

## THE ROLE OF THE UNIVERSITAS TERBUKA'S ONLINE TUTORIALS TO HELP EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION STUDENT TEACHERS LEARNING DURING THE PANDEMIC COVID 19

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### ABSTRACT

*This paper explains how the provision of online tutorial in Universitas Terbuka (UT) can help UT's students such as the Early Childhood Education (ECE) student teachers learning at UT. During the pandemic Covid 19, students cannot meet face to face with their tutors since it is dangerous. Therefore, the provision of UT's online tutorials which can give a chance for the students to have the asynchronous learnings with their tutors or instructors can be considered very important. In this paper, it is explored how the ECE student teachers can still meet and learn by participating in online tutorials. UT's online tutorials have been planned carefully in order to help all UT students including the ECE student teachers to learn actively. Therefore, without meeting with the tutors directly, the ECE student teachers can still learn by reading the learning materials, participating in the discussion sections and answering the assignments.*

*Even, ECE student teachers can also interact indirectly with their online tutors and their fellow students using the chat room or by sending emails or by using whatsapp (WA). By joining and participating in the online UT tutorials, students are directed to better understand the subject matter of their printed modules and also the students are instructed to be online learners. This article is the result of research conducted by researchers to investigate how the opinion of UT's ECE student teachers about the online tutorials they joined, and how the online tutorials can help them learn. In addition, in this study, the researcher tries to explore how participating in online tutorials can help UT's ECE student teachers become more active in their learning. The research method for this study used a simple quantitative-qualitative descriptive approach using a questionnaire which sent online. The results of this study are 1. Participating in online tutorials turns out to be the right way to help students learn without attending the tutorial venues, 2. Participating in online tutorials helps UT's ECE student teachers to be more active in their learning and 3. By studying online, students learn to familiarize themselves with computers and the internet.*

**Keywords:** UT, ECE student teachers, online tutorial, asynchronous learning

## 1. INTRODUCTION

As the 45th state university in Indonesia, the Open University (UT) has implemented government policies for higher education since UT was founded in 1984. As stated on the UT website (<https://www.ut.ac.id/en/brief-history>) it is stated that the Open University (UT):

“Fully using distance education learning mode. Since its inception, UT has been designed to be a university serving people who do not have the opportunity to follow the face-to-face mode of higher education due to various constraints, including lack of funds, living in remote and rural areas, and working as well as other commitments. The UT system is constantly evolving and improving in terms of its teaching and learning systems, management and support services for students”.

There are big changes that are happening in many aspects of our lives today, as well as the spread of the covid 19 virus that has spread throughout the world, of course, it also has an impact on learning activities that occur in Indonesia. Changes have affected our lives such as the way we relate to each other and the way we learn (Basar, 2021, Bates, 2015). The rapid changes in technology and the Covid virus disaster that is dangerous for everyone certainly affects all aspects of our lives, including influencing the Indonesian government's policies, including in the field of education.

This paper was written to describe the extent to which UT's Early Childhood Education student teachers think about online tutorials and to explore how online tutorials can help them stay focused while studying with a distance learning system. In addition, this study also seeks to find out the opinions of students about the importance of them following UT online tutorials and how the benefits of participating in the distance learning process via the internet as they experience in online tutorials. In addition, in this study, the researcher tries to explore how following online tutorials can help UT students to be more active in learning.

- Indonesia's policy for higher education in the industrial revolution 4.0

The rapid development of technology is realized by the Ministry of Research and Technology and Higher Education. Therefore, when there was a National Working Meeting (Rakernas) held in early 2018, the Minister explained that:

“The world is now entering the era of the industrial revolution 4.0 or the fourth world industrial revolution where information technology has become the basis for human life. Everything becomes limitless with unlimited computing and data usage, because it is influenced by the development of the internet and massive digital technology as the backbone of the movement and connectivity of humans and machines. This era will also disrupt various human activities, including the fields of science and technology (science and technology) and higher education (<https://www.ristekdikti.go.id/pengembangan-ipitek-dan-Pendidikan-tinggi-di-era-revolution-industry-4-0/>)”

