

CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

This chapter, as the title suggests, introduces some basic information on the evaluation research conducted and reported by the researcher. It begins with describing the burning issues in distance education and some other problem-related issues in the context where the research was conducted. It, then, describes why an evaluation research was worth for the problems, how the evaluation was conducted in general, and for what purposes. It is ended by a section that clarifies the main terms used in the study.

A. Background

The term 'quality' in education could mean several things. It is often associated with compliance to standards or criteria, the one which was applied in the study, such as the ideal ratio of student-staff, the student's minimum learning achievement on subject-matters, the required components and activities to exist in a program. Others view it as the satisfaction of the users towards the education processes. It can also relate to the capability of an education institution to manage resources.

Quality in distance education has been a major issue of public concern. For many Indonesian people, the quality of distance education issue emerges as it is compared to that of the long-established conventional education as practiced in face-to-face universities. The face-to-face mode has been believed to offer much

more opportunities for learners to acquire knowledge and skills at its best than the distance education can offer. On the other hand, distance education has been the last choice of high-school students when entering higher education. For fresh graduates, it is not popular and uninteresting.

Apart from such lacking interest, the problems addressed to distance education in Indonesia include the quality, the relatively low student-teacher interaction, the technology, resources, and costs (e.g. Soekartawi in Asandhimitra et al., 2004:9). However, comparing the quality of distance education to that of face-to-face education is misleading. Distance education has given opportunities for numerous people with time and space limitations to learn suited to their conditions. It complements the education systems in the country for it provides the opportunities that face-to-face education cannot offer because of time and space limitations. Thus, distance education and conventional education have their own roles in the education system.

This is not to suggest that distance education does not offer quality learning experiences. The government has monitored and assessed distance education institutions, as it has with conventional universities; to assure that quality education is maintained in practices and improvement attempts occurs. The government's new regulation on distance higher education (Permendikbud No. 24 Year 2012) reflects a continuing concern on quality assurance in distance education.

The paper reports the evaluation of the English Education Program (EEP) conducted at Universitas Terbuka (UT), an open and distance university in

Indonesia. Despite its advantages, the open system applied by UT has generated a complex problem of input. Especially for EEP, the absence of entry test makes it difficult to determine the student entry behavior, which in turn has generated other complex problems in developing the curriculum such as in defining the objectives, in selecting and grading the content, in determining the appropriate delivery method, and in assessing the student learning experiences.

The issue of quality in relation to the ‘absence’ of student-teacher interaction has inspired distance educators to find ways to improve the learning opportunities for distance learners so that they can access learning resources, communicate their learning experiences, enhance learning experiences by immediate support, guidance, and feedback. Research on the effectiveness of online tutorial, face-to-face tutorial, and online conferencing have been conducted to address such a demand.

To acquire quality distance learning is not only about the provision of quality learning materials but also, and more importantly, about building quality distance learning experiences. There are ways to improve the quality of distance learning experiences in EEP and great efforts must be made to achieve them.

Keegan (1996:50 in Davies and Stacey (ed), 2003:172) proposed that the use of online learning (e.g. online tutorial) to facilitate one-to-one and one-to-many communication adds to the quality of distance learning experiences. Trajanovic et al. (2007:451) added that the lack of face-to-face communication in distance language learning can be overcome by providing tools for synchronous and asynchronous communication. Synchronous interaction in online learning is

important for it permits immediate feedback for learners and feedback within the learning group. It also creates the sense of being part of a learning community, thus prevents the sense of being isolated (Mason, 1998 in White, 2003:10). Learners acquire skills in the language as they participate in personally meaningful activities in the context of social interaction, rather than by receiving knowledge in the materials (White, 2004).

In term of the content, integrating the four language skills and aspects (listening, reading, speaking, and writing, grammar, fluency, semantic, and vocabulary) might be a better approach in language teaching. We rarely use a single skill when communicating, so it makes sense to focus on more than one skill at a time. The discrete approach to language teaching applied by EEP actually clashes with recent direction of ESL/EFL learning and teaching to the meaningfulness in integrative approach (Oxford, 2001). There are some advantages of integrated approach. First, not only are learners given the chance to interact in an authentic and meaningful way, but learners are also exposed to the richness and complexity of the target language. However, with a segregated approach, it is difficult to use language in a meaningful way. Another advantage is that language is treated as a means of interaction, rather than an academic subject. Third, integrated approach allows learners to develop all language skills simultaneously and one skill could help develop another skills.

Nowadays, with several improvements in ICT infrastructure and human resources, incorporating an integrated approach and transaction orientation to the EEP curriculum may be a solution to the problem of lacking interactivity or

communication in distance language learning. With integrated approach, language teaching is not seen as transmitting specific discrete skills and aspects courses to the students, rather language skills are integratedly exercised in the process. Transaction orientation in the curriculum brings the students to the center in education process which allows dialogue and meaningful language learning experiences.

So far, it can be assumed that there might be discrepancies between what have been designed or expected to occur in EEP and its actual performances in the implementation. Such suspected discrepancies are worth investigating in a systematic evaluation to determine the areas and the extent of the discrepancies so that a program remedy or improvement can be conducted effectively.

