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Students' Perceptions on the Implementation of Face-to-Face Tutorial in Distance Education System

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Abstract

Since 2013, Universitas Terbuka (UT) has been participated in 'Bidikmisi', a government of Indonesia program which provides scholarship for students in higher education institution. To be eligible, student must fresh graduate from senior high school, have good academic record in his/her senior high school, and faces financial limitations. Bear in mind the students' limitation in self-directed learning, requirement to success in distance education environment, UT requires all 'Bidikmisi' students to attend an 8 week-sessions of face to face (F2F) tutorial sessions for all courses taken. This rather different approach is like a two-edged knife: positive if students accept this as beneficial to their learning process and negative if students consider this as reducing chances of doing other activities. To analyse students' perception on this matter, questionnaires were developed and distributed to all 'Bidikmisi' students registered in the second semester of 2016. The questionnaires are focussed on studnets' perception in three aspects, namely students' discipline to attend and to hand-in assignments in F2F tutorial sessions, tutors' quality, and role of F2F tutorial for mastering learning materials. During August-October 2016, the questionnaires were send to eight purposively chosen UT Regional Offices (ROs) and further distibuted to all Bidikmisi students in the UT ROs. A number of 366 students filled-out and returned the questionnaires. The results showed that almost all of the respondents attended the tutorial sessions, handed-in all assignment, perceived tutors as dsicipline and providing enough feedback, and the sessions helped the respondents doing their final exams.

Keywords

Face-to-Face Tutorial, Learning Support, Student Perception, Tutor

1. Introduction

Universitas Terbuka (UT) as a higher education institution fully implements distance education (DE) system in Indonesia encourages students to employ self-directed learning (UT Katalog 2017/2018, 2017). However, not all students are accustomed to self-directed learning due to primary and secondary school system in Indonesia which mostly conducted using teacher-centered approach. Notwithstanding, aware of the situation, UT provides learning support for its students with could facilitate the students to master learning process but at the same time prepare the students to eventually get used to self-directed learning. This learning support are provided in many forms, one of them is face-to-face tutorial (F2F tutorial).

The F2F tutorial is especially important to support the Indonesia government program, called Bidikmisi, in which bright but economically-handicapped fresh high-school graduate students are given scholarship to enroll in higher education

insitution. UT is included in the Bidikmisi Program and have first Bidikmisi students in 2013. UT beliefs that those Bidikmisi grantees, accustomed to teacher-centered approach, would find F2F tutorial beneficial to their learning process.

Nevertheless, it is necessary to evaluate the F2F tutorial from the Bidikmisi grantees perceptions. The evaluation is focussed on three aspects in relatuon to F2F tutorial namely roles of tutors, functions of assingments, and advantage of F2F tutorial in final examinations.

2. Bidikmisi Program & Universitas Terbuka

Bidikmisi Program is an educational scholarship from the government of the Republic of Indonesia through the Directorate General of Higher Education (DGHE), Ministry of Education and Culture (MoEC) for prospective students who are economically disadvantaged but have academic potential, to study at universities in recognized study programs to graduate on time. (http://bidikmisi.belmawa.ristekdikti.go.id/). Grantees will receive assistance of tuition fee given since they accepted in university. The grants are for 8 semesters for Diploma IV and S1 program, and for 6 semesters for Diploma III program. This scholarship is in the form of exemption from all tuition fees during college. In addition, scholarship recipients also receive an allowance for tuition fees that will be received every 6 months

There are four purposes of the Bidikmisi Program, namely:

- to improve access and learning opportunities in higher education for students who have economis constraints but doing well academically
- to provide educational assistance to candidates who are eligible to complete a Diploma or Bachelor Degree program
- to improve student achievement, both in curricular, co-curricular and extra curricular,
- to produces graduates who are independent, productive, and have social awareness so that they can play a role in the effort to eradicate poverty chain cutting and have positive contribution to community empowerment. (https://id.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beasiswa_Bidikmisi).

Bidikmisi Program is a form of state commitment to continuously strive to increase the number of people who can take education to the higher education level. Even further aimed at breaking the poverty chain that still struck in our country (about 11.5%) (http://dikti.go.id/menggapai-impian-dengan-bidikmisi/). The Bidikmisi Program began in 2010 in response to the high tuition fees at higher education institutions that resulted in more than half of the high school graduates in 2010 not continuing to higher levels. In addition, the number of students coming from poor families is very small, but not a few high school graduates who have good academic ability, but economically need to be assisted. Furthermore, if prospective students who have good academic ability, but economically disadvantaged are assisted, they can be a potential superior human resources.

