ANALYSIS OF PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS' SATISFACTION WITH THE RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING (RPL) PROCESS AT UNIVERSITAS TERBUKA

Sri Tatminingsih[1], Malpaleni Satriana[2], Muktia Pramitasari[3], Budi Hermaini[4]

[1, 3, 4]Universitas Terbuka, [2]Universitas Negeri Mulawarman

tatmi@ecampus.ut.ac.id

Abstract

Universitas Terbuka admits new students each semester, including the Early Childhood Education Teacher (ECET) Study programme. As part of this admissions process, the UT offers to recognise prior learning (RPL) by waiving courses. This process is outlined in the registration system through the application https://admisi-sia.ut.ac.id. The purpose of this study is to analyse prospective students' satisfaction with the registration process for the ECET – UT study Programme. The research method is a survey with an indicator questionnaire including: convenience, time, suitability, funding, completion and accuracy, distributed via g-form to randomly selected respondents. The population is prospective ECET study programme students with a sample of 100 prospective students. The research was conducted during the registration period for the 2024/2025 odd semester (2024 odd). The data was analysed using percentages and presented descriptively. The results showed that the level of satisfaction of prospective students was very high with regard to the ease, suitability, funding and accuracy of RPL recognition, while the level of satisfaction of prospective students tended to be low with regard to time indicators and the case resolution process. Recommendations can be made to improve RPL services and shorten the RPL process.

Keywords: recognising prior learning, registration, satisfaction, prospective students, distance learning

1   INTRODUCTION

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is the recognition of an individual's learning outcomes from formal, non-formal, informal education and/or work experience that they have received or undertaken. This RPL is usually used to enter formal education. RPL is also carried out in order to obtain a waiver or reduction in a number of courses or semester credit units or in the length of a study programme by equating the previous knowledge with the courses that he or she will be taking (Heinonen & Tuomainen, 2020; Raciti et al., 2024). This recognition can provide opportunities and keys to equal, equitable and inclusive higher education, enabling social mobility and lifelong learning, enhancing employability, social inclusion and knowledge

diversity (Raciti et al., 2024). RPL is being implemented by a number of countries in order to provide higher education opportunities to all of their citizens (Demir & Güleç, 2024; Nakata et al., 2021). RPL is also an overview of government or state efforts to minimise dropout rates for various reasons or causes. RPL is also a means to apply the concept of 'lifelong learning', which does not know any age limit and can be done by any group as long as they have the will and the sincerity(Alfriehat et al., 2024; Gonzales, 2016; Heinonen & Tuomainen, 2020). Therefore, many countries make and have rules or laws about RPL that include understanding, organisation, implementation, impact and evaluation (Kovtunets et al., 2024; Masoabi, 2023; Raciti et al., 2024).

Universitas Terbuka (UT) applies the concept of lifelong learning, RPL, directly or indirectly in the student admission process as a university that implements an open and distance learning system. This is a necessity because the open system implemented by UT facilitates the recognition of the education and previous experiences of prospective students (Darojat et al., 2019). The application of RPL has been applied to several study programmes at UT. One of them is the Early Childhood Education Teacher (ECET) - UT study programme, which has been implementing RPL since 2007, or since the opening of the ECET – UT study programme (Katalog_FKIP_Pendas, 2022). At that time, ECET- UT accepted prospective students who were graduates of the Diploma Two (D2) Kindergarten Teacher Education Programme. Those who registered with the D2 diploma would be enrolled directly in semester 6 or have their D2 recognised for 5 semesters (approximately 75 credits). The implementation of this RPL continues to this day, with various changes adapted to the prevailing regulations in the country of Indonesia.

ECET-UT received and processed RPLs for approximately 2000 prospective students in the 2024.1 semester. Based on brief interviews with ten prospective students who applied for RPL using WhatsApp Chat, it was found that there were both positive and negative opinions about implementing RPL at the Open University. The opinions were as follows. 1) they feel helped to return to university in accordance with their wishes; 2) the recognition obtained is in accordance with the experience they have; 3) easy process as long as the file is complete; 4) cheap and affordable fees; 5) the time from submission to release is quite long, it should be 7 working days (the application says so); 6) because the system is a package, recognition is very small; 7) work experience has no recognition; 8) incomplete files, the response is long, so there is no time to re-upload and RPL fails.