Furthermore, the minister of the Ministry of Research and Technology and Higher Education stated that there are five important elements that must be considered to enter the 4.0 Industrial Revolution era, namely:

- a. Developing more innovative learning systems at universities such as adjusting learning curricula, and improving students' abilities in terms of Data Information Technology (IT), Operational Technology (OT), Internet of Things (IoT), and Big Data Analytics, integrating digital physical objects and humans to produce competitive and skilled university graduates, especially in aspects of data literacy, technological literacy and human literacy.
- b. Reconstruction of higher education institutional policies that are adaptive and responsive to the industrial revolution 4.0 in developing transdisciplinary science and required study programs. In addition, the Cyber University program was initiated, such as a distance learning lecture system, thereby reducing the intensity of lecturer and student meetings. Cyber University is expected to be a solution for the nation's children in remote areas to achieve high quality education.
- c. Preparation of human resources, especially lecturers and researchers and engineers who are responsive, adaptive and reliable to face the industrial revolution 4.0. In addition, rejuvenation of infrastructure facilities and development of education, research and innovation infrastructure also needs to be carried out to support the quality of education, research and innovation.
- d. Breakthroughs in research and development that support the Industrial Revolution 4.0 and the research and development ecosystem to improve the quality and quantity of research and development in Universities, Research and Development Institutions, LPNK, Industry and Society.
- e. Breakthrough innovation and strengthen innovation systems to increase industrial productivity and increase technology-based startup companies".  
(Read more at <https://www.ristekdikti.go.id/pengembangan-ipitek-dan-dunia-tinggi-di-era-revolution-industri-4-0/#EBF1thMvYyOw03al.99>)

- Open University (UT)

UT is a public university that was established in 1984. UT is a university that uses a distance learning system. As a university that uses a distance learning system, UT always uses various technologies to help students study remotely. Therefore, UT students are directed to become students who can study independently and can use technology as an aid for their learning. All lessons designed and implemented at UT have been designed as well as possible to fit the planned learning objectives.

- Early Childhood Education (Ece) Student Teachers

At UT, there are 4 faculties, namely the Faculty of Science and Technology, the Faculty of Law and Social Sciences, the Faculty of Economics and the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education (FKIP/Faculty of Education). To become a FKIP student, the prospective student must have become a teacher. One of the study programs at FKIP is the Early Childhood Teacher Education Study Program (PGPAUD/ECE program). PGPAUD students are Kindergarten or PAUD teachers. They are PAUD teachers who have at least 1 year of teaching experience.

- UT ONLINE TUTORIAL / TUTON

In fact, UT has provided several services to help UT students study at UT, such as face-to-face tutorials, online tutorials, radio tutorials, and television tutorials as part of UT's learning support. However, this article will only review online tutorials, although, it is clear that face-to-face tutorials are the most preferred tutorial mode by students, especially students majoring in basic education (Chandrawati, unpublished 2016 research report).

At UT, tutorial are provided for several reasons, such as for courses that do not have face-to-face tutorials. There are also several programs at UT that use online tutorials or tutons for all their learning activities. Generally, tuton is done for eight sessions or eight weeks (two months).

Currently, online tutorials are offered for many courses in all courses. All students can participate in online tutorials. During the tutorial, students can discuss with tutors and other students both synchronously and asynchronously (<https://www.ut.ac.id/en/tutorials>).

Students can get more information about UT services through the UT website, [www.ut.ac.id](http://www.ut.ac.id). In addition, as a UT student, early childhood educator or teacher can register to participate in tuton. One thing students should know if they want to join and participate in online tutorials is that students must have an email address with their username and password. It is recommended that students should have a Gmail email address to participate in online courses more easily.

