Evaluation of face-to-face tutorials in a blended learning environment: A study based on students' point of view

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Abstract

Distance education system serves as an alternative for those who want to participate in education, but is constrained by several factors, such as time limitations to attend a classroom regularly or distance problem. As higher education institutions implementing distance education system, Universitas Terbuka (UT) has designed a system of learning for students that they still have a chance to meet the tutors directly in a certain period, called face-to-face tutorials. UT provides all the courses with face-to-face tutorials, but students have the option to participate the tutorial or not. A face-to-face tutorial is not the same as the class of lectures at conventional universities. It aims to provide intensive learning service; therefore, it should be designed more efficient with all the limitations that exist. This study aims to explore the opinions and feedback from students regarding the implementation face-to-face tutorials in terms of three tutorial dimensions, namely tutorial implementation, tutorial model, and self-learning. The results of the study will be discussed in this paper, including some factors that need improvement in the face-to-face tutorials.

Keywords: face-to-face tutorials, distance education, blended learning, teacher centered learning, student centered learning

Introduction

Distance education becomes an alternative education in response to the need of providing access to those who would otherwise not be able to participate in face-to-face learning because of many reasons. Limitations of distance and time are the main reasons one cannot participate in regular education. Distance education encompasses those programs that allow the learner and instructor to be physically apart during the learning process and maintain communication in a variety of ways (Keegan, 1986). It has evolved from simpler forms of distance learning into more complex forms along with the development of technology and information. Utilization of variety of learning support such as computer-assisted instruction, computer-based instruction, videoconferencing, video courses, radio course, web-based instruction, and online learning, make distance education more attractive. Technology has played a key role in changing the dynamics of each delivery option over the years, as well as the pedagogy behind distance education. Technology is responsible for distorting the concept of distance between learner and instructor, and enabling learners to access education at any time and from any place. Emerging technologies also facilitate the

establishment of synchronous and asynchronous learning networks using the Internet (Beldarrain, 2007).

Developments of information system and technology are very useful for the development of distance learning through the use of various media and technology. Online learning is becoming one of the most popular methods of teaching today, especially in distance education. However, in many situations, distance education can also be done by combining face-to-face learning with online learning, often referred to as simply blended learning. Universitas Terbuka (UT) implements a system of blended learning in the learning process. Students are given the opportunity to choose to participate in online learning, face-to-face learning, or a combination of both. UT continues the application of face-to-face learning to provide a better learning assistance to students if conditions allow for students to come following the face-to-face learning. Based on the explanation above, UT initiates to develop a face-to-face learning or known as face-to-face tutorial which is designed to be held as much as eight sessions per course in one semester. Students also have to complete three assignments during the face-to-face tutorial. To achieve the expected competencies, UT has designed the implementation of face-to-face tutorials in the form of learning materials (a summary of the main points of the material), assignments, and discussion. In practice, each tutor may provide the most appropriate teaching methods based on the design from UT.

One of the departments available at the UT is department of management that has several courses that is classified as difficult courses; some of them are statistics, mathematical economics, financial management, accounting, and operations research. Most students can achieve their scores ranging in C and D that indicate they have difficulty in learning these courses. The scores obtained for those courses for period of 2013-2016 as follows.
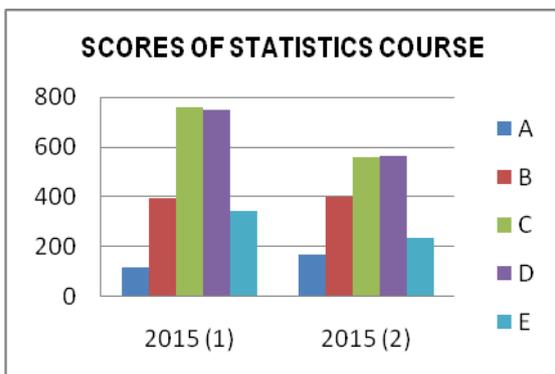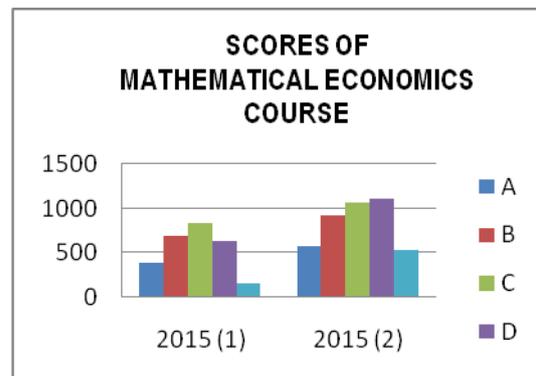