This article describes the analysis of prospective students' satisfaction with the RPL process at Universitas Terbuka, particularly in the ECET study programme, based on some of these facts.

2   LITERATURE REVIEW

The implementation of RPL is intended to increase the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) of higher education and the Human Development Index (HDI). The GER and HDI are often used as a measure of the success of the educational process and resources of a region or country. Based on data from the Central Bureau of Statistics from 2019 to 2021, the APK of higher education in Indonesia ranges from 30.28 to 31.19. This range is still considered low compared to other countries, although it is only around ASEAN or Asia.The RPL programme is presented to facilitate citizens who may drop out of school/college in the middle of the road due to various factors (Rahmad Nasir, 2022).

The implementation of RPL in the education process is beneficial for individuals as it can serve as a means of equating the education they have achieved. The main challenge in implementing RPL is the burden of proof placed on the applicant and the difficulty in matching the experience gained with the courses to be taken. Although the RPL process is a good practice, there is a need for clarity in the procedures applied and agreement on the recognition of a field of study by the universities organising RPL. Therefore, the assessor calculating equivalence must be a trained individual with the required standards and be competent, objective, open-minded and knowledgeable in carrying out their duties (Raciti et al., 2024).

In general, the meaning of service user satisfaction refers to the feelings of pleasure or disappointment (less happy / not happy) that individuals feel as a result of comparing perceptions or expectations with experiences of perceived services. If the perceived service is below expectations, then the tendency is for service users to feel dissatisfied and, conversely, if the service meets expectations, then the individual will feel happy and satisfied. (Kotler dan Keller, 2015 in Darojat et al., 2019). The definition of satisfaction of prospective students who apply for RPL in this study is formalised as a feeling of pleasure or displeasure felt by prospective students who apply for RPL for the services provided with indicators: 1) time in processing from submission to completion; 2) ease of features in the RPL application; 3) suitability of course exemption calculations with submissions; 4) speed of response given by Ut to objections or questions from prospective students; 5) use of officer language in

responding to questions / objections from prospective students; 6) solutions provided to RPL submission problems (Mendikbudristek Republik Indonesia, 2021; Trapsilawati et al., 2019).

3   METHODOLOGY

This research was conducted using survey techniques, with data collected through a questionnaire with six aspect about student satisfaction with the RPL application process at UT, particularly in the ECET study programme. This satisfaction includes indicators of aspects: 1) processing time from submission to completion; 2) features in the RPL application; 3) calculation of exemption or equivalence of experience and courses in the application; 4) UT's response or response to objections or questions from prospective students; 5) use of assessor language in responding to questions/objections from prospective students; 6) solutions provided to RPL application problems. The population is the students of the ECET- UT study programme who apply for RPL, which is 700 people. The sample and respondents were 150 prospective students who had successfully obtained RPL and were registered as students in the 20241 semester. The sampling technique uses census and purposive random sampling, that is, student data is drawn from students who have passed the RPL and are willing to be sampled and respondents in this study. Data collection was carried out between June - August 2024. Data collected through closed-ended questions (with a Likert scale of 1-5) were calculated and processed using simple percentages. The scale used to measure the level of satisfaction with RPL services at UT, specifically ECET Study Programme, is 5 = very satisfied; 4 = satisfied; 3 = neutral; 2 = unsatisfied; 1 = very unsatisfied. The higher the score given by the respondent, the higher the level of satisfaction. While the data in the form of open-ended questions are transcribed and processed on the basis of similarity or similarity of responses, they are then tabulated and described narratively.

