

STUDENT LEARNING SUPPORTS AT “SALUT”

Sugilar

Universitas Terbuka (INDONESIA)

Abstract

“SALUT” is a student learning support center provided by Universitas Terbuka, Indonesia. The mission of “SALUT” is to mainly offer communication technological based learning support for the students who study at a distance based on self-directed learning provisions. This report is aimed to evaluate the “SALUT” as students’ learning support services. Recently, there are three out of 39 regional centers of Universitas Terbuka possess “SALUT”, i.e. Bogor, Bandung, and Serang. Since all the three of “SALUT” was organized by the same private agency for similar services offered to students, therefore the study was focused on only one “SALUT”, i.e. the “SALUT” in Cibinong which is located in Bogor Regional Office of Universitas Terbuka. Students and management of the “SALUT” was the source of information in this study. The data was analyzed to describe students’ learning at the “SALUT” and to justify whether “SALUT” was effective to support students’ learning. The standard of evaluation included students’ participation, perception of usefulness, learning attainment, and re-enrollment. The conclusion of this report will be applied for rationalizing whether “SALUT” should be spread out in other 36 regional centers of Universitas Terbuka in Indonesia.

Keywords: Student support services, distance education, learning attainment, re-enrollment, self-directed learning.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 SALUT as Student Support Services

SALUT is a learning support services provided by UT to the students who are especially living in districts far away from regional office of UT (RO of UT) which is generally located in the capital city of a province. SALUT is operated under and coordinated by the RO of UT. SALUT is intended to hand by hand with the Students Learning Groups (SLG) which was introduced earlier and also located in a district, however SALUT was supposed to characterize by information technology (IT) based while SLG was conventionally learning supports such as face-to-face tutorial. SALUT is facilitated with high-tech in IT based, to allow students access online learning resources provided by UT, online registration, online examination, and online information from UT to the students. Rector of UT have stated in a national newspaper that SALUT is a building that containing classrooms and computer laboratories connected to internet, so that students can online register, online tutorial, and access digital library [1]. In short, SALUT is learning support services which is placed in some districts, coordinated by RO of UT in a province, and more IT based than the learning support service that was provided earlier in SLG.

UT plans to develop SALUT in all RO of UT. Until now, there was 39 ROs of UT in Indonesia. The development of SALUT has related to a request by the government of Indonesia to develop UT as a cyber university. It means that more students should have an access to online learning support services and the SALUT is considered as a mean to close IT based learning support services to the students. The development of SALUT is to overcome the problem of students in accessing online learning resources developed by UT since only about 35% of 426.503 students has an online access. In 2019, Rector of UT expected that there will be more than 150 SALUT [2].

To implement the plan, evaluation of SALUT is needed to explore information related to SALUT that is currently running, namely SALUT in Cirebon (Bandung RO of UT), Cibinong (Bogor RO of UT), and Serang (Serang RO of UT). This information is needed to be used in making better SALUT planning and implementation. Evaluation of the implementation of "SALUT" is intended to provide reliable information and can be used for the development of a larger number of SALUT in various places.

1.2 Evaluating SALUT

Evaluation of the implementation of SALUT requires identification of the evaluation component. These components will contribute to improving the implementation of learning support services. Various approaches are available to identify components in an evaluation. Simonson, Smaldino, & Zvacek [3] convey three evaluation approaches in the context of distance education. A popular evaluation approach carried out in the context of education and training is an evaluation approach from Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick [4]. This approach includes the following five levels: (1) reaction, (2) learning, (3) transfer, (4) results, and (5) return on investment. Although this approach is quite comprehensive, it does not focus too much on managing a distance education program as is the purpose of this evaluation.

Furthermore, Woodley and Kirkwood [5] introduced six categories of evaluation in services for distance education, namely (1) measurement of activities, (2) measurement of efficiency, (3) measurement of outcomes, (4) measurement of achievement of goals, (5) policy measurement, and (6) organizational measurement. This evaluation approach is very suitable for evaluating SALUT management. However, this approach relies on quantitative measurements, so that it may lose qualitative information which is also needed to understand the obstacles to SALUT management.

AEIOU's approach to program evaluation, especially in distance education programs, was proposed by Fortune & Keith in 1992 and modified by Simonson in 2005 [3]. The components evaluated in this approach were (1) accountability, (2) effectiveness, (3) impact, (4) organizational context, and (5) unanticipated consequences. The AEIOU approach has proven effective in evaluating national multi-year activities at Iowa Distance Education Alliance Star School Project. In addition, this approach has also been used by Simonson [3] to evaluate the main initiatives of distance education in South Dakota, USA. Of the several research approaches proposed above, this report uses the AEIOU approach because this approach accommodates formative and summative, qualitative or quantitative information needs.

