STUDENT PREFERENCES AND EXPERIENCES IN ONLINE THESIS ADVISING: A Case Study of Universitas Terbuka

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ABSTRACT

Online learning and communication requires new perspectives and habits of learning which oftentimes are not readily acquired by students and faculties. The sense of security in the old habits of face-to-face learning may become a hindrance in the development of positive attitude and ease in online communication. This study explored student perceptions of the thesis advising process and the use of online communication for thesis submission, correction and feedback at the Open University of Indonesia (Universitas Terbuka, UT).

This is an exploratory study of Internet usage patterns for thesis advising by students and advisors. The study, which involved thirty graduate students, reveals that in some cases there is a mismatch of perceptions and expectations in online advising between students and advisors. Even though students reported generally positive perceptions of online advising, only half of the students used the Internet for thesis advising.

Only 38 percent of the respondents sent their thesis papers to an advisor using email, and, for various reasons, 61.5 percent preferred that the advisors provide written feedback on the printed draft rather than electronic feedback on the document sent back and forth using the Internet.

Paperless thesis advising is not desirable for the students involved in this study, although they typically use the Internet for other purposes. Reasons for this discrepancy will discuss.

Keywords: Online thesis advising; online feedback

INTRODUCTION

Internet use for education is spreading rapidly due to improved access and capacity for interactivity and flexibility (Osguthorpe & Graham, 2003). For various reasons, such as enlarging student body, many education institutions throughout the world have adopted online systems as a means of instruction, either in part or in whole. Online learning has gained acceptance and popularity among students in North America and Europe (Allen & Seaman, 2005).

Similar trend also occurred in many Asian countries. As observed by Baggaley (2007), regardless of limited infrastructure, Asian educators have been enthusiastic to use ICTs to deliver education to the thousands of disadvantaged learners.

In many distance education programs, such as in the Phillipines and Indonesia, online learning has become an integrated part of the learning system (Ramos, Nangit, Ranga, & Trinona, 2007; Luschei, Dimyati & Padmo, 2008).

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However, with the increasing use of Distance education and online learning, questions and issues about many aspects of distance and online education have been raised by practitioners as well as policy makers. Issues such as comparative effectiveness, effect of isolation on learning (Shelley, Swartz, & Cole, 2007) have been hurled back and forth by practitioners and researchers. Noticing the unpreparedness of faculties, many studies addressed issues concerning the capacity of faculty to teach effectively in an online setting (Arabasz, Pirani, & Fawcett, 2003; Alonso Diaz & Blazquez Entonado, 2009). Some research concludes that knowledge of computers and Internet literacy are necessary for faculty teaching online but online teaching competence requires different instructional designs and methods for supporting students. Some studies reported that teachers, or faculties, believe that online instruction is essentially not different from face-to-face classroom teaching (Arabasz, et.al, 2003; Spector & Merrill, 2008). In the lights of effective, efficient and engaging (E3) learning (Spector & Merill, 2008) this perception has grains of truth. In both face-to-face and online learning, quality teaching is the heart of the matter. Faculties should play a facilitative role to allow students actively explore and construct their own understanding.

However, when it comes into how a web-based instruction is constructed, many online instruction is simply a transfer of printed text book to web-based format, and it lost its appeal to students.

Prensky (2001) especially commented on a missmatch of 'digital natives and 'digital immigrants'. Young people who are from childhood introduced to using digital gadgets and constantly in contact with digital media (Tapscott, 1988) has different ways of thinking and to operate in daily lives compared to older people. Young people are capable of using the gadgets efficiently and effectively, whereas the faculties who are 'digital immigrants,' being introduced to using digital gadgets later in life, tend to behave inconsistently, such as printing articles rather than reading it on screen, or writing plan for activities in agenda book, rather than enter it into the handphone agenda. When expectations of faculties and students are different, students may become impatient and dissatisfied with the ways the faculty communicate and facilitate their learning.

Thesis advising at the Graduate Studies at UT has been a difficult phase for students to go through. The rate of students who complete their magister program on time is relatively low, about 30 percent. Students move fairly easy through the courses, but the process of thesis writing is a bottleneck. Especially for students who live far from the advisors, the advising process does not move smoothly.