4   FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The survey was conducted using a questionnaire containing 41 closed statements. These are indicators of 6 aspects of service in the RPL process that are measured for satisfaction. The questionnaire was sent to about 700 respondents, randomly selected from about 2000 prospective students of the ECET - UT Study Programme who applied for RPL. Only the top 200 responses were selected from the returned and fully completed questionnaires that were worthy of further analysis. The data were then processed using percentages in order to obtain results that could be written up. The results of the data processing are presented in Table 2.

4.1   Identitas Responden

Data on the identity of respondents is presented in table 1 below.

No	Aspect and Indicators	Frequency	%
1.	Gender		
	a. Men	24	16%
	b. Women	126	84%
2.	Incorporated in		
	a. Kindergarden	92	61%
	b. Play Group	21	14%
	c. Similar Early Childhood Education Units	37	25%
3.	Age		
	a. 17 – 25 years	43	29%
	b. 26 – 35 years	86	57%
	c. 36 – 50 years	21	14%
4.	Occupation		
	a. Early childhood Teacher	94	63%
	b. EC Headmaster	45	30%
	c. school administrator	10	7%

The data in Table 1 show that the respondents or prospective students of the ECET- UT study programme who apply for RPL are dominated by women (84 per cent). This is very reasonable because the majority of women are identical to children and are considered to be more diligent and patient in taking care of children (Rumpoko & Diana, 2022). The respondents in this study were mostly between 26 and 35 years old (57%). The interesting thing about these data is that there are quite a few respondents aged between 17 and 25. This makes a lot of sense, as from the 2024.1 semester, ECET- UT has started to accept pre-service students who have not yet become teachers. As for the employment data, most of the respondents work as teachers in kindergartens.

12.   Findings and Discussion of survey results

Table 2 Indicators for each of the aspects.

No	Statement	SM		M		N		TM		STM		Total
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
1. General information about the RPL process												
a.	RPL information clarity	30	15	68	34	5	2,5	34	17	13	6,5	150
b.	RPL fees paid compared to services provided to apply for RPL	31	15,5	52	26	10	5	45	22,5	12	6	150
c.	Ease of contact with programme in relation to RPL application	12	6	42	21	23	11,5	48	24	25	12,5	150
d.	Ease of contacting assessors or academic staff responsible for RPL	10	5	25	12,5	45	22,5	43	21,5	27	13,5	150
e.	Friendliness of assessors and academic staff to questions about RPL	12	6	28	14	45	22,5	40	20	25	12,5	150
f.	Speed of dealing with complaints about RPL	31	15,5	52	26	10	5	45	22,5	12	6	150
Time taken to process												
a.	Time to access eligibility application features is available 24 hours a day	31	15,5	65	32,5	10	5	23	11,5	21	10,5	150
b.	Data and file processing time is limited	62	31	38	19	8	4	20	10	22	11	150
c.	Waiting time for the RPL exemption process in accordance with the regulations (a maximum of 7 days)	21	10,5	23	11,5	70	35	24	12	12	6	150
d.	Time available for appeal after exemption	46	23	38	19	12	6	34	17	20	10	150
e.	Response from UT is quick (less than 3 days) if there is an appeal	20	10	38	19	10	5	38	19	44	22	150
f.	Waiting time from objection to correction	24	12	30	15	50	25	30	15	16	8	150
Features of the admission and RPL application process												
a.	The functions in the app are simple and easy to understand	50	25	52	26	3	1,5	17	8,5	28	14	150
b.	App functions are simple and straightforward	54	27	55	27,5	3	1,5	10	5	28	14	150
c.	Many app features are ambiguous	28	14	12	6	32	16	40	20	38	19	150
d.	The capacity for uploading files is sufficient	54	27	55	27,5	3	1,5	10	5	28	14	150
e.	Document requirements are easy to set up and upload	58	29	60	30	3	1,5	14	7	15	7,5	150
Calculating exemption or equivalence when applying												

