

A Case Study of Lecturers' Competencies in International Universities¹

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Abstrak

Kehadiran dari universitas terkenal diluar Indonesia sangat menarik perhatian yang tinggi, bukan hanya dari masyarakat Indonesia saja, tetapi juga dari penduduk mancanegara. Secara khusus adalah universitas di negara maju sangat diminati oleh penduduk dunia, dan persaingan menjadi sangat ketat untuk calon pelajar yang mencoba untuk mendaftar, dan mengambil ujian saringan masuk di universitas tersebut. Dengan persaingan yang ketat tersebut, maka hanya pelajar dengan nilai tinggi yang dapat diterima. Keterbatasan tempat dan sumber daya manusia di lokasi asal, mendorong universitas tersebut untuk mengembangkan pasar ke negara berkembang sehingga menjadi lebih dekat dengan para calon pelajar.

Universitas internasional sudah menjadi trend di industri pendidikan di Indonesia. Dengan memperhatikan tingginya tingkat pertumbuhan pelajar yang mendaftar ke universitas internasional, maka sebenarnya penduduk Indonesia sangat terbuka untuk dapat menerima standar internasional dalam sistem pendidikan di Indonesia. Oleh sebab itu, proses pencocokan perilaku konsumen dan harapan penduduk Indonesia dengan standar universitas internasional menjadi penting untuk dapat memastikan terciptanya kegiatan pengajaran yang lancar di universitas internasional di Indonesia tersebut.

Penelitian ini berupaya untuk fokus kepada sumber daya manusia dalam lingkungan persaingan yang ketat di industri pendidikan tinggi yang berstandar internasional. Fokus dari sumber daya manusia ini meliputi keahlian seseorang, kemampuan untuk mengajar, dan cara pengajaran, termasuk dengan keahlian dan kemampuan untuk dapat melakukan penelitian. Diharapkan bahwa kapasitas seorang pengajar, termasuk

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dengan kemampuan pengajar, kecakapan pengajar, keahlian pengajar, pengetahuan pengajar, dan atribut lainnya, cukup baik untuk dapat menangani kelas di universitas internasional, dan cocok dengan harapan konsumen.

Penelitian ini menggunakan data primer dan sekunder, yang diambil dari beberapa universitas internasional di Jakarta. Data tersebut meliputi data dari para pengajar, pelajar, dan orang tua. Diharapkan bahwa hasil penelitian ini dapat menunjukkan betapa pentingnya kecakapan seorang pengajar untuk dapat menangani kelas di universitas internasional dengan baik dan sesuai dengan harapan konsumen.

Kata Kunci: pengajar, kecakapan, studi kasus, universitas internasional

1. INTRODUCTION

The presence of well-known universities outside Indonesia has attracted significant interests, not only for Indonesians, but also for students of other countries. Particularly, western universities are highly demanded and the competition is rather fierce when students attempt to register and take on the entrance tests. Only the top percentile of students seems to be accepted. Because of limitation in space and personnel, those western universities decided to expand their market base into developing countries, like Indonesia, to get closer to their potential customers.

Following the economic crisis in Indonesia, the establishments of western universities in Indonesia, including the joint efforts of promoting international curriculums are flooding the country. In Jakarta and other big cities, especially, the numbers of international universities are increasing rapidly. Each of those international universities offers different curriculums and specialties, as a way to differentiate themselves among the crowd.

People seem to believe that international universities are able to provide better quality of education. Thus, in order to enter the business industry, people tend to send their children to international universities. Perhaps, the perceptions and image of holding international certificates seem to be the key success factor for public. In addition, it is presumed that people tend to choose international universities due to their advantages, including double-degree programs, overseas internship programs, foreign languages, and better quality of the teaching staff.

Inevitably, the high demand for the international courses could be seen as one of many ways to attract students. Different international universities have their own strategies in promoting their programs.

This paper attempts to focus on lecturers' competencies, which includes issues on human skills, ability to teach, teaching delivery, research skills, and research ability. It is expected that by studying lecturers' competencies, the lecturers' abilities to handle classes in international universities are improved, and thus, fit to the consumer expectations.

2. EDUCATION MANAGEMENT

2.1. Overview

Education needs proper management. Managing education is, indeed, easier to formulate than to implement those formulations. Regardless of what streams of education management you are trying to follow, lecturers should pay a close attention on the outcomes (Triana, 2005). Lecturers should be aware that education is a strategic step toward transforming people to grasp more knowledge, skills, and competence. Thus, lecturers should know that they play an important role in molding students for future activities and career path (Danumihardja, 2004).

2.2. Job Dimensions of Lecturers

One of dimension in proper education management is shown in one of the presentation slides, which accompanied the book "Human Resources Management: Gaining A Competitive Advantage", Noe, et al, incorporates an example on job dimensions and job tasks of a university professor; teaching, conducting research, advising, performing services, and participating in external consulting works (Noe, et al, 2006). Such an example is referenced here as a framework in developing research into several international universities.