As stated earlier, this study focuses on evaluating SALUT. The problem of this research is formulated as follows.

SALUT has been held in three locations and operates for more than two years. UT will establish a large number of new SALUT in various locations throughout Indonesia at Regional Office Center of UT. Therefore, evaluative information is needed from the existence of SALUT for planning and implementation of SALUT in other locations. Therefore, it is necessary to evaluate the current practice of SALUT to provide information related to evaluative questions as follows:

- Did the SALUT do what intended to do to students? (accountability)?
- Does the implementation of SALUT achieve its objectives (effectiveness)?
- Does participation in SALUT affect on other aspects (impact)?
- What organizational factors contribute (positively or negatively) to the success or failure of implementing SALUT (organizational context)?
- Are there unplanned things that occur during the implementation of SALUT (unanticipated outcomes)?

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the SALUT in Bogor RO of UT at Cibinong. The evaluation purpose was to produce information relating to (1) accountability, (2) effectiveness, (3) impact, (4) organizational context, and (5) unanticipated consequences. The evaluation results will be used for the next "SALUT" development elsewhere.

2 METHODOLOGY

This research report is an evaluation research on the implementation of SALUT. According to Stern (2004), evaluation research is a research to assess an object for various purposes, including: (1) accountability, (2) development, (3) knowledge production, and (4) social improvement. The object of this evaluation research is the implementation of SALUT which has been running in Bogor RO of UT at Cibinong for the development of SALUT in many places in the future.

This study applies AEIOU's framework to derive evaluation components in implementing SALUT. Table 1 shows the scheme of program evaluation derived from the AEIOU.

Table 1. Program Evaluation of SALUT

No	Component of Evaluation	Evaluation Question	Methods	Evaluation Criterion
1.	<i>Accountability</i>	a. How many students of SALUT in the last three semesters? b. What kinds of support services are provided by SALUT?	Interview and document analysis	a. To be economically effective, the number of "SALUT" students is at least 500 students. b. The learning support services provided in "SALUT" are suitable to students needs.
2.	<i>Effectiveness</i>	a. How was the students' attitude toward SALUT for students who participated in SALUT? b. How was the learning attainment of the students in SALUT compared to overall students in the RO of UT?	Survey and documented analysis	a. Positive attitude toward SALUT b. The students in SALUT tend to have higher level of learning attainment than the overall students in a RO of UT.
3.	<i>Impact</i>	Is there any new experience in SALUT that students can get benefit from?	Interview with students in SALUT	There is an experiences that benefit the students
4.	<i>Organizational context</i>	What organizational context that contribute to performance of SALUT positively or negatively?	Interview with SALUT management and Bogor Regional Office of UT	No organizational context that contribute negatively to performance of SALUT.
5.	<i>Unanticipated Outcomes</i>	Are there any unanticipated outcomes of SALUT?	Interview with management of SALUT.	The are no negatively unanticipated outcomes of SALUT.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Accountability

Accountability related to how SALUT was responded by students who were the target of the establishment of SALUT. This relates to how many students joining in SALUT and what kind of learning supports services students are interested in. Table 2 shows the number of students joining in the SALUT" at Cibinong, Bogor RO of UT.

Table 2. Number of Students in SALUT

Semester	Number of Students	Percentage of Growth
2016.1	140	-
2016.2	214	52.86%
2017.1	363	69.63%
2017.2	479	31.96%
2018.1	502	4.80%