	Indicators	SM		M		N		TM		STM		Total
No	Statement	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
a.	Calculation of RPL submission and exemption as per expectation	58	29	58	29	5	2,5	12	6	17	8,5	150
b.	Calculation of equivalence of proposed course grades as per expectation	60	30	65	32,5	3	1,5	10	5	12	6	150
c.	Calculation of number of submission credits is equivalent to number of exemption credits	52	26	60	30	12	6	14	7	12	6	150
d.	Recognition of the number of credits to be submitted	60	30	53	26,5	11	5,5	18	9	8	4	150
e.	Recognition of grade equivalence in each course proposal	78	39	50	25	2	1	16	8	4	2	150
f.	Recognition of previous work or professional experience	15	7,5	17	8,5	67	33,5	12	6	39	19,5	150
How UT responds to objections raised by RPL applicants												
a.	Response to counter-arguments raised	22	11	15	7,5	90	45	11	5,5	12	6	150
b.	Response time to questions/rebuttals	80	40	43	21,5	7	3,5	16	8	4	2	150
c.	Speed of the response to questions/rebuttals	12	6	21	10,5	12	6	67	33,5	38	19	150
d.	The response of the study programme to the question of the RPL applicant is fast.	10	5	22	11	10	5	71	35,5	37	18,5	150
e.	The official telephone number of the programme is easy to reach	15	7,5	32	16	28	14	50	25	25	12,5	150
f.	The official telephone number of the academic department responsible for RPL is easy to reach.	25	12,5	32	16	18	9	40	20	35	17,5	150
g.	The programme's e-mail is active and provides answers to questions/refutations about RPL.	10	5	23	11,5	90	45	12	6	15	7,5	150
Responding to questions / appeals via telephone / WhatsApp or email												
a.	The use of the spoken language is polite and clear.	38	19	42	21	25	12,5	20	10	25	12,5	150
b.	Response to telephone enquiries (verbal)	37	18,5	43	21,5	30	15	23	11,5	17	8,5	150
c.	Sending responses (in writing) using WA	38	19	45	22,5	28	14	32	16	7	3,5	150
d.	Answering by email (written)	28	14	33	16,5	60	30	22	11	7	3,5	150
f.	Clarity of responses to questions or objections raised	30	15	43	21,5	34	17	32	16	11	5,5	150
e.	Questions / objections answered promptly	23	11,5	26	13	53	26,5	23	11,5	25	12,5	150
Providing solutions to problems encountered when submitting RPL												
a.	Solution provided as needed	27	13,5	42	21	24	12	34	17	23	11,5	150
b.	The solution provided is as expected	12	6	33	16,5	27	13,5	53	26,5	25	12,5	150

Indicators		SM		M		N		TM		STM		Total
No	Statement	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
c.	Solutions delivered by officers tend to be the same	32	16	26	13	34	17	43	21,5	15	7,5	150
d.	There is always a solution to the case complained about	32	16	43	21,5	21	10,5	42	21	12	6	150
e.	There are some cases where there is no solution	28	14	34	17	15	7,5	50	25	23	11,5	150
	Rerata	34,05		39,85		25,56		30,2		20,34		150

In Table 2 it can be seen that the respondents are most satisfied with the use of the application and the ease of use of the features in the RPl application. These features can be found in the application at MyUT.ut.ac.id. This is quite understandable, as the application is designed for students in such a friendly way that users feel comfortable and have no difficulty in using and registering independently. The use of the RPL application is one of the things regulated by the government regulation on RPL, which states that each university can regulate the procedures for the RPL process according to its respective capabilities and needs (Mendikbudristek Republik Indonesia, 2021; Rahmad Nasir, 2022). In addition to satisfaction, data on RPL applicants' dissatisfaction with RPL services appeared in indicators related to the response of assessors and academic department officials who were difficult to contact, and the responses given when respondents contacted the programme's telephone number and email to submit complaints or objections. The data also show that many respondents were neutral. This may be because they had not experienced the indicators presented.

5 CONCLUSION

The level of satisfaction of prospective ECET - UT students applying for RPL is quite variable. Some were satisfied and some were dissatisfied. The expression of satisfaction or dissatisfaction is based on certain indicators. The results of this study also show that the RPL process run by the Open University, especially the ECET programme, still needs to be improved and developed in several aspects and indicators.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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