Figure 1. Scores of Statistics Course

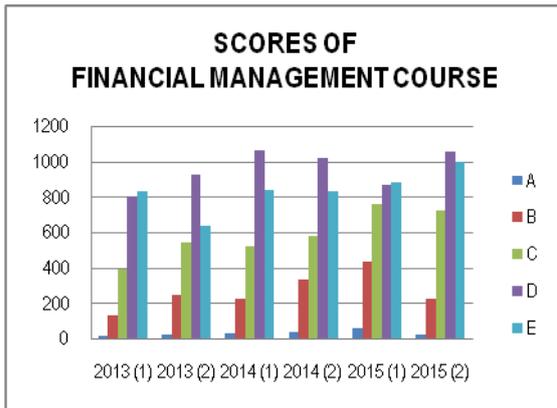Figure 2. Scores of Mathematical Economics Course

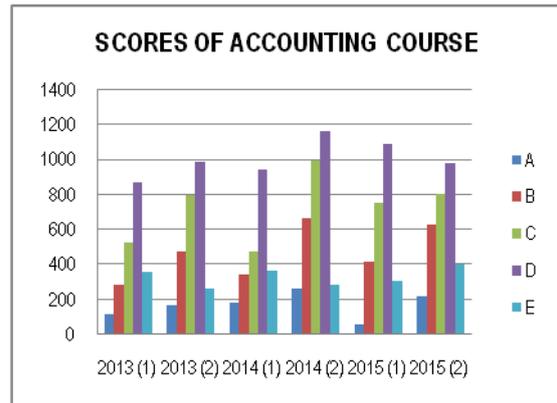Figure 3. Scores of Financial Management Course

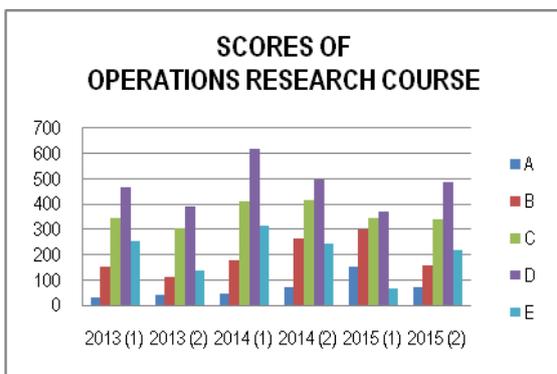Figure 4. Scores of Accounting Course

Figure 5. Scores of Operations Research Course

Face-to-face tutorial is a learning support for students to study all courses, UT has a responsibility to provide face-to-face tutorial, but it's not a compulsion for the students to participate in the face-to-face tutorial. However, the implementation of face-to-face tutorial need to be analyzed, whether the implementation of face-to-face tutorial are in accordance with the needs of the student?. Assessment of face-to-face tutorial can be accomplished by evaluating the process based on learning methods in the area of education. Changes in the new teaching methods is a shift from teacher centered learning to the student centered learning. Application of the method student centered learning (SCL) is a method that empower students as the center of activity during the learning process. This method differs from teacher-centered learning methods that addresses teacher as a source of learning. The purpose of this paper is to evaluate the implementation of face-to-face tutorial and analyze the needs of the students about an ideal design of face-to-face tutorial that will beneficial for them.