Tuton will be given in eight weeks. Each week students have to study one initiation and one topic of discussion. Assignments will be given in the third, fifth and seventh week. Thus, there will be eight learning materials, five to six discussion topics and three assignments. In participating in tutoring, students can have dialogue in online discussions (questions and answers) with online tutors and with fellow students.

The interaction between students and their tutors can be considered as a learning process for UT students, apart from reading the printed learning materials (modules). Students can have dialogues with their tutors, their colleagues, or the subject matter modules. Participating in online tutorials will contribute 30% to a student's final grade.

The provision of online tutorials for PAUD started in 2007/2008. However, at that time only a few students who were also PAUD teachers (student teachers) participated in online learning. In 2013 more PAUD teacher students took online tutorials. In 2018 UT PAUD teacher students who took online tutorials, especially in the PAUD Teacher Professionalism course (PAUD4405), also experienced an increase in number. Even because of the spread of the Covid 19 virus, which made it impossible for everyone to meet face-to-face with other people, the number of students taking tutoring in the January-June 2020 semester also increased. Students who take tutoring also look more active in that they actively answer the discussion topics given for 8 weeks and they are also active in sending answers to assignments 1, 2 and 3. Another thing that has changed is that active students also send messages to the tutor if the tutor does not immediately assess the answers to the discussion and the answers to the task.

Online tutorial (tuton) is a form of online learning that uses the Moodle LMS which is sourced from open source and developed according to the needs of UT (Darajat, et al, 2018). Online tutorials are provided to assist UT students in understanding their subject matter while studying independently. In online learning, students can study at their own place without leaving their class or family and on their own time.

Learning activities through tuton are carried out in eight initiations and three assignments for each course per semester. Each tutoring class is held by a tutor. The number of students in each class is between 20-50 students per class.

In fact, rapid technological progress is very beneficial for UT because it can help UT to be able to continue to change and improve itself through change or innovation, to improve all aspects of its services. UT uses technology in response to changing demands by clients and stakeholders such as UT students (<https://www.ut.ac.id/en/brief-history>). The use of distance learning systems is in dire need of technological assistance. At UT, technology is used to manage all activities and learning systems, for example in providing online teaching and learning processes called online tutorials (online tutorials or tutons).

- Independent Learners

Given that being a UT student means that students have to learn independently because every day UT students do not meet directly with their lecturers or lecturers, UT always tries to help students to stay connected with UT through participation in tutoring. Or in other words, online tutorials are provided to help UT students understand lecture material while studying independently. By participating in online learning, students can study in their own place without having to leave the class or their families and can manage their study time according to their own time even though it is still within the time limit determined by UT.

- Asynchronous Learning

Asynchronous Learning (ASL), which is an online learning process that provides teaching materials and indirect assignments (<https://aptika.kominfo.go.id/2021/02/synchronous-dan-asynchronous-learning-inovasi-learning-daring-friend-deaf/>).

In asynchronous learning, communication is done asynchronously. That is, the lecturer provides material that can be used as a reference for students. The material can be re-studied by students in the form of PPT files, PDFs, or videos (<https://sevima.com/beda-komunikasi-daring-sinkron-dan-asyncon-berserta-sample/>).

Independent learning or commonly known as self-directed Asynchronous Learning is independent learning that can be done by students anywhere and anytime according to their respective conditions and learning speed (<https://sevima.com/beda-komunikasi-daring-sinkron-and-asynchronous-with-examples/>).

HOW PARTICIPATING IN ONLINE TUTORIALS CAN HELP UT PGPAUD STUDENTS FOR THEIR ONGOING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT.

To help students improve their employability and help become citizens who can adapt to the changes taking place in the 21st century, the professional development of teachers in every country should include various methods to increase the effectiveness of teachers and schools as expected. In addition, changes should also focus on transformational strategies to develop deeper forms of content, new pedagogical models, and partnerships of educational organizations to learn together with parents, business challenges, and community institutions” (Dede, 1998, in Vrasidas & Glass). , 2004, p.xii).