The Graduate Studies advice students and advisors to use internet for a more time-efficient and effective advising. Faculty, for various reasons, are hesitant to use online communication, they prefer more common means, such as telephone, headphone or instant messages that they are used to. In graduate study programs, especially during thesis writing, students need intensive thesis feedback which phone calls or short messages hardly adequate for the complexity of responses.

Students from a far distance will have to repeatedly send bales of papers of thesis drafts back and forth to advisors by post which simple email attachment will save them time and cost.

For this reason, the study focus on the use of the Internet in a country where the faculty do not yet intensively use it in education, but many students are pursuing graduate education that requires writing a thesis and the institution recommends using online communication for sending and getting feedback from the faculties.

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PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study explored student perceptions of the thesis advising process and the use of online communication through the internet for thesis submission, correction and feedback. The study also tries to explain various factors influencing student perceptions and tendencies in completing their theses, such as advisor's attitude and student readiness to embark on thesis writing. Of particular interest are differences in perceptions of students and their advisors with regard to online thesis advising. Relevant factors that influenced perceptions about sending and receiving documents electronically versus paper versions are included.

Theory and Research Review

The term 'online learning' used interchangeably with 'e-learning' encompassing various meanings. Online learning may refer to a partial component in hybrid or blended learning, in which online components are supplementary or designed to provide enrichment, and 'fully' online learning, which does not incorporate any face-to-face components.

Many studies reveales that availlability of access to the internet does not necessarily guarantee use. Lacks knowledge of computer and internet and the necessary skills to effectively communicate online can be major hindrances for using the Internet. In the era of information technology, one should have what is called 'tool literacy' (Rudestam, 2002), in which one understands and uses practical and conceptual tools. Researchers found that computer efficacy, or an individual's confidence in his or her ability to competently use computers (Peng, 2009), is a significant predictor of computer use. The similar findings may be true for internet use. Understanding individual user differences is important in a computer-assisted education environment such as an online theses writing so that intervention can be designed to increase system use and facilitate students.

Another reason for low use of the internet is the absence of what Rudestam & Schoenholtz (2002) called 'online communicative competence'. It is a dimension of information literacy, which relates to communication, interaction, and interpersonal behavior in the world of cyberspace, and interpersonal behavior was definitely influenced by common internal factors, such as individual beliefs, preferences and perception (Grasha & Yangarber-Hicks, 2000). Another preventing factor of internet use is complaints from professors distressed by bales of emails from students (Sigrun, 2007). Professors or advisors may have a different perception and preference about email use. Some advisors think emails from students are too demanding of time and energy, the language is disrespectful, or simply inappropriate. Regardless of the negative sides, more and more education institutions are committed to technology-mediated learning. Because of the intense participation that students experience in an online environment, learning is improved. In a study of 52 students in one online class, 27 percent of students felt their learning was the same as in their face-to-face classes, and 50 percent of students indicated more learning in the online class (Palloff and Pratt, 2005).

Nevertheless, the technology readiness of online students should not be overestimated. Students may be competent in online games or social networking tools, but not equipped in online learning to do well in online class obviously requires more than savviness in online technology.

The Indonesia society The tendency to be versatile in online social networking also happens in Indonesia.

Many Indonesians even know how to build pressure groups using short messages and Facebook to correct injustices in the society.

Blog users in Indonesia in 2009 reached 1.2 million, an increase of 900 percents from 2007. However a skill to function well in blogs does not necessarily transfer to the academic skills in online classes.

BACKGROUND: INDONESIA AND UNIVERSITAS TERBUKA

Indonesia is an archipelago of 17504 islands, stretching across 3977 miles area, with a population of close to 237,000,000 people. Internet users in Indonesia in 2008 were 25 million, which was was the fifth largest in Asia. In 2009 the figure increased 40 percent reaching 35 million (Antara, 2009).

However compared to the total population, the rate of internet penetration in Indonesia is low, about 10.4 percent in 2008, compared to 60 percent in India 60 and 65.7 percent in Malaysia. (Miniwats Marketing Group, 2008). Yet the use of internet in Indonesia is predicted to increase sharply in the next 5 years.

