The centralization and standardization of student services in Universitas Terbuka

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Abstract. Universitas Terbuka (UT) now a days is applying the centralization and standardization model on its student service management system. Those both administrative and academic services are handled directly by the Rectorate office and the working units under it. Student administrative services include admission, registration, tutoring the Modul-Base of course subject matter, exam-schedules determination, exam-results announcement, grades-transcripts printing and graduation ceremonies. Academic services involve curriculum establishment, subject course material settlement, tutorial services, remedial teaching, learning assessment, and academic judicium. The objectives of managerial centralization and standardization are at least assuring the achievement of managerial efficiency and effectivity. However, in the practical terms the middle line and operating core business services apparently could not resolve problems in quick and effective manner, when students asked for help due to the problems of delivered administrative and academic services. The research question was "what is the impact of centralized and standardized of student service management system to the UT overall services performance?". The method used was a case-study, and the data were taken through series of document review, observation technique and interviews. The data were analyzed descriptively qualitative using MPFAAC technique. The study concluded that the student service managerial centralization and standardization brought about the inability of the middle line and operating core business services from doing any job creativity, innovation, and responsivity.

Keywords. centralization, standardization, administration and academic services, inovation, and responsiveness

A. Introduction
The learning process at UT is by distance learning method. In this method, the students do not learn the course material through lectures in the classroom but learned through the media. Course materials were written in the subject matter book (BMP) and then handed over to the students to learn independently. Students read the BMP and followed by the online tutorials, face to face tutorials, directed assignments, and ended with the semesterly final exam. Every single learning process was done independently in the sense of the students’ own initiative without strict control of the institution.

In accordance with the UT organizational structure, the working-units that provide direct-services to the students are the units of distance learning programs (UPBJJ offices).
UPBJJ offices are UT branch offices located outside of the Headquarter, which are in the capital of the provinces and/or regency/city. UT has 39 UPBJJ offices. UPBJJ offices are the technical working unit in the field. The main task and function of UPBJJ offices are as executioner of the Headquarter policy of strategic apex. All policies related to the student services are designed and planned in the strategic apex. Academic policies are decided by the Vice Rector I and the Faculties, meanwhile the administrative policies are decided by Vice Rector III. The policies of the Vice Rector III are forwarded to support the working-units that which under the authority of the Bureau of Academic, Student Affairs and Planning (BAKP) and the Institute for Educational Development and Quality Assurance (LPPMP) then executed by UPBJJ offices. UPBJJ offices provide services to students that include admission, registration, BMP submission, tutorials, final examination or thesis-writing, grader-transcripts submission, exam results announcement, diploma degree delivery and academic/administrative problem-solving. UPBJJ offices are considered only to implementing the UT Headquarter policies with such limited discretion.

The UT student service management system as described earlier is considered the centralized model of student services management system. The UT model of student services management system has positive and negative sides. Centralization made uniformity in delivering services so that the operating core unit can work effectively based on the specified standards prescribed by the Centre or Headquarter. However, the centralization of services also creates stiffness. If there are problems in the field, UPBJJ offices do not have enough discretion to overcome it. Many cases of service to students cannot be solved by UPBJJ offices quickly. For example, BMPs received by the students were very late; students have to apply for rectification of data; and numerous students complaint on grades E or D. All of the student complaint cannot be resolved directly by UPBJJ offices because the authorities to resolve the issues is located in the Centre or Headquarter. The Center has to get through a long bureaucratic procedure among the related working-units, and finally just can be completed a few days later. Once the problem has been completed, the Centre handed over the solved-case to UPBJJ offices and then UPBJJ offices handed over to the students. Based on those of issues, a proposed research question was "What is the impact of the centralization and standardization of services to the overall UT services performance?". Based on this question, this study aimed to describe the impact of centralization and standardization of services on the effectiveness of services to students.

It has been long noticed, that the design and structure of the organization are strongly influenced by the organizational goal, the size of the job handled, the complexity of the job, the spaciousness and narrowness of the job-catchment area, and the nature of the work. These factors also influence the choice of method to implement the policy and coordination: whether by way of centralized or decentralized way. Organization with jobs that which having light workload in handling is considered not complex and to be more effective and efficient when it is applied with a centralized management model. However, an organization with a long span of control, wide service area, and the type of complex work more effectively with a decentralized model.