The professional development of teachers can be seen as an important factor to move education towards a better future. According to Vrasidas & Glass (2004, p.2-3) some characteristics of effective professional development can be seen when students are actively involved in meaningful activities and when they reflect critically on what they are doing. These characteristics can also be used in the professional development of teachers. To develop effective professional development for student-teacher, it is believed that we need to move our teaching and learning process towards a pedagogical model that values interaction among students, the social nature of learning, societal change, and reflection in the implementation of teaching practice. In distance education settings, this change will change the traditional learning that is always used by distance education institutions, namely changing the use of learning materials or activities that ignore interaction between students and tutors into a learning activity that can increase interaction between students and tutors.

Online learning in distance education can be divided into asynchronous and synchronous. Conducting synchronous learning or meeting face-to-face although virtually is a bit difficult compared to asynchronous. It is difficult to conduct synchronous online learning because all participants have to set the same time so that they can meet each other in person. Therefore, in UT online tutorials, asynchronous online learning programs are more often used.

In addition, the dialogue approach in online learning programs is expected to be applied to become an effective teacher professional development (Chandrawati, thesis, 2015). Online programs can also help students who want to study anywhere, anytime (Vrasidas & Glass, 2004, p.4). Professional development can help address deficiencies that may have been part of teacher education and keep teachers using new knowledge and practices in the field (UNICEF, 2000). It should be noted that in learning activities, dialogue and reflection with colleagues, peer and supervisor observations and journaling are effective ways for teachers to increase their knowledge (UNICEF, 2000) at <http://www.unicef.org/education/files/QualityEducation.PDFs>).

UNICEF (2000) also writes that an example program in Kenya, the Mombassa School Improvement Project, builds on this approach to professional development and shows that teachers supported by on-site training as well as external workshop training significantly improve their ability to use learning behaviors. - Child-centred teaching. practice. In distance education settings, this change will change the traditional learning that is always used by distance education institutions, namely changing the use of learning materials or activities that ignore interaction between

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## **2. METHODOLOGY**

This study uses a quantitative and qualitative descriptive approach because it uses a survey with an online questionnaire with a google form from the first week of June 2020 to the third week of June 2020. The contents of the questionnaire are closed and open questions that respondents can answer online. Questionnaires were distributed to groups of students who were known to researchers, namely those who followed the PKM Tuweb, Physical Development Methods, and tutors in subjects including ECE teacher professionalism, Strategy for Development Activities in Kindergarten, and Learning Theory. In addition, the questionnaire was distributed online to several tutorial center administrators whom the researcher knew in the regions, Purwokerto, Semarang, Tasikmalaya, Lampung, Padang, Tangerang, Banten. The respondents of this study were UT students. There were 600 respondents who answered the questionnaire. A qualitative approach is used as an effort to better understand the respondents' responses. The data were analyzed using qualitative descriptive data analysis.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data from the questionnaire showed that most of the ECE student teachers who took the online tutorials stated that following the online tutorial help them to increase their IT skills, and help them to be more understood the content of the modules, and the presence of assignments and discussions made them study and think actively. Meanwhile, if there are things that cannot be asked to the tutor directly, they can find out fellow students from outside the class who are members of the tuton class. All responses from the respondents of this study revealed that:

participating in online tutorials turned out to be a way to help students learn without having to come to the tutorial site,

Participating in online tutorials could motivate and help UT students to be more active in their learning and students can learn from their peers and from their tutors, and By learning online, students learn to learn more in using computers and the internet.

### 4. CONCLUSION

The existence of tutors turns out to be a way to help students learn without having to come to the tutorial site and tutors can motivate and help UT students to be involved in their learning activities and students can learn from their friends and from their tutors, and participating in the online tutorials made the students to learn to use computers and the internet more actively. Other results show that dialogue in online learning tutorials can help UT students as transformative practice and problem posing. Providing dialogue can help close gaps and deepen understanding between students and instructors and between students themselves — and ultimately how distance learning at UT allows ECE student teachers to learn independently.

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