B. Purpose of the Study

The study was an evaluation of a program, EEP, which was intended:

1. to determine whether EEP performances in the program development and implementation are congruent with the EEP standards; and
2. to identify any discrepancies in the program.

In determining the program congruency, the researcher developed two sets of criteria. The following tables present the two sets of criteria.

Table 1.1. Program Development Congruence Criteria

Congruence Level	EEP Program Definition Performance
Completely congruent	All EEP components are highly adequate, comprehensive, and completely compatible.
Congruent	Almost all EEP components are adequate, partly comprehensive, and partly compatible.
Fairly Congruent	Most of EEP components are adequate, partly comprehensive, and partly compatible

Incongruent	Most of EEP components are inadequate, incomprehensive, and incompatible.
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Table 1.2. Program Implementation Congruence Criteria

Congruence Level	EEP Program Implementation Performance
Completely congruent	All program standard components are perceived to occur in EEP by the students and staff
Congruent	Almost all program standard components are perceived to occur in EEP by the students and staff
Fairly Congruent	Most of program standard components are perceived to occur in EEP by the students and staff.
Incongruent	Most of program standard components are perceived not to occur in EEP by the students and staff.

There were two categories of program congruence, namely: program development congruence and program implementation congruence. Program development congruence was assessed by two experts in the first evaluation stage namely Program Definition Evaluation. In this stage, EEP standards, as stated in EEP and UT official documents such as EEP curriculum document and institutional strategic and operational plans, were compared with the other sets of standards issued by the government and/or international distance education standard agencies like the Asian Association of Open Universities (AAOU). Expert judgments were provided in form of checklists.

The program implementation congruence was assessed by the students, assessing the other three evaluation stages namely Program Installation Evaluation, Program Process Evaluation, and Program Product Evaluation). EEP implementation performance congruency was indicated by the students' responses in the survey questionnaires.

On the other hand, information on discrepant components was obtained from the students as indicated by their responses in the questionnaires.

Cross-sectional survey design was used in the study. Statistical tests were used in the first place to determine which EEP components were congruent or incongruent and which EEP components had discrepancy. The results of which were then complemented by the results of the open-ended data analysis. These are presented the Chapter III of the research report.

C. Research Questions

The EEP evaluation was conducted to answer the following research questions:

1. Are EEP performances in developing and implementing the program components congruent with the standards?
2. Which EEP components have discrepancies?

D. Scope of Evaluation and Limitations

The EEP evaluation was formative, rather than summative, since the aims of the evaluation were to obtain a description of the program congruence and discrepancy as basic considerations for program improvement. According to Stufflebeam (2002:59), formative evaluations are employed to examine a program's development and assist in improving its structure and implementation.

The evaluation investigated EEP performance on program components implementation against standards. This is to distinguish it with other program

evaluation models which evaluate programs by measuring programs performances in meeting intended aims or objectives.

The evaluation adapted The Discrepancy Evaluation Model (DEM) (Provus in Tyler, 1969) which has four evaluation stages comprising program definition evaluation, program installation evaluation, program process evaluation, and program product evaluation. Due to access and time concerns, the evaluation did not cover the fifth stage (cost benefit analysis) as mentioned in the revised version of the model (Provus, 1972).

The evaluation investigated the EEP components which include curriculum components such as objectives, content (learning experiences), delivery method (organization of learning experiences), and learning assessment as suggested by Tyler (1950 in Richards, 2001:39) and other program content such as student, staff, support systems, and facilities as suggested by Provus (in Tyler, 1969:249). Those components describe various program components in three areas – inputs, or beginning conditions; process or planned activities for both staff and students; and output, or the objectives (Miller and Seller, 1985:310). The following table illustrates EEP components which were investigated in the evaluation.

Table 1.3 EEP Components

Inputs	Process		Outputs
1. Student 2. Staff 3. Content 4. Delivery Methods 5. Learning Assessment 6. Supports Systems 7. Facilities	Student transaction with: 1. Student 2. Staff 3. Content 4. Delivery Methods 5. Learning Assessment 6. Supports Systems 7. Facilities	Staff transaction with: 1. Students 2. Staff 3. Content 4. Delivery Methods 5. Learning Assessment 6. Supports Systems 7. Facilities	1. Vision 2. Missions 3. Objectives

The evaluation was limited to those EEP components and sub-components in which discrepancies were suspected to occur. Some other components like policies, administration, monitoring systems were not included due to coverage, time, and resources concerns.

E. Significance of the Study

EEP evaluation was important because of several reasons as follows:

1. The evaluation provided results in form of description, analysis, and recommendations that can be used by decision-makers and policy-makers of distance language programs in considering the distance language program development, remedy, and improvement.
2. The evaluation results may be used by the program administrators as feedback for improving various practices within the program.
3. The study contributes to add the scholarly research and literature in the field of distance language program evaluation.
4. The implications of the study that might be reached by EEP students were the improvement of the quality of educational processes and products such as the improved learning relevance, learning experiences, services, and communication in the program.
5. The evaluation could be considered as part of the attempts to implement the institutional plans. The study was in line with UT's 2005-2020 Strategic Plan and 2005-2010 Operational Plan which focus on three areas of continuous improvement, including: (1) academic quality and relevance, (2) access to distance education services, and (3) internal management.
6. The evaluation could be considered as an attempt to establish academic and institutional accountability to the program's stakeholders. Program and/or curriculum evaluation is an activity that should be conducted by every

educational institution. According to Article 57 of Regulation No. 20 Year 2003 about the National Education System, “evaluation (of curriculum and/or program) is conducted to nationally control the quality of education as a form of educational institutions’ accountability to stakeholders. It is conducted to students and programs at all education levels, units, and types both in formal and informal sectors”.