Organizational structure is defined as the formal system of authority relationships and tasks that control and coordinate employee actions and behavior to achieve goals in organizations (Jones, 2013). Organizational structure describes the formal arrangement of jobs and tasks in organizations (Robbins and Coulter, 2007); it describes the allocation of authority and responsibility, and how rules and regulation are executed by workers in firms (Nahm et al., 2003). Most of the extant studies on organizational structure have focused on centralization,
formalization, and standardization. Centralization refers to the concentration of decision-making authority at the upper levels of an organization (Jones, 2013). In a centralized organization, decision making is kept at the top level, whilst in a decentralized organization; decisions are delegated to lower levels (Daft, 1995). Centralization is composed of a hierarchy of authority and participation (Hage & Aiken, 1967). The organizational hierarchy of authority refers to the concentration of decision making authority in performing tasks and duties (Jones, 2013). Decentralization is found to be related to many working attitudes and behavior (Subramaniam and Mia, 2001). Formalization refers to “the amount of written documentation in the organization” (Daft, 1995: 16).

Mintzberg (1983: 95-96) argued that centralization is the tightest means of coordinating decision making in the organization. Most decisions are made by one person, in one brain, and then implemented through direct supervision. Other reasons have been given for centralizing structures, but aside from the well-known one of lust for power, most of them amount to the need of coordination. However, organizations that span of control too far and require quick handling in accordance with local conditions require decentralization. Mintzberg (1983:97-96) argued that decentralization is as it allows the organization to respond quickly intervening to local conditions. The transmission of information that runs to the center and goes back to the sender really takes time, in which may be crucial. And the last reason for decentralization is that it is a stimulus for motivation.

Centralization is measured as both the hierarchy of authority and the degree of participation in decision-making. An organization with centralization model will typically have a high degree of hierarchical authority and low levels of participation in decisions and policies making and resources utilization; while a decentralized organization will be characterized by low hierarchical authority but highly participative decision-making (Andrews, 1999). Decentralization is hypothesized to improve public services by empowering service managers to make service delivery decisions, while effective strategizing is thought to make organizations flexible and “fit for purpose”. These ideas were reflected in the Reinventing Government movement in the US, and more recently have formed an integral part of the modernization agenda pursued by the labour government in the UK (Walker and Boyne, 2006). Whetten (1978) found that centralization has a positive effect on the output of US manpower agencies, but a negative one on staff perceptions of effectiveness. Classical theorists of bureaucracy regard the relative degree of centralization as integral to understanding how an organization’s decision-making processes are conducive to greater organizational efficiency (Gulick and Urwick 1937; Weber 1947).

This research approach used was qualitave and the method was a case-base study. The data were collected through documents review that covered UT Student-Service SOP, observation that covered 5 biggest UT Regional Offices (UPBJJ-UT), and interview that involved managers and staffs of whom executed student-services at the 5 biggest UPBJJ-UT and the 7 head-quarter working units related to student-services. Field observations were conducted at the 5 biggest UT Regional Office (UPBJJ-UT) during the managerial-meetings. The interview was conducted by interviewing students and staffs of the 5 biggest UPBJJ-UT offices during the services. The data were analyzed qualitatively descriptive using MPFAAC factor of analysis (Meaning-Positioning-Functioning-Authorizing-Actuating-Controlling, Sudarsono, 2018). ‘Meaning factor’ means the ontological and axiological analysis of the administrative object of the study; ‘Positioning factor’ means the location of the existence of the working relationship of the operational unit; ‘Functioning factor’ means the functioning of an operational work unit; ‘Authorizing factor’ means the work of authority of an operational
work unit; ‘Actuating factor’ means the execution of mandated job or duties; ‘Controlling factor’ means the work of the supervisory function in the chain of work implementation.

**B. Result and Discussion**

**Meaning**

Mintzberg (1983: 9) explains that the organization have five main meaning of components: 1) operating core; 2) midle line; 3) strategic apex; 4) technostructure; and 5) support staff. The operating core is the workers who actually carry out the organization’s tasks. The midle line is midle- and lower-level management. The strategic apex is top management and its support staff. The technostructure is analysts such as engineers, accountants, planners, researchers, and personnel managers. The technostructure makes norms and standards. The supporting staffs are the people who provide indirect services.

![Figure 1. The Five Basic Parts of The Organization](image)

**Figure 1. The Five Basic Parts of The Organization**


UT institution has the meaning of a form of people who have the same perspective in achieving the ideals of educational services. The meaning of educational services itself means providing learning services to society based on high moral values. On the other hand, the meaning of student-services is also interpreted as excellent-services that must be provided by the institutions as well as UT as a public body to their students. Poor service to students by institutions means a denial of the moral values of good-governance (Neneng Siti Maryam, 2016).