The government of Indonesia has made a goal of 50 percent internet literacy, out of 257 million population in 2015 (Antara, 2009).

Universitas Terbuka (UT) is a distance education university in Indonesia, established in 1984 by a presidential decree to meet the needs of higher education for new high-school graduates. In later years, the percentage of younger students became very small, consisting of less than 5 percent of students.

The total number of students in early 2009 was 537,000, 70% of whom are in-service teachers. Since 2004, UT offers three master's degree programs: public administration, business management, and fishery management.

The master's program was initially intended to be a carrier flag for the institution, aiming at providing excellent service to a small number of students. Nonetheless, in four years, the number of students has multiplied fourfold. The Master's in Public Administration has the largest number of students.

STUDENT BODY AND LEARNING SYSTEM AT THE GRADUATE PROGRAM

Many students as instrumental for obtaining a better social status and income view graduate education. A flexible, distance learning system has become a preferred choice for education by many graduate students and especially by those who want to continue to work while completing their studies.

The program policy was administered by the School of Graduate Studies at Universitas Terbuka at the central office in Jakarta.

The Regional Offices hold tutorials, examinations and other learning activities. During the second semester of 2009, the number of registered students was 641, supervised by 12 Regional Office.
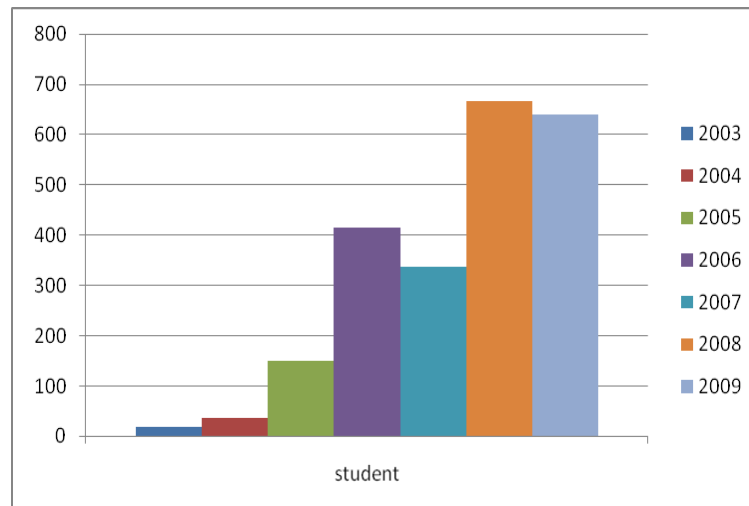
Figure: 2
Number of Graduate Students, Universitas Terbuka, 2003-2009

For the last two years, the number of students registered each semester is stable. This indicates that students are getting used to distance learning system and move smoothly within the program. Students began graduating in 2006, and since then 187 students have graduated. In general a student takes four to five semesters to complete the program, completing courses in three semesters and working on thesis in the fourth and fifth semesters.

Graduate studies at Universitas Terbuka employs a blended education of independent learning and face-to-face sessions integrated with online communication for courses tutorial, academic and thesis advising. Some courses include video-conference for seminars and general lectures. The general learning process can be described as follows:

> ➢ **Students study individually using a package of learning materials consisting of printed and multimedia material. Some courses are supplemented with web-based material.**
> ➢ **Students are required to attend face-to-face tutorial sessions four times per course, and access eight units of online material, which serves as triggers for discussions, per course per semester.**
> ➢ **Students access three class assignments online and submit the assignments to face-to-face tutors for marking and feedback.**
> ➢ **A course final grade is determined based on tutorial performance (60%) and final assessment (40%).**
> ➢ **At the final stage of the program students are required to write a thesis and sit for thesis defense.**
> ➢ **To be eligible for certification the students must have a minimum GPA of 3.00 and pass the thesis defense.**

From early on, students were exposed to online communication. Figure 3 shows that online component is integrated into the learning system. At the undergraduate programs participation in online tutorials is voluntary, whereas in the graduates program is mandatory.

