policy to regulate and promote distance education system in order to raise the quality, the way committed to expanding the network infrastructure internet content and learning resources, and prepare the cultures of human resources in the educational environment, to become a man who has a learning culture.

References

Azra, Azyumardi. (1994). *Pendidikan Tinggi Islam dan Kemajuan Sains (Sebuah Pengantar)* dalam Charles Michael Stanton, Pendidikan Tinggi dalam Islam, terj. Afandi dan Hasan Asari. Jakarta, Logos.

Fizriyani, Wilda. (2016). *Mendikbud: Teknologi Jadi Sumber Kekuatan Utama.* Retrieved from http://www.republika.co.id/berita/pendidikan/eduaction/16/01/20/o18p1z368-mendikbud-teknologi-jadi-sumber-kekuatan-utama

Giles, D. (2003). *Media Psycholgy*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Kartika, Esther. (2010). *Memacu Minat Membaca Siswa Sekolah Dasar*. Retrieved from http://search-pdf-books.com/peran-perpustakan-dalam-menumbuhkan-minat-baca-pdf/.

Ki Supriyoko, et al. (2003). *Konfigurasi UU RI No. 20 Tahun 2003 Tentang Sistem Pendidikan Nasional*. Bandung, Fokus Media.

Martono, Nanang. (2010). *Kritik Sosial terhadap Praktik Pendidikan dalam Film Laskar Pelangi*. Jurnal Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Volume 3 No.16, Mei 2010.

Mudjito (2001). *Pembinaan Minat Baca*. Jakarta, Universitas Terbuka.

Nugroho (2006) *Menimbang Daya Saing Perguruan Tinggi*. Retrieved from http://www.suaramerdeka.com/harian/ 0607/31/opi03.htm.

Nurahmad, Hadi. (2008). *Membangun Budaya Baca di Lingkungan Perguruan Tinggi sebagai Upaya Meningkatkan Intelektualitas Mahasiswa*. Retrieved from: http://imadiklus.com/membangun-budaya-baca-di-lingkungan-perguruan-tinggi-sebagai-upaya-meningkatkan-intelektualitas-mahasiswa/

Paramitha, Zaskia. (2012). *Pendidikan Tinggi Indonesia Gagal Imbangi Pasar*. Retrieved from http://nasional.kontan.co.id/news/pendidikantinggi-indonesia-gagal-imbangi-pasar.

Qomariah, Astutik Nur (2009). *Perilaku Penggunaan Internet pada Kalangan Remaja Perkotaan. Palimpsest Jurnal Ilmu Informasi dan Perpustakaan. Tahun 1 Nomor 1 2009*. Retrieved from http://palimpsest.fisip.unair.ac.id/images/pdf/astutik.pdf pada Mei 2012

Rusfrida. (2006). *Pengembangan Pendidikan MIPA Secara Jarak Jauh: Pengalaman Jurusan Biologi FMIPA Universitas Terbuka*. Dipresentaskan dalam SEMINAR NASIONAL MIPA 2006 dengan tema" Penelitian, Pendidikan, dan Penerapan MIPA serta Peranannya dalam Peningkatan Keprofesionalan Pendidik dan Tenaga Kependidikan" yang diselenggarakanoleh FakultasMatematika dan Ilmu Pengetahuan Alam UNY, Yogyakarta pada tanggal 1 Agustus 2006. ISSN 979-99314-1-X

Ruth, Emyana. (2013). *Deskripsi Kualitas Layanan Jasa Akses Internet di Indonesia dari Sudut Pandang Penyelenggara Description of Internet Quality of Services (Qos) in Indonesia From the Providers' Point of View*. Buletin Pos dan Telekomunikasi, Vol.11 No.2 Juni 2013 : 137-146

Sarnoto, Ahmad Zain (2012). *Konsepsi Politik Pendidikan di Indonesia*. Educhild Vol. 01 No.1 Tahun 2012

Sugianto, Erika Indirasari. (2015). *Universitas Terbuka di Indonesia Tahun 1984-1994*. E-Journal Pendidikan Sejarah Volume 3, No. 2, Juli 2015.

Sulistyorini, Dyah. (2010). *Mengupayakan Sinergi Menuju Masyarakat Melek Informasi*. Retrieved from http://www.antaranews.com/berita/183525/mengupayakan-sinergi-menuju-masyarakat-melek-informasi

Suparman, Atwi. (1989). *Pendidikan Jarak Jauh: Konsep Dan Peranannya Dalam Memecahkan Masalah Pendidikan*. Pidato Ilmiah Dalam Rapat Senat Terbuka pada Acara Lustrum I Dan Wisuda Universitas Terbuka.