**Positioning**

Contextualizing the position of Mintzberg’s five-part structure of the organization theory into UT organization (Permenristekdikti No. 16 Tahun 2017 and Permenristekdikti No. 84 Tahun 2017), it can be depicted as follows: 1) the Rectorate is as the strategic apex; 2) the
Faculties, PPS, and LPPM are as a middle line; 3) the Faculty Departments/Study Programs and UPBJJ offices are as the operating core; 4) BAKP, BKUK, LPPMP are as the supporting agents; and 5) Pusmintas and SPI is as technostructure. Operating core in the central office is the Faculty Departments/Study Programs, meanwhile in the local area is UPBJJ offices. Although functionally Faculty Departments/Study Programs are assumed to be the operating core, but in real terms they do not perform this function. The working-units by which actually carry out the functions of the operating cores are UPBJJ offices as branch offices located outside of the Headquarter, in the capital city of the province and/or regency/city.

Policies of student services are decided by the Headquarter then implemented by UPBJJ offices. To ensure UPBJJ offices implement the policies in accordance with the provisions of the Headquarter, the Center of Quality Control (Pusmintas) is supposed to making standard operating procedures. Quality Control System (Simintas) is developed and made in written document as a Guide Book for working-units in executing student service agendas. Based on this Guidebook, UPBJJ offices operate the student services management system (Permenristekdikti No. 16 Tahun 2017 and Permenristekdikti No. 84 Tahun 2017).

**Functioning**

UT is a state university that has three main task and function so-called ‘*tri dharma perguruan tinggi*’ to be sanctioned (Undang-Undang Nomor 20 tahun 2003 tentang Sistem Pendidikan Nasional): 1) organize teaching; 2) conduct research; 3) conduct community service. To carry out these functions, UT develops an organizational structure (Permenristekdikti No. 16 Tahun 2017 and Permenristekdikti No. 84 Tahun 2017) consisting
of the Rectorate, the Faculties and the Graduate Program (PPS) that which oversee the Faculty Departments and Study Programs, the Institute for Research and Community Service (LPPM), the Bureau of Finance, General Affairs and Cooperation (BKUK), the Bureau of Academic, Student Affairs and Planning (BAKP), Institute for Educational Development and Quality Assurance (LPMP), the Technical Operating Unit of Professional Development (UPTPP), the Center for Quality Assurance Systems (Pusmintas), the Unit of Internal Audit System (SPI), and the Unit of Distance Learning Program (UPBJJ office). In addition, UT also has a Board of Trustees and the Academic Senate. Rectorate is top management. The faculties and Graduate Program (PPS) are considered the teaching field of academic working-units. LPPM is implementing an academic field of research and community service. BAKP is a supporting unit for administration of student affairs and planning. BKUK is a supporting working-unit of finance and personnel affairs. LPMP is the supporting working-unit of testing service, learning service, and subject-course material service. UPTPP is the supporting working-unit of competency and career development of human resources. SPI is a supporting working-unit for internal audit. UPBJJ office is the technical field working-unit located in outside of the Headquarters. The Board of Trustees (BP) is the body of which oversees the finances of non taxable citizen. The Senate is a policy-making body whose members consist of representatives of lecturers, professors, and university leaders.

The function of each work unit at UT is expected to work according to the design of the main tasks and functions that have been determined, but so far the performance of existing work units is strongly influenced by the performance of officials who run positions in their work units. Whereas the performance of the organizational structure is strongly influenced by organizational design. The design of a hierarchical organizational structure compared to a 'flat-top' one is certainly very different in its influence on the effectiveness of the performance of organizational functions (Muhlisin Muhlisin. 2020), as is the case with UT. The organizational design principle of 'economical structure rich in function' is certainly different from the 'hierarchical structure' in the accuracy, speed and control of services to clients/costumers/students. This phenomenon has been faced by UT so far in providing services to its students.

Authoring

UT has three authorities that is to say (Permenristekdikti No. 16 Tahun 2017 and Permenristekdikti No. 84 Tahun 2017): 1) teaching; 2) research; 3) community engagement. These three authorities have been projected into its separation of power to be carried out by UT organizational structure. UT has a Board of Trustees and the Academic Senate that has authorities to settle down UT organizational grand-policies. Rectorate is having top management-authorities. The faculties and Graduate Program (PPS) are entitled of having academic authorities. LPPM is having research and community service authorities. BAKP authorities is supporting student affairs and planning administration. BKUK authorities is supporting finance and personnel affairs. LPMP is supporting testing service, learning service, and subject-course material service. UPTPP is the supporting competency and career development of human resources. SPI is supporting internal audit. UPBJJ office is operating technical field located in outside of the Headquarters. The Board of Trustees (BP) is overseeing the finances of non taxable citizen. The Senate is policy-making whose members consist of representatives of lecturers, professors, and university leaders.