Literature Review

Moore and Kearsley (1996) have defined distance learning as a learning environment where 'students and teachers are separated by distance and sometimes by time'. The definition by Moore and Kearsley was completed by Rovai, Ponton, and Baker (2008) that emphasized in if *any* element in structured learning is separated by 'time and/or geography', then the learning takes place in a distance learning setting. Distance education has some benefits such as fostering interaction and collaboration among learners thus creating a true learning community, providing more flexible access for students, increased viability of specialist courses and flexible content which can be modified to suit work-based learning needs (Hudson, 2014; Schnetter et al., 2014). The implementation of distance education increasingly enriched by the application of blended learning that provides a more flexibility way for students to study. Blended learning is both simple and complex. At its simplest, blended learning is the thoughtful integration of classroom face-to-face learning experiences with online learning experiences. There is considerable intuitive appeal to the concept of integrating the strengths of synchronous (face-to-face) and asynchronous (text-based Internet) learning activities. At the same time, there is considerable complexity in its implementation with the challenge of virtually limitless design possibilities and applicability to so many contexts (Garrison and Kanuka, 2004).
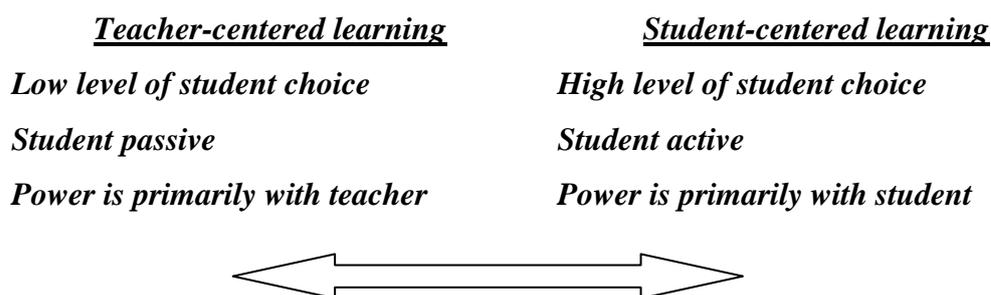
Learning has meaning a programmed activity in the design of FEE (facilitating, empowering, enabling), to make students learn actively with emphasis on learning resources. Learning is the process of developing creative thinking that can enhance students' thinking skills with construction and explore new knowledge. The learning process is emphasized on efforts to improve governance and good development of the learning material. There is a change in new teaching methods with the implementation of a change from Teacher Centered Learning (TCL) to Student Centered Learning (SCL). The concept of SCL is currently widely used and many are addressed in the literature related to learning. Some of the terminology has a meaning similar to SCL, such as flexible learning (Taylor, 2000) and experential learning (Burnard, 1999). The teacher's role in the SCL concept shift from his role as a teacher turned into a facilitator. Students are expected to learn in advance the material that will be discussed in the classroom, then there is a facilitator who directs the student learning outcomes.

Kember (1997) gives two main orientations in learning, namely the teacher-centered / content oriented conceptions and the student-centered / learning-oriented conception. Teacher-Centered Learning (TCL) is a learning method that focuses on teachers to provide or transfer of knowledge from experts to students (Harden and Crosby, 2000). Contrary to TCL, SCL is a learning process that emphasizes that the knowledge created by students and teacher is as a facilitator of learning, not only as a transmitter of information (O'Neill and McMahon, 2005). Table 1. shows the differences in methods of TCL and SCL (http://gjm.fp.ub.ac.id/documents/manual_mutu.pdf).

Table 1. The Differences of TCL and SCL

	Teacher Centered Learning	Student Centered Learning
1	Knowledge is transferred from teacher to students	Students actively develop the knowledge and skills
2	Students receive knowledge passively	Students are actively involved in managing knowledge
3	More emphasis on the mastery of the material	Not only emphasizes the mastery of the material but also in developing student character (life-long learning)
4	Typically utilize a single media	Utilizing multi media
5	Teacher has a function as the main information provider and evaluator	Teacher has a function as facilitator and evaluations conducted jointly with the students.
6	Learning and assessment process conducted separately.	The process of mutual learning and assessment is conducted continuously and integrated
7	Stressing on the correct answer only	Stressing on knowledge building. Error is considered to be a source of learning.
8	Suitable for developing knowledge in one discipline only	Suitable for developing of science by means of an interdisciplinary approach
9	Learning climate is more individualistic and competitive	Learning climate is more collaborative, supportive and cooperative
10	Only students who are considered to make the learning process	Students and teacher are learn together in developing the knowledge, concepts and skills.
11	The lecture is the biggest part of the learning process	Students can learn not only from lectures but could also be used in various ways and activities
12	Emphasis on completion of the learning materials	Emphasis on achieving competence of learners and not the completion of the material.
13	Emphasis on how teacher conducts the learning process	Emphasis on how students can learn to use a variety of teaching materials, interdisciplinary methods, emphasis on problem-based learning and skills competency.