F. Clarification of The Main Terms

The following describes the main terms used in the study such as: evaluation, program, program evaluation, performance, standards, and program components.

1. Evaluation

The term ‘evaluation’ used in the study was in line with Steinmetz’s definition of evaluation. He suggests that evaluation is an activity to compare an object to a standard that describes qualities and characteristics of the object should posses (in Stufflebeam et al., 2002:128).

2. Program

In a general term, a program is an educational program that educates students through the teaching and learning processes which are systematically planned to achieve certain educational goals and objectives.

In this study, the term was referred to a program namely the English Education Program (EEP), an undergraduate program administered by Universitas Terbuka (UT), an open and distance university in Indonesia. The program is

delivered through the open and distance learning system of UT. It is aimed to upgrade the academic performance and professionalism of the EFL high school teachers (Naskah Akademik Program Sarjana Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris, 2007:5). Thus, EEP is the program being the object of evaluation.

3. Program Evaluation

Program evaluation was referred to the activities of comparing EEP performance against standards that govern EEP. The information obtained from the comparisons was used as a basis for determining the congruence of EEP. It may yield discrepancy in the reverse. When discrepancy was found, i.e. EEP did not perform as expected by the standards on certain components and/or activities, the program evaluation was continued to collect information on discrepant components and/or activities for analysis. The analysis results were used as bases for determining corrective actions or remedies in the program.

4. Performance

Performance was referred to the actual qualities and characteristics of EEP. Performance measures whether or not EEP was clearly and adequately described (Stage 1); and the extent it actually performed (Stage 2-4). EEP performance was measured by: (1) comparing the EEP description, which described the program components that actually occurred, against the standards governing the program component development and implementation; and (2) judging the extent EEP performances in implementing program components

against the standards governing the program development and implementation of a program including its components and activities.

5. Standards

A standard describes the qualities and characteristics of an object should posses. Standards referred in the study include regulations, guidelines, benchmarks that govern the qualities and characteristics of program components and activities which are required to exist in a program or EEP in this context. Standards exist in form of statements as mentioned in various official documents issued by the government, the institution, or other eligible national and international standards agencies.

6. Program Components

As previously mentioned, the EEP evaluation described and compared standards against program performances in implementing its components and activities. The program components and activities being referred to were in line with Provus's taxonomy of program content (in Tyler, 1969:249) that categorizes components into three categories of inputs process, and outputs components and subcomponents. A more thorough description of Provus's taxonomy and the Discrepancy Evaluation Model (in Tyler, 1969:242-282) adopted in the study was provided in Chapter III of the research report.

Yet, to fit the EEP context, few adjustments were made. Therefore, EEP components included in the study were:

1) Inputs:

- a. Students
- b. Staff
- c. Content
- d. Delivery Methods
- e. Learning Assessment
- f. Supports systems
- g. Facilities

2) Process:

- a. Student interaction with inputs and outputs components
- b. Staff interaction with inputs and outputs components

3) Outputs:

- a. Vision
- b. Missions
- c. Objectives

G. Evaluation Framework

The following framework was designed to help systematically evaluate EEP. This framework provides directions on the methods of answering the research questions as thoroughly described in Chapter III.

Table 1.4 EEP Evaluation Frameworks

Research Questions	Evaluation Stages	Program Components	Sources of Information	Instruments	
1. Are EEP performances in developing and implementing the program components congruent with the standards? 2. Which EEP components have discrepancies?	1. Program Definition Evaluation	1. Student 2. Staff 3. Objectives 4. Content 5. Delivery Methods 6. Learning Assessment 7. Supports System 8. Facilities	Official Documents	Document Survey Form Standard Document Checklist	
	2. Program Installation Evaluation	1. Student 2. Staff 3. Objectives 4. Content 5. Delivery Methods 6. Learning Assessment 7. Supports System 8. Facilities	Students	Student Survey Questionnaire	
			Administrators	Administrator Survey Questionnaire	
	3. Program Process Evaluation	Student transaction with: 1. Students 2. Staff 3. Content 4. Delivery Methods 5. Learning Assessment 6. Support Systems 7. Facilities Staff transaction with: 1. Staff 2. Students 3. Content 4. Delivery Methods 5. Learning Assessment 6. Support Systems 7. Facilities	Students	Student Survey Questionnaire	
			Administrators	Administrator Survey Questionnaire	
		4. Program Product Evaluation	1. Vision 2. Missions 3. Objectives	Students	Student Survey Questionnaire
				Administrators	Administrator Survey Questionnaire