The authority in executing such specific job such as tutorial and examination services, all of these have to be operated in rigid and strict procedural manner vertically and horizontally.
Student-service problems that occur in the operational field level, at the most has to face red-tape procedure and are not accommodated by better contingency in its authority design. The authority issues at the area of delivering student services at this point by fact is nothing to do with the SOP design per se, but to do with weak-quality-control which is supposed to integral part of the service management SOP. The service management SOP is not showing the profile of the quality over the design, but rather the design over the quality.

**Actuating**

In actuating the SOP delivery of BMP, UPBJJ offices only conveys the BMP to the students. In this BMP delivery case, there are five models applied, e.g. (Hanif dkk. 2022. Document Review: SOP-BMP Delivery): 1) direct package model; 2) independent model; 3) semester system package model so-called ‘Semester Package System’ (SIPAS) without Face-to-Face Tutorials (TTM); 4) semi SIPAS model; and 5) full SIPAS model (SIPAS-Penuh). In the case of direct packages models, students are getting BMP in one package with payment of fees. This model is applied to the Elementary School Teacher Program (PGSD) Studies Program, Teacher Education on Early Childhood Education (PGPAUD) Study Program, and the Graduate Study Program (PPS). In the case of Independent Model, the students has to buy BMPs theirselves in UT-Karunika Cooperative located at the Headquarter through the application of online bookstores (Hanif dkk. 2022. Observation Result: BMP Delivery). In SIPAS Model without TTM, students are supposed to buy BMP non-fee package without following TTM. In the Semi SIPAS Model, the students are supposed to buy the BMPs outside the tuition fee in a package with TTM on the half of the courses registered. In full SIPAS Model, the students are assumed to buying the BMPs non-tuition fee with the TTM for all courses that have been registered (Hanif dkk. 2022. Document Review: SOP-BMP Delivery). Beside of these five models, there is another one model, that the students do not buy the BMPs, hey only rely on the online library to read that of BMPs digital.

Students who choose the SIPAS model, the Central office sends the BMPs to UPBJJ offices directly. In case of logistic affairs, UPBJJ offices located outside Java, frequently the supposedly sent BMPs have not arrived on time at UPBJJ offices. Even though the BMPs supposedy should be accepted few weeks before the tutorial schedules commenced. It often happens that the BMPs are received a month or two after the tutorial begins (Hanif dkk. 2022. Document Review: SOP-BMP Delivery). In this case, UPBJJ offices are supposed to report to LPPMP, and LPPMP following it up by checking all the delivery procedures and the results has to be submitted to the related UPBJJ offices.

In online tutorial, the students may respond tutorial initiation and do assignment from their tutors. The Faculty Study Program coordinate these online of electronics tutorials. The students has to register theirselves to follow the online tutorials and engage it where they are. In the virtual space, the students discuss the subject-matter brought by in the tutorial initiation, and may commite in discussion with their fellow students or with the tutor. In this room, students submit assignments requested by the tutor. For face-to-face tutorials, UPBJJ offices implement in two models, e.g.: 1) a package with SIPAS and 2) at the request of students (ATPENM). Students who buy BMPs with full model SIPAS will automatically be getting TTM services. However, for students who do not follow the full model SIPAS can buy a TTM package based on ATPENM scheme. Students who want ATPENM scheme must apply to UPBJJ offices by paying an additional fee as much of IDR150,000 per subject-course. In carrying out the TTM scheme, UPBJJ offices have authority to determining the tutors, the tutorial activities schedule, the provision of tutorial classrooms, and supervising the tutors performance and tutorials.
process. The role of the Center or Headquarter in TTM is only providing a written guide-lines expressed in the Tutorial Guide-line Book. Based on the Guide-line Book, UPBJJ offices operates operates the satandard procedures. TTM operationalization is organized by UPBJJ offices, while online tutorials is conducted by the Faculty Study Program. The Faculty Study Program has authority to determining the tutors. Through the subject-course-material presented by the tutors, the students may discuss the tutorial subject-matter issues with their respected tutors and other fellow students. The tutorial grader scores are belonged to the tutors’ authority to set.

Generally so far, the implementation of TTM has been operated and runing smoothly. However, there are still cases of the TTM practicum grader scores that yet have not been received by LPPMP on time. The impact is that, the examination results of the on going semester can not computerly be processed. In the case of this problem UPBJJ offices has to ask the students and tutors to hand it down the practicum grader scores. UPBJJ offices then has to processing the practicum grader scores then ask LPPMP to issuing the final exam formula.