The learning process represents a blended learning scheme, which combines independent learning, face-to-face tutorials and online tutorials. 219
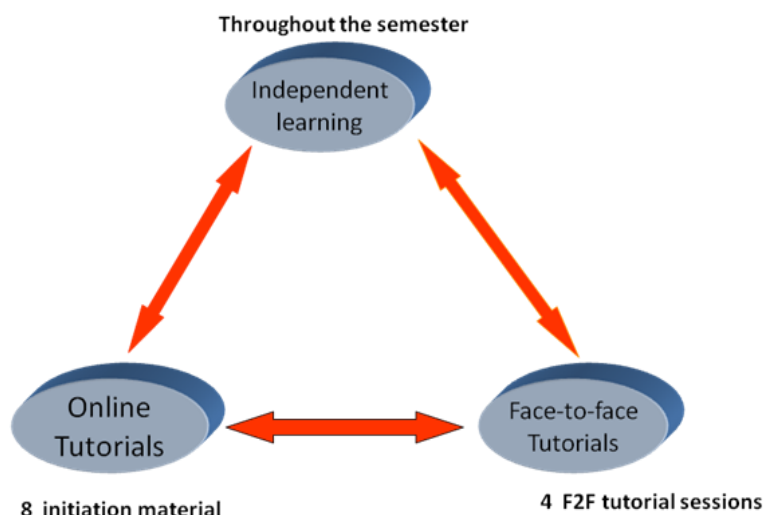
Figure: 3
Students' learning components

Each student is required to use the Internet for different purposes such as sending assignments to the tutor or sending messages to tutors and fellow students. Prior to 2009, student access to the online tutorial is minimal, only 20 percent. After a lot of encouragement and exhortation, the percentage increased to about 50 percent. The non access by students clearly indicates that the intended integrated learning process did not yet materialize. Students often make excuses that internet access in their regions is too slow, or that they are too busy to access the tutorial online.

In early 2009, after many thoughts, the Graduates Studies made a regulation, that any student who does not participate in online tutorial will fail the course, regardless of the course exam score. Surprisingly, this strategy has accelerated students' participation to 97 percent. It seemed then what spurred students to participate in online tutorials is the consequence of losing grades, or put it mildly, if students believe that success in their course is affected by the use of technology, they will go out to use it (Phipps & Merisotis, 1999).

The admonition of 'learn to use it and you will love it' does not bring the expected result. In this instance, intimidation works better than encouragement. The Graduate Studies, then, focus of effort is to ensure consistency and the quality of students' participation.

Thesis Advising Mechanism

At the end of the third semester students, produce research pre-proposal to be refined and implemented during the fourth semester. Thesis advising is conducted as face-to-face interactions, by email, and by residential intensive advising sessions at the regional office. Students writing should conform to the UT manual for thesis format. After obtaining approval from both advisors, the student is scheduled for thesis defense.

A student will have two advisors; the main advisor will attend to the research substance and methods appropriateness, while the second advisor concentrates more on the technical aspects of thesis writing. As main thesis advisors, UT employs university lecturers with doctorate degrees of relevant field of study from neighboring public universities of the Regional Offices.

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The second advisors are mostly lecturers from UT at the central office in Jakarta. The students expected to contact and arrange meetings with the advisors, and they will meet their main advisors at least twice during the residential thesis advising. The rest of the advising will be from a distance, using telephone, SMS, or online. Student submission of drafts of thesis back and forth to the advisors recommended by internet, due to a far distance between the students and the advisors. Residential advising sessions conducted twice during the thesis writing process.

The first session is at the beginning of the semester. In a seminar, students will present their proposals and get feedback from advisors and fellow students. The residential session is a forum for collective advising by advisors as well as input from fellow students. The second residential session takes place after most students collect data and analyzes their findings. In this session students report their findings and initial conclusions, and get feedback from the advisors. Thesis research and writing in a regular semester is planned for 14-16 weeks.

Thesis advising scheme within a semester

Activity	Weeks													
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Academic service	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Distance and/or online thesis advising	■	■		■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■		
Residential thesis advising			■										■	
Thesis writing	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	
Thesis Defence														■

Figure: 4
Thesis advising scheme

Thesis Defense
Once students obtain thesis approvals from the advisors, they sign up for thesis defense. To maintain objectivity and quality of the thesis, a student will be examined by three examiners, one external examiner, and two advisors acting as examiners. A rubric for marking is used, incorporating components such as: problem formulation, methods, analysis and discussion of findings and recommendation.

