Social Construction of Academic Staff in Order to Create Professional Tutors

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Abstract:

Abstract: Universitas Terbuka (UT), the 45th state university in Indonesia, was established by Presidential Decree No. 41 of 1984, employing a Distance Learning System (DLS). This study focuses on tutor behavior in academic and administrative aspects, such as delays in submitting reports, incorrect assessment formats, and limited IT proficiency, which disrupt tutorials. The objective is to enhance the professionalism of UT tutors in both academic and administrative capacities. Common issues identified include tutors working part-time, frequently requesting leave, arriving late, submitting documents late, and having limited IT skills. This qualitative research employs a narrative descriptive approach. The novelty of this study lies in understanding that limited assessment procedures and IT skills among tutors are the primary causes of tutorial problems. Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation, with primary data sources from tutors and secondary sources from administrators. Data analysis follows the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, encompassing data collection, reduction, display, and conclusion, with validation through triangulation of methods, sources, and time. The theoretical framework of Social Construction of Reality by L. Berger and T. Luckman is used to explore the data. The findings indicate the necessity for social changes among tutors, both academically and administratively, to enhance IT skills and create a culture of quality.

Keywords: Administrators, Tutors, Distance Learning System (DLS), Quality Culture, Tutor Construction.

Introduction

In tutorial webinars, various issues arise due to tutors' behavior in both face-to-face and online learning sessions, impacting academic and administrative processes. These issues highlight a research gap, particularly in tutors' indiscipline in academic and administrative matters. Examples include delays in submitting tutorial results, incorrect assessment formats, and limited IT proficiency, which disrupt learning at Universitas Terbuka (UT). The aim of this study is to enhance the professionalism of tutors at UT in both academic and administrative capacities. Current problems include part-time tutors frequently requesting leave, rescheduling sessions, and submitting documents late.

Society is both an objective and subjective reality. Objectively, society seems to exist outside of individuals, confronting them. Subjectively, individuals are integral parts of society, shaping and being shaped by it (Soekanto, 2019). Tutors, as part of society, play a

significant role in educating the nation, both through face-to-face interactions and online tutorials, contributing significantly to producing high-quality human resources (HR). The novelty of this research is the understanding that creating professional tutors requires social construction among tutors, involving changes in both academic and administrative fields, including improved IT skills and quality tutor training. Tutors must be professional and of high quality in academic aspects, whether as teachers, lecturers, or educational practitioners. Therefore, it is essential to address mental and behavioral deviations among tutors and improve their quality and positive motivation to become professional tutors (UT Catalog, 2020).

This research assumes that UT tutors need to be professionally disciplined, both academically and administratively. Through the social construction of tutors, it is possible to obtain high-quality tutors who provide valuable tutorials with positive motivation and without nepotism or corruption. The goal is to ensure that no new tutors quit after a few sessions, causing disruption to the schedule and financial planning of UT's central administration. For regional operations, UT collaborates with various societal institutions, both formal and informal, such as the Department of Education, Islamic boarding schools, the Ministry of Religious Affairs, educational foundations, and schools. Additionally, UT works with communities to establish study groups through foundations, boarding schools, professional organizations, and both private and public universities.

Research Methodology
Approach and Design
Based on the object of research, including both the location and data sources, this study falls under field research, which specifically relies on in-situ investigations (Kartono, 1996:47).

Research Location
This study was conducted at the Distance Learning System (DLS) of Universitas Terbuka (UT) Surabaya for the following reasons:
1. The DLS-UT Surabaya covers a vast area comprising 18 districts/cities.
2. There is a significant number of tutors, particularly from high school and vocational school teachers, as well as lecturers from public and private universities, who require enhanced capabilities.
3. Through tutor construction, it is expected that the human resources at DLS-UT Surabaya will become more professional, resulting in improved tutor behavior.

Data Sources

a. To explain the program for enhancing tutor quality, interviews, observations, and existing documentation were conducted with tutors, lecturers/administrative staff, and managers at UBPJJ UT Surabaya.

 b. To explain the implementation of tutor quality enhancement, interviews, observations, and existing documentation were conducted with informants.

Data Processing Technique
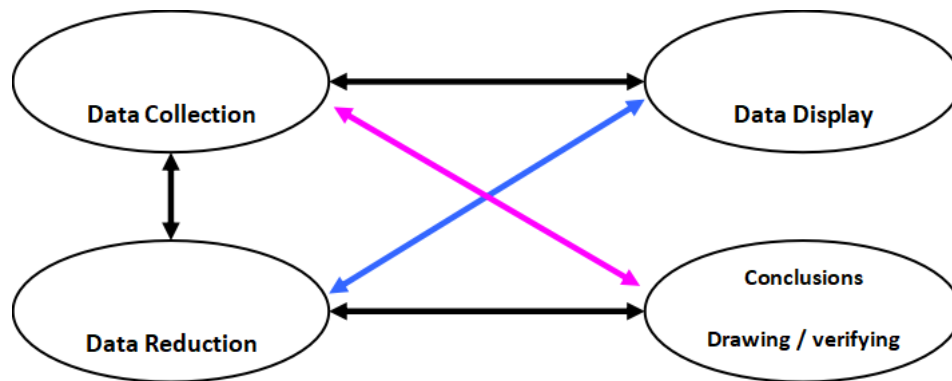
Figure 1. Data Processing with the Interactive Model by Miles and Huberman

Results and Discussion

The formation of social construction among tutors involves changes in both administrative and academic fields driven by a strong motivation to provide quality tutorial services at UT Surabaya. This social construction process includes changes in the understanding of administrative and academic aspects during the tutorial teaching process, visible in the tutors' administrative abilities and academic improvements. The tutorial teaching process during the pandemic could not proceed with face-to-face interactions due to the risk of COVID-19 transmission and the prohibition by the COVID-19 Team, as it violated health protocols, leading to potential transmission among students.

To adhere to health protocols and prevent COVID-19 among students, online learning or webinars were implemented. This required a social construction in the attitudes and behaviors of both Pendas and Non-Pendas tutors. Behavioral changes in tutors were driven by discipline and a desire for further study, along with a deeper understanding of the internet, achieved through self-study or courses provided by DLS-UT Surabaya via tutor training. The social construction experienced by Pendas and Non-Pendas tutors was facilitated through collaboration with higher education institutions with computer departments and DLS-UT Surabaya through tutor training sessions.

Tutor training significantly contributed to creating professional tutors, as promoted by UT Surabaya, aiming to produce professional tutors who are proficient in IT, understand

administrative procedures for submitting reports according to UT regulations, and submit tutorial reports to UT Surabaya as scheduled for validation by the academic supervisors. Behavioral changes in tutors performing their duties align with A. Weber's theory of social action, creating high-quality and professional tutors.

Conclusion

This study examines the phenomenon of social construction among tutors and their social actions in creating professional academic staff. The main objectives are: a. To create high-quality, professional academic staff/tutors. b. To achieve social changes related to attitudes, behaviors, and discipline in submitting tutorial reports according to regulations.

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