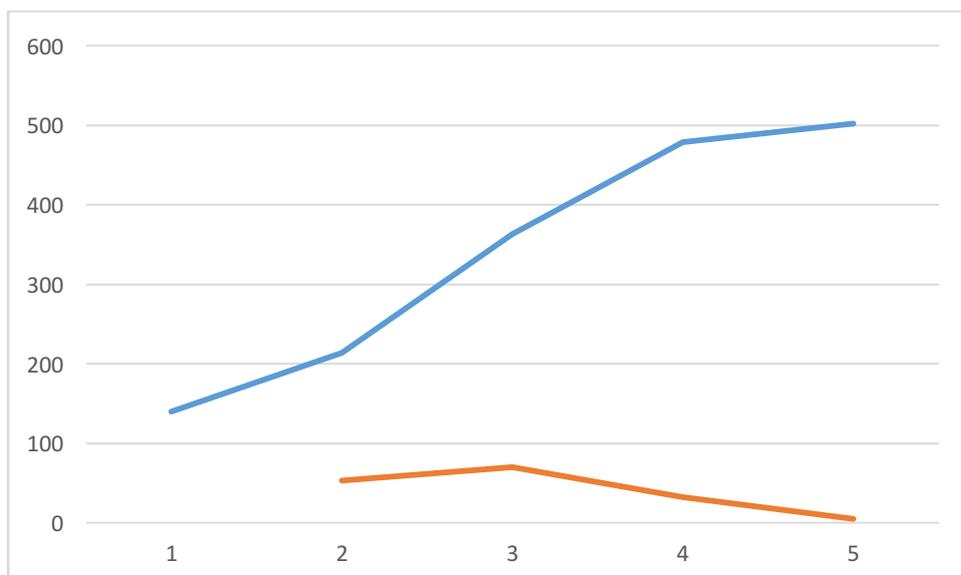


Figure 1. Growth of Students Number

Table 2 showed that the number of students joining SALUT until semester 2018.1 was 502 students. The percentage of growth was indeed very promising, i.e. 39% in average. Therefore, accountability of SALUT in respect to participant number was quite worthy. With average of increasing number by 39%, then the economic scale of SALUT for minimum 500 students was attained in only four semesters or two years. The growth of student number also presented in Figure 1, whereas blue line represented number of students and red line represented percentage of growth.

Who are SALUT students? The students of SALUT in this report were part of all students in Bogor RO of UT. By comparing between the students in SALUT and the overall students at Bogor RO of UT then would answer the question, whether students of SALUT have different characteristics with overall students at Bogor RO of UT. Table 3 shows the demographic characteristics of students who are members of SALUT compared to overall students at Bogor RO of UT.

Table 3. Demographic Characteristics of "SALUT" Students Comparing to Overall Students of Bogor RO of UT

Demographic Characteristics	"SALUT" Students	Overall Students of Bogor RO of UT
- Gender	Male 49.2% Female 50.8%	Male 47.4% Female 52.6%
- Working Status	Yes 84% No 16%	Yes 82.5% No 17.5%
- Age	Mean 26.80 years	Mean 25.1 years

Table 3 shows that SALUT was more interested by men students, this can be seen from the proportion of men who joined SALUT (49.2%) more than proportion of men at Bogor RO of UT (47.4%). In addition, students who joined SALUT tends to be the students who worked, as shown from the table that the proportion of SALUT students who worked were 85% which was higher than students who worked at Bogor RO of UT (82.5%). The job status of students who join "SALUT" can be related to a required additional fee for joining SALUT and the students who already have a job can afford the fee. In addition, SALUT students tend to be older than overall students at Bogor RO of UT, with an average age of 26.80 for students "SALUT" and 25.1 for average age of overall students at Bogor RO of UT.

SALUT Cibinong provides services in the form of (1) online tutorial services, (2) face-to-face tutorial services, (3) academic guidance, (4) UT Online literacy training, (5) tutoring services, (6) other services. UT Online literacy training services and tutoring are the most popular services for students with 502 participants in the 2018.1 semester. Details of the number of student participants in each service are shown in Table 4. Based on interviews with several students it was revealed that students wanted online

exam services, trainings for personal development, foreign language training, and seminars related to the study program.

Table 4. Students Participating in Learning Support Service Activities

No.	Support Service Activities	Number of Students				
		2016.1	2016.2	2017.1	2017.2	2018.1
1.	Face-to-Face Tutorial	20	136	310	414	360
2.	Online Tutorial	140	214	363	479	502
4.	Computer Literacy Training for UT-Online	140	214	363	479	502
5.	Study Guidance	140	214	363	479	502
6.	Technical assistance for using computer			90	75	58

3.2 Effectiveness

Effectiveness is related to the positive attitude of students towards the services they follow. In addition, the effectivity is also measured by how successful students achieve learning results as shown by the test scores.

The positive attitude of students towards the support services obtained in "SALUT" is indicated by the benefits felt by students towards the service. Table 5 describes the students' assessment of the services they obtain.