In addition, students will also be given marks on presentation skills and agility in handling questions and comments from the examiners. The scores given by the examiners will then be weighted and combined, for thesis final score.

Roles of internet in thesis writing process
In distance education system, internet is a medium which shortens the distance between student and instructor and time-efficient. Thesis advising at a distance can greatly benefit from online communication. Students could send drafts to advisors, and advisors could send comments and corrections electronically.

Internet communication is obviously superior to postal communication in terms of speed. At UT, feedback and thesis correction from advisors mostly have been delivered through regular mail.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The study is an exploration of students' perceptions and experiences in thesis advising, particularly on their perception of online communication with advisors and the in-text feedback. The study was conducted in 2008 to 2009, involving graduates from different years and locations. A questionnaire developed to inquire about students' experiences in the thesis advising process and their perception of the use of online communication during the advising process. During residential thesis advising, students and advisors were interviewed to probe some issues.

To crosscheck information from the students, focus group discussions with advisors conducted twice in 2009, to discuss their perceptions of the overall conduct of the thesis advising and online communication with advisees. The first discussion was attended mostly by advisors/lecturers from Universitas Terbuka in Jakarta. Lecturers at Universitas Terbuka assigned as the second thesis advisors to students from different parts of Indonesia. Most relied on technology-mediated communication for advising, such as phone, SMS, and email.

The second discussion was conducted at a regional office in Pontianak in the province of Kalimantan, attended by professors at the local university who are the first thesis advisors . During the discussions the advisors offered information on their experiences and suggestion to improve the thesis advising process and results.

A questionnaire of 29 items was used to collect information from the graduates. The questions were divided into three sections. First section, consisting of 12 questions, asked about the general issues of the advising process, such as: ownership and use of the manual for thesis writing developed by the Graduate Studies Program, whether students received notification early of who the advisors were, whether for any reasons they ever wanted to change advisors, and what they perceive as appropriate time length for thesis. The second section, comprising 17 items, asked issues such as: ease at first contacting advisors, having drafts of proposal on time, perception of advisors' helpfulness and capacity, and usefulness of the first and second residential thesis advising.

The third section asked issues such as: intensity and frequency of advising during a semester, and whether students send drafts of their thesis to advisors by post or as email attachments, whether advisors did in-text editing, and their preference of modes of advising. The questionnaire also incorporated some open questions for their comments and suggestions. The questionnaires were sent by post to fifty graduates. Twenty- nine (29) completed and returned the questionnaires for a response rate of 58%. Two graduates received it by email since they were out of the country, and returned them by email.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The students' ages ranged from 27 to 52 years old, with an average of 41. Seventy-two percents are from 27 to 45 years old. Four (13.7%) out of 29 are females. In general, female students constitute not more than twenty percent of the total number of students. All respondents had already graduated.

Fifty eight percent were graduates from Public Administration Program, and 41.4% from Management Program. The respondents were from five Regional Offices on the islands of Sumatra and Java.

Students' perception of experience in theses advising
Preparation for Thesis Writing

- ➢ **Use of manual for thesis writing: UT designed a special manual for thesis writing to be distributed to students when they complete the third semester. It is designed as a simple booklet which explains the technical aspects of thesis writing in accordance to UT specifications. In addition to printed format distributed to students, it can also be accessed from the Graduate Study website. When asked if they understood the content of the manual, almost 100% stated that they have one and understand the content. However during the process of advising, some advisors reported that students do not use the manual. Consequently, the theses must undergo heavy re-editing, which is time-consuming. It seems that having the manual does not guarantee use. For this matter, a system of meticulous check and correction is employed by the Graduate Study to enforce adherence to the manual by students and faculties. Even if the advisors already give approvals, the students have to obtain clearance from the Graduate Study office before being scheduled for thesis defense.**