In a simplest way, the difference between TCL and SCL is shown in Figure 6. (O'neill dan McMahon, 2005)

Teacher-centered learning   *Student-centered learning*

Low level of student choice   *High level of student choice*

Student passive   *Student active*

Power is primarily with teacher   *Power is primarily with student*

Figure 6. The difference of TCL and SCL

Research Method

The study begins by describing a needs analysis conducted by interviewing respondents; those are the students participating in face-to-face tutorial. After getting this information, data collection is conducted by distributing questionnaires to students. The questionnaire is divided into three sections; the first is to explore the students' opinion about the implementation of current face-to-face tutorial, the second part is the learning methods using TCL, and the third part is to explore the students' opinion about learning methods using SCL. The next step is to conduct in-depth interviews with some of the subjects chosen to explore their opinion on teaching methods that have been given. Data obtained from the students were analyzed using univariate analysis with frequency distribution approach. After observation and in-depth interviews to students, the next step is to perform a qualitative analysis. The research data is a primary data obtained through questionnaires and interview. The questionnaires are as follows

Table 2. Research Questionnaires

No.	Questions
PART A.	
1.	My tutor always prepare materials with good and complete before starting tutorial
2.	Tutor always explain the general instructional objectives and specific instructional objectives before starting tutorial
3.	Tutor reiterate the main points of the material from the previous session
4.	Tutor explains the material continuously from beginning to end of the session
5.	Tutor give time for discussion
6.	Tutor give students the opportunity to ask questions about the material being described
7.	Tutor discuss the assignment that have been given
8.	Tutor give a conclusion at the end of the session
PART B.	

9.	I like when tutor always prepare materials with good and complete before tutorial starts	
10.	I like when tutor is always explain the general instructional objectives and specific instructional objectives before starting tutorial	
11.	I like when tutor reiterate the main points of the material from the previous session	
12.	I like when tutor explains the material continuously from beginning to end of the session	
13.	I like when tutor give time for discussion	
14.	I like when tutor give students the opportunity to ask questions about the material being described	
15.	I like when tutor discuss the assignment that have been given	
16.	I like when tutor give a conclusion at the end of the session	
PART C.		
1.	I enjoy reading the learning material and prepare the material before the tutorial begins	
2.	I like when tutor perform two-way communication with students	
3.	I like when every session of tutorial enriched with discussions and assignments	
4.	I can learn the material by myself	
5.	I don't need explanation from tutor	
6.	I like when the tutorial is conducted by discussion and tutor perform as facilitator	
7.	I like when tutor gives a lot of practice questions	

Result

A total of 73 students are willing to provide answers in the questionnaire, as well as five students are willing to be interviewed. Students were asked to give their opinion (agree or disagree) to any questions. The result of students opinions as follows.

Table 3. Result of Part A.

Questions	Percentage of agreed responses
My tutor always prepare materials with good and complete before starting tutorial	95.89
Tutor always explain the general instructional objectives and specific instructional objectives before starting tutorial	87.67
Tutor reiterate the main points of the material from the previous session	71.23
Tutor explains the material continuously from beginning to end of the session	63.01
Tutor give time for discussion	90.41
Tutor give students the opportunity to ask questions about the material being described	97.26
Tutor discuss the assignment that have been given	78.08
Tutor give a conclusion at the end of the session	87.67

The result of the student answers on the questions Part A about the evaluation of the tutorial shows that the implementation of the tutorial has been run in accordance with the

implementation of the standard tutorial by UT. Most of the answers of students (above 50%) support the implementation of the tutorial at the preparation phase, introduction, implementation, and closing. In the preparation phase, students appreciate tutor that has been set up a good tutorial material. Subsequently, at a preliminary phase, tutor explains the general objective of the tutorial, specific objectives of the tutorial and key points of previous session. Furthermore, during the implementation phase tutor explains the materials and give students opportunity to ask questions and discuss. At the closing phase, tutor gives conclusion about the material at the session.

Table 4. Result of Part B.