In 2016, the government provided Bidikmisi assistance to 74,128 new students, bringing the total recipients of education funding from 2010 to present to reach 352,409 students. Every month Bidikmisi-winning students receive Rp.600.000/month life support. In 2017, Kemenristekdikti will increase it to Rp.650.000/month.

Bidikmisi Program is inline with what The Commonwealth Education Hub (2016) beliefs as a need for a variety of funding options to be available to ensure increased and equitable access and at UT, all administraive affairs of the Bidikmisi Program is coordinated by the Office of Vice-Rector for Networking. Once adminitrative issues are settle, related study programs take charge of the students learning process, including implementation of F2F tutorial.

Beginning in 2012 UT is given the opportunity by the DGHE to recruit students from senior high school graduates in the last two years, in order to obtain Bidikmisi scholarship (http://www.ut.ac.id/2015/78-tentang-ut/691-beasiswa).. The

requirement to register for Bidikmisi Program at UT is as follows.

1) Participants are high school graduates who graduated in the last two years

2) The highest age at the time of registering is 21 years.

3) Economically handicapped is indicated as follows.

- Maximum gross income of parent/guardian combined = Rp 3,000,000/month
- Maximum gross income of parent/guardian combined divided by the number of family members = Rp750.000/month.

4) Maximum education of parent /guardian = Strata 1 or Diploma 4.

5) Have sufficient academic potential, which is reflected in the best 30% of the school.

6) Special consideration is given to applicants who meet the requirements of 1 s.d. 4, if having co-curricular or extra-curricular achievements at the district/city level or other non-competitive achievements with no ranking (eg head of student school organization).

7) The academic potential and achievements referred to in items 5 and 6 shall be declared by recommendation letter from the Principal/Madrasah or Head of District/City Education Office in accordance with Appendix II of Bidikmisi Guideline.

8) Have adequate health so as not to disrupt the process of learning in higher education institution.

9) Not color blind for certain courses.

10) Committed to complete studies at UT, expressed in agreement or contract between UT and Bidikmisi student, which includes the rights and obligations of each party including the student's observance of university regulations related to the Bidikmisi Program and the sanctions for its violation.

The UT Bidikmisi Program is distributed to all 38 UPBJJ-UT (see Figure 1 for UT Regional Offices –ROs- location throughout Indonesia and Table 1 for study programs offered in every UT RO)

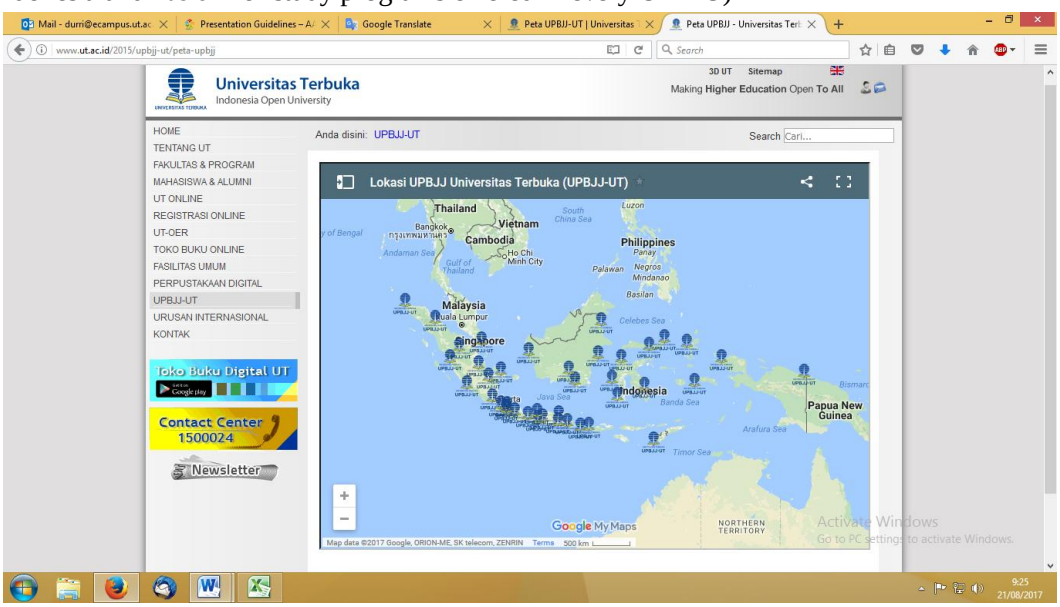

Figure 1. Location of universitas terbuka regional offices.