The semesterly final exams are organized by UPBJJ offices and in this setting the Headquarter provides an item test instrument and send it to UPBJJ offices by post or directly brought and delivered by the appointed officers. UPBJJ offices prepare examination rooms, set the superintendents and submit the test script and the test answering sheets that had been filled by the students to the Headquarter. The next, the Central or UT Headquarter is processing those of students’ answered exam-sheets, and the examination results are submitted to UPBJJ offices. Finally then, UPBJJ offices hand it down to the students.

Generally, the semesterly examination process, started from the examinees verification, exam-rooms preparation, on-going exam organization until the exam results announcement, so far it has been noted going smoothly. However, it happens that the student exam results can not be announced on time due to the technical error. In this case, the students ordinarily submit a complaint to the respective UPBJJ offices. UPBJJ offices in this situation can not resolve the case right away, because all of the exam-data have been stored in the Headquarter. UPBJJ offices could only escalate the case-issue to the Headquarter. In this situation, the students are asked to wait the processing period until there is a response from the Centre. Any how, the answer from the Headquarter has been frequently so late until recently received by UPBJJ offices for more than one week.

**Controlling**

The centralized services could create bureaucratic red tape. Red tape bureaucracy is the complication of the rules, procedures and burdensome services process that negatively impact the performance of those services itself. Weber (1947) explained that the bureaucracy requires terms, structure and hierarchy that must be passed through; procedures and steps that must be followed through; time that must be taken; fees that has to be paid; and attitudes as well as behavior that must be displayed by officers when serving customers. All these activities could hinder and complicate the services, and controlling are becoming a critical issue to be paid attention.

Problems such as delays in BMPs delivery, delays in announcement of final exam results, late updating for student data, and rectification grader-scores for TTM practicum, all of them must be resolved by UPBJJ offices through the bureaucratic procedures (Hanif dkk. 2022. Observation Result: Student Services). In resolving these problems, the Headquarter verifies the data with long processes and procedures of controlling from one working-unit to others. Once everything is clear, the Headquarter hands it down back the clearer case status to UPBJJ offices and UPBJJ offices hand it over to the students. To do so, UPBJJ offices require solid-
proof of controlling through registration and payment invoices of the students (Hanif dkk. 2022. Interview: Student Service).

The next, UBPJJ offices then submit all the evidences to LPBAUSI with the procedures and steps that winding around and has to wait in a relatively long time to get the response (Hanif dkk. 2022. Observation Result: BMP Delivery). On the other side, the controlling mechanism to the student services might often encounter additional issues such as frontdesk-bureaucrats are less sympathetic to the services they are supposed to do best. So then, how UBPJJ offices could accomplish expected job performance, when such controlling service management system creates bureaucratic red tape. Red tape usually implies useless controlling, excessive or meaningless paperwork; a high degree of formalization and constraint; unnecessary rules, procedures and regulations; inefficiency; unjustifiable delays; and as a result of all of this, frustration and vexation (Bozeman, 1993).

C. Conclusion
The study using MPFAAC analysis concluded that centralization and standardization had created an inability of operating core business unit to exercise creativity, innovation, and responsiveness. Operating core is always attached to the formulation and standardization. The very rigid standardization does not give any discretion to the operating core, as well does not stimulate any creativity and innovation in accordance with the dynamic conditions faced by the front-desk bureaucrats and their customers. As a result, the working-units’ ability to respond the very dynamic problem in the field is so weak. For, the weak responsiveness to resolve the problems faced by the working units to their customers is due to the such winding and time consuming procedures that can not be dealt with quickly and accurately.

Based on those of conclusions, UT is strongly suggested to decentralize such key student services issues to UBPJJ offices tant could promote responsive services. The Center or Headquarter could give larger authorities to UBPJJ offices to print BMPs out with prescribed standards. UBPJJ offices could build accountable mutual cooperation with the local printing agencies to print the BMPs according to the students' needs. By utilizing the information technology available, the Centre may authorize UBPJJ offices to process the student test answering-sheet directly. With this authority, the exam answering-sheet which is processed in UBPJJ offices, in term of workload is not overly large so that it could be handled only in one or two weeks, it is not time consuming until two months. UBPJJ offices can also resolve the case of examination results, update the student personal data and improve better handling in tutorials grader-scores error correction. UT does not necessarily have to worry about exam results data security, it is because now possibly it can be developed a computer security system and a sophisticated database that is safe and controllable by utilizing a computer and internet systems available.

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