Questions	Percentage of agreed responses
I like when tutor always prepare materials with good and complete before tutorial starts	100
I like when tutor is always explain the general instructional objectives and specific instructional objectives before starting tutorial	98.63
I like when tutor reiterate the main points of the material from the previous session	90.41
I like when tutor explains the material continuously from beginning to end of the session	56.16
I like when tutor give time for discussion	93.15
I like when tutor give students the opportunity to ask questions about the material being described	100
I like when tutor discuss the assignment that have been given	100
I like when tutor give a conclusion at the end of the session	100

The result of the student answers on the questions Part B, it is known that the students like the tutorial model that consists of four phase, those are preparation phase, introduction phase, implementation phase, and closing phase. Most of the students answered "agree" to the questions in the questionnaire. Special to the question "I like when tutor explains the material continuously from beginning to end of the session", only 56.16% of the students agreed, and the rest of them do not agree to the question.

Table 5. Result of Part C

Questions	Percentage of agreed responses
I enjoy reading the learning material and prepare the material before the tutorial begins	80.82
I like when tutor perform two-way communication with students	97.26
I like when every session of tutorial enriched with discussions and assignments	84.93
I can learn the material by myself	38.36
I don't need explanation from tutor	24.66
I like when the tutorial is conducted by discussion and tutor perform as facilitator	49.32
I like when tutor gives a lot of practice questions	68.49

The result of the student answers on the questions Part C are as follows.

1. Most students prepare tutorial well, that has read the learning materials before class begins.

2. Students like if the tutor is always perform two-way communication with students, discuss, and write assignment.

3. Students still need the assistance from the tutor; they can not learn by themselves; as indicated by the answer to the question " I can learn the material by myself " (38.36%) and "I do not need explanation from tutor" (24.66%), " I like when the tutorial is conducted by discussion and tutor perform as facilitator "(49.32%). That means, students still need assistance from tutor during the tutorial and was not able to learn the material by themselves.

4. Students like if tutor provides many practice questions.

In addition to the students' answers through questionnaires, the next step is to conduct interviews and discussions to five students to know their preference to the tutorial model. The result of the interview as follows.

1. Students like when tutorial is conducted in two-way communication, means that the tutor does not explain the material continuously from beginning to the end, but interspersed with discussions and/or question and answer. If the tutor explains the material continously, students feel bored, even sleepy that make them can not accept the concentration of material.

2. Especially for the quantitative course, students preferred that tutor explain the theory at a glance, then give plenty of examples and exercises. It is easier for students to understand the material because the more often they practice problems, then they feel increasingly understand the material.

3. Students do not agree if the tutor dominate the tutorial for the whole session, which means not giving a chance to students for discussion or questions.

4. Students do not agree if the tutor simply directing students to the discussion without explaining the material in advance. Students also do not like when the tutor acts as a "moderator" in the discussion without explaining any material or provide the correct answer to the discussion.

5. Students like when tutorial is done in two directions, the first tutor explaining the fine points of matter, followed by a discussion and also question and answer. It because students still need an explanation from tutor to learn the material and they can not or are not sure if they read the learning materials by themselves without any assistance from the tutor.

Conclusion

This study aims to determine students' opinion regarding the appropriate tutorial models for them. Based on the results of the data taken from students, a key point that can be concluded is students prefer to a tutorial model that is a combination between TCL and SCL. They cannot fully study independently; they still need assistance and guidance from tutor. Moreover, there are several important points to be considered as follows.

1. The implementation of face-to-face tutorial in Department of Management UT has been implemented in accordance with the rules of implementation of face-to-face tutorial in UT that are consists of four phase; preparation phase, introduction phase, implementation phase, and closing phase. Tutors also have directed the tutorial in a good way and following each stage determined by the UT.

2. Students do not like when face-to-face tutorial is implemented only focus to students only, and minimum role of tutor. Students prefer when tutorial is implemented in two directions; in addition to discussion among the students, the tutor also have to explain the material.

3. Students also do not like when tutorial is implemented in one direction only, meaning only tutor explains the material continously without giving an opportunity to students for discussion or questions.

4. The tutorial model preferred by students is a model that combines methods TCL and SCL, considering UT students are not able to learn the material by themself, but still need assistance from the tutor.

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