Table 1. UT regional offices & study program offered in bidikmisi program.

No.	UT ROs	∑ of Students (per 2017.2)	Faculty of Economics			Faculty of Law, Social & Political Sciences				Faculty of Math & Natural Sciences		
			1*	2*	3*	4*	5*	6*	7*	8*	9*	10*
1	Banda Aceh	139				√						
2	Medan	80					√					
3	Batam	38				√						
4	Padang	94		√								
5	Pangkal Pinang	90			√							
6	Pekanbaru	98			√							
7	Jambi	45			√							
8	Palembang	220									√	
9	Bengkulu	135					√					
10	Bandar Lampung	143		√								
11	Jakarta	45	√									
12	Serang	37									√	
13	Bogor	200		√								
14	Bandung	189								√		
15	Purwokerto	91		√								
16	Semarang	191				√						
17	Surakarta	93					√					
18	Yogyakarta	83						√				
19	Pontianak	83									√	
20	Palangkaraya	29				√						
21	Banjarmasin	180	√									
22	Samarinda			√								
23	Surabaya	215										√
24	Malang	197		√								
25	Jember	335	√				√					
26	Denpasar	193		√								
27	Kupang	15					√					
28	Mataram	76			√							
29	Makassar	139		√	√							
30	Majene	96				√						
31	Palu	17		√								
32	Kendari	24		√								
33	Manado	49										√
34	Gorontalo	139		√								
35	Ambon	84		√								
36	Jayapura	115				√						
37	Ternate	59										√
38	Sorong	108										

1 = Economics Developmentnt
2 = Accountant
3 = Management
4 = State Administration
5 = Communication
6 = Administration Sciences
7 = English Literature
8 = Biology
9 = Agribussiness
10 = Statistics

Participants are high school graduates who graduated in the last two years.

The highest age at the time of registering is 21 years.

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Have sufficient academic potential, which is reflected in the best 30% of the school.
Special consideration is given to applicants who meet the requirements of 1 s.d. 4, if having co-curricular or extra-curricular achievements at the district/city level or other non-competitive achievements with no ranking (eg head of student school organization).
The academic potential and achievements referred to in items 5 and 6 shall be declared by recommendation letter from the Principal/Madrasah or Head of District / City Education Office in accordance with Appendix II of Bidikmisi Guideline.
Have adequate health so as not to disrupt the process of learning in higher education institution.
Not color blind for certain courses.
Committed to complete studies at UT, expressed in agreement or contract between UT and Bidikmisi student, which includes the rights and obligations of each party including the student's observance of university regulations related to the Bidikmisi Program and the sanctions for its violation.

3. F2F Tutorial

Fung and Carr (2000) did a reserach on F2F tutorial (Figure 2) which focussed on students' expectations of the benefits they will gain; their reasons for attending; the approaches they prefer; and their overall satisfaction with what tutors actually provide. Reddy (1996) Points out that attendance at tutorial sessions should be made compulsory. Tutors who are not familiar with the techniques of counseling and treating adults should get some orientation beforehand.
Katalog 2017/2018 (2018) explains that F2F tutorial is a tutorial activity conducted face-to-face in a classroom. F2F tutorial is conducted by UT ROs in eight consecutive weeks for each course. During the tutorial, students are given three assignments at weeks 3, 5, and 7. The assignments can be done inside or outside of the tutorial class, depends on the characteristics of the course and the provisions set. In the F2F tutorial, students are required to actively participate by coming at least five out of eight meetings, engaging in the discussions, and finishing all three assignments timely.
A study by Putra (2014) reveals that there is a substantial difference between the average of students' tutorial scores and that of the final examination results. In addition, the correlation between score in tutorial and those in final exam is very small but positive and significant. Furthermore, partial correlation analysis between tutors' specific characteristics shows that the association of students' tutorial scores and final exam results is significant in the group of students guided by tutors holding a master's degree and in those instructed by university affiliated tutors. The mean difference analysis between groups defined by tutor characteristics showed that the students guided by tutors with a master's degree did substantially and significantly better than those instructed by tutors with only a bachelor's degree, but there is no significant difference between the groups defined by tutors' professional affiliations.
Others researchers, Rahman and Sadat (2010), mentions factors like conditions and infrastructure of the tutorial centres, tutor's qualification, experience and training in distanc learning, teachin styl and strategie as importance in the process of acquiring education through DE.
At UT, F2F tutorial tutors are experts from state or private higher education institutions as well as other institutions who fulfilled the requirements set by UT. The requirement is related to their educatioanal background and teaching competencies. To ensure that tutors possess enough comptencies to act as tutors, UT provides training for prospective tutors. This is also in line with Reddy (1996) who mention the necessity for tutors who are not familiar with the techniques treating adults to get some orientation beforehand. Prospective tutors who qualify for training are invited and take part in the training where they learn about effective learning methods in tutorials, development of tutorials, and development and assessment assignments. Tutors who are not familiar with the techniques of counseling and treating adults should get some orientation beforehand (Reddy, 1996). Tutors who have attended the training are included in the exam to obtain a tutor