This is not considered exaggerating at all since business environment is rapidly developed over the last few years, perhaps due to competitions. This higher competition level pushes knowledge to advance further. Knowledge is continuously developed to offer better alternatives toward making managerial decisions (Anatan, 2006). Brainpower seems to control today's business environment more than muscle power. Thus, if brainpower controls the business environment, it means that lecturers ought to update their job dimensions as suggested. If brainpower controls today's business environment, and lecturers are the artists in every class sessions, then lecturers must equip themselves with the all-around updates; from every single perspectives (Rachmayati, 2006). In this paper, those perspectives are limited to what Noe, et al, suggest.

2.2.1. Teaching

In teaching, it simply means that lecturers should prepare the necessary teaching materials, including homework, assignments, quizzes, and exams on each of the class subjects handled. Lecturers should also ensure that the teaching tools and equipment are available on each of the class session. Teaching also means that lecturers should present their materials appropriately for students to understand.

2.2.2. Research

One of the tasks that lecturers must do is conducting research. Research is intended to prepare reports and findings toward publications in various journals and other academic periodicals. This task is essential to sharpen the analytical and reporting skills of the lecturers. Conducting research is also a way to maintain and continuously improve the knowledge and exposures on various issues. Such knowledge and exposures are excellent to provide basis on future teaching engagement.

2.2.3. Advising

Advising is one of the lecturers' responsibilities. Advising session is crucial to grasp and/or otherwise update information on each of the students to provide the most suitable research potentials and career path. Advising is important to lecturers, the academic services, students, and parents. Through effective advising sessions, lecturers can note potential problems, difficulties, complaints, or suggestions from the students. This information will be relayed into the academic service department for immediate follow-ups. When follow-ups are performed, it is expected that students will be more satisfied. When the students are satisfied, they will likely to share wonderful stories about the university to their parents. At the end of the link, it is expected that parents are also pleased with the performance of the university. This minimizes potential complains to universities. This improves the satisfaction level toward the universities, and the reputation jumps. All this is done by a simple advising session with lecturers.

2.2.4 Services

This indicates that lecturers are needed to serve as members of certain committee. This includes holding a certain structural position. Whenever lecturers are holding a particular position, it is somewhat expected that lecturers themselves can initiate necessary actions, including pushing on favorable policies and provisions for the students' best interests.

2.2.5 Consulting

Engaging in consulting work is highly advisable for lecturers. This is to say that lecturers should actively involve in various consulting projects on behalf of the universities; in terms of business incubator assignments, perhaps, which often focuses on small and medium enterprises. Business incubators are popular in universities, not only for research purposes, but also to implement academic knowledge into the real situations and conditions in those small and medium enterprises.

3. STUDY & ANALYSIS ON CHOSEN VARIABLES

The following discussions are based on studies that had been undertaken by ETC & Foundation in several international universities in Jakarta (Anantadjaya, 2005; Yogaswara, et al, 2006). A total of 100 respondents

from several international universities are conveniently chosen for the purpose of this study.

Based on the calculations in both table 1 and table 2, it is apparent that the responses were relatively insufficient to show statistical supports on the job dimensions and job tasks of a university professor as proposed by Noe, et al (2006). The KMO measure of sampling adequacy only indicates 0.461, whereas the Cronbach's Alpha shows only 0.299 (based on unstandardized items), or 0.109 (based on standardized items).

Table 1: KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.461
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	570.338
	df	300
	Sig.	.000

Source: Anantadjaya, 2005; Yogaswara, et al, 2006; and SPSS 12.0.

As quantitative studies were insufficient to provide necessary foundation, qualitative studies were extracted from those respondents. Such qualitative research revealed the following findings;

Table 2: Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.299	.109	30

Source: SPSS 12.0

3.1. Teaching

Teaching is the only activity that lecturers and students have understood properly. However, when the actual activities of teaching are discussed in details, comments emerged.

3.1.1 Teaching Qualities

Respondents indicated that there are no significant differences in teaching qualities for lecturers in international universities. There are lecturers, who are merely giving lectures to students, and seem to choose not to engage in additional roles, including acting as facilitators, advisors, and/or counselors. It is expected that lecturers should be able to provide broader views on international perspectives, rather than a mere discussion from the textbooks.

Teaching qualities could be improved by industrial knowledge and experience, perhaps. Respondents indicated that lecturers should improve their communication abilities, not only providing conversing in Indonesian, but also in English. This appears to be the basic skills on people-approach, as a way to service the customers of international universities. Respondents also indicated that teaching qualities could be improved substantially by allotting more time to regularly conduct discussions with students on progress and difficulties throughout the semesters. By allotting more time, respondent indicated that lecturers could have a much better knowledge on each student characteristics, which could be transformed as clues to direct students for future careers endeavors. This is particularly true for international universities that offer internship programs, either domestically or internationally. Moreover, this is important to direct students on future research toward the formulation and completion of their theses.

3.1.2 Teaching Styles

Respondents indicated that lecturers tend to use course plans strictly throughout the semester. As stated earlier, the most common teaching style used is lecturing. Lecturing styles are widely used, not only in class meetings, but also to various arrangements of on-campus seminars and workshops. Although questions are frequently allowed, interactive discussions appear to be minimal. Discussions tend to lead to debates with significant emotional involvement. As a result, discussions tend to be avoided.