- ➢ **Pre-proposal: Twenty-three respondents (79.3%) claim to have pre-proposals ready before entering the fourth semester. The pre-proposal is the product of independent study at semester three. Having the pre-proposal handy will help the students move on efficiently in their research. However, many will change their topics after the residential theses advising and rigorous discussion with their advisors. In some cases it causes longer time of study which has financial implications for students. Reasons quoted by students for changing the research topics include 'find a more interesting topic during the seminar session', 'my topic lacked focus', and 'the advisor directed me for quantitative methods, even though I prefer qualitative.'**

Means of Sending Drafts To Advisors
Student's preference in sending their drafts to their advisors varies. Fourteen students (48.3 percent) prefer to send them as email attachment, and the rest prefer to send the printed form by post. Some students mention repeated failures of uploading parts of their work to be sent online to the advisor, and this condition makes them resort to using the post service.

A student with a computer and telephone line can easily access internet through the service provided by the national Telkom. Most graduate students have access to a computer and the internet either at home or at the office. Sending a package by post from the outer islands to Jakarta may take two weeks by regular mail and three days by special delivery.

Sending a draft of a thesis of about 100 pages as an email attachment will be instantly delivered, and cost less, except for those students who have to travel a long way to find an internet kiosk. It was interesting to note, however, that some graduates stated they did not use email because their advisors did not seem to require it. The advisors preferred to have printed documents to be sent to them for comments and corrections.

Use of Internet For Advising
Out of 29 students, 19 (65%) used internet to contact and interact with their advisors. The reported frequency was between one to 15 times.

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The majority (81%) ranged from 2 to 6 times. Students who used internet for communication with advisors reporting it as 'cheaper' and 'faster' to get a response. However, some commented that they had to wait more than a month to have comments from the advisors. Therefore, they used all available means of communication to get messages to their advisors, sent draft by email, sent SMS messages that they already sent the draft by email, and if necessary called the advisors by telephone. The Program required advisors to respond to students within two weeks, but only a few do so. Many advisors have an impression that students put pressure on their time and demanded immediate feedback. While others, understanding the pressures on students to complete the thesis on time, made time for punctual feedback.

Online/In-Text Correction By Advisors

Eight students (42.9%) of those who sent drafts of theses to advisors do not prefer in-text or online editing by the advisors, in other words they want the advisors to print the thesis and make corrections on the printed copy. Students used Microsoft Word to type their theses, but many do not know yet how to use 'track changes' and 'comments' in Microsoft Word. Therefore when an advisor used in-text edit and gave comments on a student thesis using track changes, students missed many corrections and resubmitted drafts which did not change much from the original version, despite the fact that change integration can be done by a simple "accept' or 'reject.' The Graduate Studies overestimated the word processing capability of the students and did not formally provide training for this skill.

Advisors Preference of Doing Online Correction

Out of eight students who emailed their theses to advisors, five of them (62.5%) reported that their advisors conducted in-text comment and editing, this number accounted for only 17.2 % of all respondents. Some advisors explains the difficulty of doing in-text editing. Reading and doing in-text editing on screen straining their eyes, therefore they prefer reading and giving corrections in print. Being constantly around information and communication technology, advisors from Universitas Terbuka tend to easily adapt to in-text editing on screen. compared to advisors from other universities. However, the number of advisors who demonstrated ability and preference to do in-text editing on screen was limited.

Perceptions on Residential Theses Advising

When asked if students present findings during the second residential advising, 5 students (17.2%) stated that they were not able for various reasons, such as 'data collection is not completed', 'the operationalization of variables is not yet approved by the advisor', 'I'm not ready','the output of the previous session is unclear to me', etc. It seemed that students did not or could not make contact with their advisors to resolve their problems.

A student even reported that the seminar turned into a 'killing field' for him. His presentation met with 'difficult' and 'harsh' questions from the external discussant, which shake the theoretical foundation of his research. He become unmotivated and reluctant to further contacting his advisor.

In addition, these students worked full-time while conducting research at the same time. There were time constraints because of other competing responsibilities. This condition seemed to be the main cause for students to have longer study period.

Support and Helpfulness of Advisors

Theses writing can be a hard, winding and lonely road for students, especially for distance learners with less frequent face-to-face interactions with the advisors, compared to students in the conventional university. Therefore they had to have a source of moral support and encouragement from friends, family and advisors.