Table 5. Perception of Usefulness of Learning Support Services at "SALUT"

Learning Support Services (LSS)	Very Useless	Useless	Usual	Useful	Very Useful
SALUT Services	1.4%	-	2.8%	36.1%	59.7%
Specific LSS including: • Face-to-face tutorial • Online tutorial • Face-to-face tutorial • Study Guidance	1.4%	1.4%	2.8%	40.3%	54.2%
Contribution to examination results	1.4%	1.4%	1.2%	40.3%	52.8%

Table 5 shows that SALUT is considered useful by more than 95% of SALUT participants. The services provided by SALUT are considered useful by more than 90% of student users. This shows that the existence of SALUT is considered positive by students. However, as shown in Table 6, learning result as indicated by test scores in final examination did not show that learning at SALUT have been characterized by good result in final examination compared to overall students at Bogor RO of UT where SALUT placed.

Table 6. Learning Attainment of the SALUT Students Compared to Overall Students in Bogor ROC of UT

No.	Course Codes	Mean of scores of overall students in Bogor RO of UT	Mean of scores of students in SALUT	Significance of one sample t-test for comparing two means (=p)
1.	ADBI4201	2.60	2.53	0.803
2.	ADPU4332	2.97	2.36	0.002
3.	EKMA4115	1.93	2.17	0.194
4.	EKMA4116	2.45	2.63	0.130

5.	EKSI4205	1.90	1.58	0.056
6.	ESPA4110	2.38	2.41	0.768
7.	ESPA4111	1.66	1.37	0.226
8.	ESPA4122	1.96	2.26	0.055
9.	ISIP4110	2.37	2.33	0.837
10.	ISIP4122	1.44	1.08	0.058
11.	ISIP4130	1.16	0.93	0.111
12.	MKDU4107	1.66	1.43	0.108
13.	MKDU4109	1.80	1.78	0.912
14.	MKDU4110	2.59	2.41	0.013
15.	SKOM4101	1.33	0.96	0.00

Only EKMA4116 and ESPA4110 out of 15 courses in Table 5 have the mean scores of the SALUT students higher than the mean score of overall students in the regional office center of Bogor. Unfortunately, even for that the two courses, the difference between the two means was not significant as indicated by $p = 0.130$ and $p = 0.68$ respectively. It means that there is no statistically different between the two scores.

Another parameter of effectivity of SALUT is the level of student re-enrollment. Here, all the students in Bogor RO of UT who were first enrolled on the first semester of 2018 were observed in the second semester of 2018. The student re-enrollment between SALUT's students and overall students Bogor RO of UT.

Table 7. Re-enrollment of SALUT and Overall Students

	SALUT Students	Overall Students
Enrolled	338 (69.3%)	557 (53.3%)
Non-enrolled	150 (30.7%)	488 (46.7%)

Table 7 shows that the Re-enrolled students in SALUT was 69.3% compared to 53.3% for overall students in Bogor RO of UT. The difference was significant at $\alpha = 0.05$. It can be then concluded that SALUT make difference in students' re-enrollment whereas SALUT make higher proportion of students' re-enrollment than overall students in Bogor RO of UT.

3.3 Impact

Students joining "SALUT" turned out to have other effects felt by students in addition to receiving learning assistance. Based on the results of interviews with several students, it was obtained information that students felt the benefits of joining SALUT in terms of: (1) socializing with fellow students, (2) having the opportunity to make new friends, (3) having the opportunity to work together, and (3) sharing information about their work.

To increase the social impact of SALUT, social activities are needed held at SALUT. For example, a joint tourism activity for visiting SALUT in another district / city or visits SALUT at another RO of UT.

3.4 Organizational Context

SALUT is designed to be under the coordination of RO of UT. However, during the development period, SALUT was in coordination with the Vice Rector's office for institutional development and cooperation affairs. After SALUT is deemed established, then SALUT will be under the coordination of RO of UT.

Various problems arise when SALUT is in the development stage. A slight tension arose between SALUT and RO of UT and SLG (Student Learning Group). For example, the results of the interview with staff at RO showed that initially SALUT was deemed to have attracted too high a fee. However, the tariff that can be collected by SALUT has not been formulated explicitly by the Vice Rector Office. Even so, Vice Rector's office informally stated on various occasions about the reasonable fees for students to join SALUT. In our opinion, tariff issues are things that need to be formulated flexibly because this concerns with the kinds of services matters provided by SALUT to students and the choice of students

to assess whether the rates are in accordance with the value of the services they receive.

Student Learning Group (SLG) was formed by RO of UT in the districts to provide services to students. The services provided were mainly in the form of administration and management of face-to-face tutorials and examinations. SLG is managed by an administrator who is not a student and have a contract for cooperation agreement with RO of UT. The SLG manager saw SALUT as a competitor in recruiting students in one district. Moreover, in the SLG perspective, SALUT is like getting the ease of recruiting new students by RO of UT, for example SALUT was given a table to recruit new students in the RO of UT office.