There is also a tendency that lecturers use their academic power over students. It means that lecturers tend to minimize the opportunities for debates; simply because lecturers believe that they have more knowledge. Whenever students try to express their opinions, lecturers tend to have the pre-condition stage that their opinions are wrong. Lecturers seem to have minimal concerns on whether students can understand the study materials. Homework appears to be the number one favorite for teachers without sufficient time spent to really discuss and solve the problems together in class. Authoritarian style appears to be the lecturers' best approach in class management.

3.2 Research

Initially, this is an area, which some respondents may not have clear understanding on what research is all about. Upon further exclusive discussions in few focus groups, nonetheless, research seemed to materialize as the foundation toward better teaching. Lecturers who do not spend time in reading newspapers and/or magazines regularly, for example, would likely to lack knowledge on current events, which potentially provide clues for future actions, and teaching directions.

The number one impediment in research is, indeed, the support from the institutions. Support toward conducting research is not readily available as lecturers would have expected. In one international university in our study, research is very minimally supported although the institution has been in providing educational services to students for a couple of years. The minimal supports toward research are also not fairly distributed across different faculties. Though universities are seen as think tanks, not all universities' personnel agree and/or otherwise support the research proposals from lecturers.

The number two impediment in research is the availability of time to do so. Respondents indicated that though institutions support research and continuing education, lecturers may not be able to do much if they are heavily burdened with teaching schedules, various tasks, and responsibilities. This is particularly true for those lecturers, who hold structural positions in any institutions. This finding is, in fact, contradictory with other job dimensions that ought to be performed by lecturers.

Respondents indicated that due to the nature of the universities, lecturers in international universities should conduct research more often than those in local universities. This is to provide adequate cushions for the international status of the universities.

3.3 Advising

Respondents indicated that as much as possible, they did not want to participate in advising. They believe that advising is the job for counselors in the academic services. Lecturers are only supposed to be responsible for lecturing and delivery of teaching materials in accordance with the class syllabus. However, lecturers are expected to have time outside class for questions and tutorials. Just like research, this seems to create a dilemma. As the number of students rises, the advising time increases. This reduces the available time for lecturers to prepare for teaching materials, research, serving as members of committee, and participate in consulting work.

As international universities are gaining their popularity, the number of students is skyrocketing. To catch-up with the growing numbers of students registering at a certain international university, the numbers of lecturers should be added. Failure to do so seems to lead to questions toward lecturers' competencies. Thus, institutional reputation is also questioned.

3.4 Services

Respondents indicated that lecturers should not be assigned certain positions. Structural positions should be held by non-lecturers. There is a tendency that lecturers, who hold structural positions, are more

committed to the responsibilities they have structurally. Regular meetings take up substantial times from the lecturers to do some other activities. This is not mentioning the administrative loads that must be taken care of due to their structural positions. Respondents indicated that they were a bit troubled by the fact that many lecturers are busy with their structural agendas than committing more time to students.

3.5 Consulting

Though the majority of respondents agreed that lecturers should participate in consulting work as a way to apply their academic knowledge, lecturers should not forget or otherwise change their priority. Respondents indicated that the challenge in consulting work is only time management; in which area those lecturers are supposed to be the expert. However, as consulting works tend to take up substantial time, lecturers would only have minimal time in putting their efforts into academic progress of the students.

3.6 Lecturers' Performance

It is rather obvious that lecturers' performance is mainly evaluated by superiors. Though students' comments are sought, their comments are not highly regarded and treated as a mere formality. Respondents indicate that this method of evaluation is rather misleading. Since students know well about how those lecturers managing their own classes, the weight on students' comments should be heavier. Nonetheless, students' comments on various evaluation questions do not seem to be fairly weighted toward the overall performance of lecturers.

Respondents indicate that many lecturers, both full-time and part-time, tend to be evaluated more on their academic degrees and their contribution to the academic world, such as professorships and research, rather than their own competence in handling and delivering materials in class. It is said to say that international universities are not yet adopting the best practice in performance evaluations on lecturers to really indicate the lecturers' competence.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the quantitative study in international universities in Jakarta, there is a wide gap between what students expect to gain in comparison to the lecturers' competence in meeting those expectations in international universities. Lecturers' competencies in international universities need to be improved, undoubtedly. Though responses were only marginally support the findings, international universities have to realize such needs for improvement on lecturers' competencies as a way to better-equipped students for the actual working environment upon graduation. Such improvements are necessary to push the international status of the universities. International universities are different from regular/local universities. Thus, lecturers' competencies in handling international

classes should not be marginally different from the local counterparts. However, there are strings attached to any changes. The hurdles, in fact, lie on the hands of the management officers and lecturers themselves in international universities. The willingness and ability to change for those management officers and lecturers remain questionable.

As international universities strive to attract students, one aspect of improving the competitiveness is definitely the lecturers' competencies. International universities shall concentrate on advancing their brainpowers to excel and come up on top of the competitions.

Future studies should incorporate different sets of questions to seek out more statistical evidence toward the proposed framework of thinking by Noe, et al (2006).

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