Almost all students (27 or 93.1%) reported that the advisors actively made efforts to motivate students during the writing process, in the forms of 'encouragement to complete the theses', 'invitation to contact anytime finding difficulties', 'psychological support that student will be able to complete the theses', 'digging for deeper data', 'let students borrow the advisors' books', etc.

Some candidates, however, 'drop-off' quietly from the process, and pick it up later when they are ready. This phenomenon often occurs, especially for students who consider their present job and responsibility as more important. During the national campaign for the Indonesian presidency in 2006, many students who are public officials were involved in the campaign process, therefore they stopped the research activity and continued the process after the election was over.

Local Content as Research Reference

External examiners frequently mentioned that many of the thesis lacked strong conceptual and theoretical frameworks. Most students who were practitioners in the field, such as the students of public administration, were local government officials or members of the house of the representatives, who were essentially practitioners, and not accustomed to theoretical thinking. Many thesis topics derived from their working place. In many cases they could not separate their thinking as practitioners or academicians. Rather than analyzing and connecting their findings to theory, many will emphasize problem solving interventions. In addition, scientific journals in their respective field were not available in the local university libraries. Since many students, especially from the outer islands, did not have a good mastery of English, subscriptions for reference clearinghouse services such as Proquest was not very helpful. They need online local content in Bahasa Indonesia (the Indonesian language) for free access. Even though in the central library in Jakarta journals and other references in Bahasa Indonesia are available, the center does not provide journals in printed form be distributed to students.

In 2009, Universitas Terbuka initiated collaboration with other universities to digitize their local journals and upload them for access by subscription. Recently, the government for free access by students launched a reference clearinghouse. The challenge then, is then to encourage students to to explore and use the references. The Graduate Program have to integrate the references in the students assignments to trigger students access and active use, moving away from being spoon-fed to active and engaged learners.

DISCUSSION

This study shows that many students did not favor online theses advising and prefer face-to-face discussion with their advisors. They seemed take cues from the advisors. Since advisors did not encourage the students to use online communication, students perceived online communication as not preferable.

Students who sent drafts of thesis online do not necessarily prefer in-text editing on the digital form by advisors.

The ease and time efficiency in sending thesis online outweigh the necessity to learn new skills and change ways of using word processing. This corresponds with Keramidas, Ludlow, Collins, and Baird (2007) that lack skills to adequately operate in new environment cause reluctance to abandon familiar ways.

The unwillingness to change on the part of the advisors is probably also related to lack of skills or in their technophobia (Goodyear & Ellis, 2008) and that expecting face-to-face faculty to begin function well in the online environment requires training of the 'specific skills' due to the lack of pedagogical transferability from the traditional to the online classroom. This is also true for thesis advising. Apart from the skills of using in-text editing, online advising may have a different nature, such as communicating elaborated conceptual feedback to students in a motivating tone, using online mode. Body gestures are missing as clues, and students have to be able to capture the explicit and implicit meaning from what they read. This line of research may benefit online thesis advising to minimize the difficult hurdles faced by students and advisors.

This study is exploratory in nature. Due to some limitations, the findings cannot be generalized to all graduate students at UT. A respond rate of 58 percent of mailed questionnaires was relatively low, and clearly indicated voluntary response by motivated students. Nonetheless, the finding can serve as primary information for further studies in online advising, as well as inputs for improving thesis advising by the Graduate Program at Universitas Terbuka.

CONCLUSION

Use of the Internet for thesis advising theoretically is promising and beneficial to students and advisors. However, in practice potential benefits are not always realized. This study nevertheless shows some empirical evidence that online thesis advising is potential for helping students to overcome problems during the thesis writing process. Given appropriate training in in-text editing, both students and advisors can move more smoothly and effectively for faster delivery and timely response. Both students and advisors need to learn a new habit of collaboration, optimizing the use of word processing tools for a faster thesis correction and feedback.It is yet to see whether paperless thesis advising is realistic. However if we are able to realize it , at least cutting down the number of papers shuffled to and fro is possible; and the best of it all, it reduces the number of trees cut down to produce paper, that we may live in a greener world.

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