We recommend that SALUT recruit participants from those who are already UT students who need online learning assistance. Recruiting new students should be left to the SLG as it has been running so far. In this case, SALUT will be the main attraction for new students to get online learning assistance after becoming UT students through registration in SLGs or RO of UT as happened before. This will avoid unhealthy competition with SLG and endorse mutual cooperation between SLG and SALUT. Meanwhile, the purpose of UT to form SALUT as a way to increase students will still be achieved through UT's image that is better because it provides online services and simultaneously increases student retention through SALUT services.

3.5 Unanticipated Outcomes

So far no matters related to SALUT can be categorized as results that were not anticipated beforehand. Student interest in joining SALUT in accordance with previous expectations. Student retention which tends to be higher for students who join SALUT can also be estimated in advance. Maybe the only thing that was out of the previous estimation was about the lower learning outcomes of students who joined SALUT compared to overall students at Bogor RO of UT. To reveal this further research is needed. The low student learning outcomes can be caused by various factors. Research regarding student input for SALUT, the academic climate at SALUT, the UT exam system, is expected to reveal this phenomenon.

4 CONCLUSIONS

The results of the evaluation of SALUT and standards of evaluation that have been determined, following conclusions were derived:

- SALUT was successful for accountability component of evaluation since SALUT was needed by students as indicated by the number of students joining SALUT. The percentage of student number growth for every semester was 59%. With average of growth percentage by 59%, then the economic scale of SALUT for minimum 500 students will be attained in only four semesters or two years.
- In effectivity component of evaluation, SALUT was considered useful by more than 95% the students who have joined in SALUT. Learning support services provided by SALUT were also considered useful by more than 90% the students who have joined in SALUT. However, the learning results as indicated by grade point in some courses showed that the students who have joined in SALUT in Bogor ROC of UT tended to be lower grade point than overall students in Bogor ROC of UT. In the future, SALUT should be focused on developing academic climate to make sure that learning process was occurred.
- In respect to impact component of evaluation, the students in SALUT viewed that SALUT was provided them to socialize, meet with new friends, share hobbies and information about their jobs. Therefore, in future developing of SALUT, cares should be given to provided a condition for interaction between students socially.
- In organizational component of evaluation, the study found that there were some tensions between SALUT and ROC of UT, especially before SALUT fully coordinating by ROC of UT. Also, Student Learning Group regarded SALUT as a competitor in recruiting new students. For the development of SALUT in the future, SALUT should be fully coordinated by ROC of UT and during development process of SALUT, the vice rector office of institutional development affairs could be supervised SALUT through ROC of UT.

- In unanticipated outcomes component of evaluation, the study found that there is a tendency that learning result of the students in SALUT was lower than the overall students. In the future, developing SALUT should put academic concerns at first. SALUT should develop academic climate seriously. For instances, library facilities are a must in a SALUT. Also, video conference with the nationally best speaker or lecturer should be presented regularly in SALUT.

Based on the conclusions above it can be decided that SALUT deserves to be developed in every RO of UT by paying attention to academic aspects in order to encourage the achievement of student learning outcomes.

REFERENCES

- [1] Tribunnews, 14 July 2015, *Universitas Terbuka Bidik 150 Sentra Layanan UT*, available at: <http://www.tribunnews.com/nasional/2015/07/14/universitas-terbuka-bidik-150-sentra-layanan-ut>.
- [2] Kompas, 28 April 2015, *Universitas Terbuka Luncurkan "SALUT"*, available at: <https://www.ut.ac.id/blog/universitas-terbuka-luncurkan-salut>.
- [3] Simonson, M., Smaldino, S., & Zvacek, S. (2015). *Teaching and Learning at a Distance: Foundation of Distance Education*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age.
- [4] Kirkpatrick, D.L. & Kirkpatrick J.L. (2006). *Evaluating training programs* (3rd ed.). San Francisco: CA. Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.
- [5] Woodley, A., & Kirkwood, A. (2005). *Evaluation in distance learning: Course evaluation*. Available at: <http://www1.worldbank.org>
- [6] Stern, E. (2004). *Philosophies and types of evaluation research*, in: Descy, P.; Tessaring, M. (eds) *The foundations of evaluation and impact research, Third report on vocational training research in Europe: background report*. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.