certificate. Only participants who have passed the examination and have a certificate of tutor are entitled to be tutors.

Figure 2. F2F tutorial sessions.

4. Methods, Results & Discussions

4.1. Methods

Bidikmisi students enroll at study programs in all 38 UT ROs. For this research, only eight UT ROs are included for manageability reasons. UT ROs were chosen purposively to represent three parts of Indonesia, eastern, western, and central parts. Eastern Indonesia was represented by Ambon, western part by Bandung, Surakarta, Jember, Surabaya, Bandar Lampung, and Medan, while central part by Gorontalo

Participants in this reserah are all students first register in 2013– 2015 semester. In other words, students have to be at least in their third semester to serve as respsondent in this study. Therefore they can provide their perceptions on at least three semesters of their experiences of taking part in F2F tutorials.

Data were collected during August-October 2016 with questionnaires especially developed for this research. Questionnaires were send to UT ROs and distributed to Bidikmisi students on F2F tutorial sessions. There is no compulsary to fill out the questionnaires and no consequence of any kind to students' participation in the reserach with the students' final grades.

4.2. Results & Discussions

A number of 1000 questionnaires were distributed to Bidikmisi Students in eight UT Ros and 366 (37%) questionnaires returned and all used in analysis. Distribution of questionnaires returned based on UT ROs (Figure 1) and gender of the samples (Table 2) reveals that more than half of the respondents are from UT RO Jember and 68% are females.

Meanwhile, distribution of respondents based on Faculties and study programs are listed in Table 3. Around one fifth of the respondents enroll in Communication (21,9%) and Administration Scineces (23,8%) study programs at Faculty of Law, Social, and Political Sciences. Agribussiness study program is represented the least (1,1%). Nonetheless, all study programs are represented in this research.

Almost all of respondents (98%) attended all the F2F tutorial sessions and almost all (96,2%) did the assignment on time. The almost fully-attendance could be rooted in the regulation that only those who attend at least five out of eight sessions is entitled to tutorial session to be counted in final score (Katalog UT 2017/2018, 2017). Meanwhile, high number of respondents strongly agree and agree to hand in all their assignments timely could be caused by the respondents awareness that in doing the assignments they could get tutors assistance which could result in high scores. A privilege do not apply in final examinations.

Table 2. Distribution od Respondents Based on UT ROs and Gender

UT Regional Office	Female		Male		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Jember	143	39,07	56	15,30	199	54,37
Surabaya	40	10,93	14	3,83	54	14,75
Gorontalo	15	4,10	30	8,20	45	12,30
Ambon	12	3,28	7	1,91	19	5,19
Surakarta	13	3,55	2	0,55	15	4,10
Bandar Lampung	10	2,73	4	1,09	14	3,83
Bandung	6	1,64	3	0,82	9	2,46
Medan	8	2,19	1	0,27	9	2,46
NA	2	0,55	0	0,00	2	0,55
TOTAL	249	68,03	117	31,97	366	100,00

Table 3. Distribution of Respondents by Faculties and Study Programs

Faculty	Study Program	UT Regional Office*									TOTAL
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	NA	
Economics	Ec. Development	-	-	-	-	9,0	-	-	-	-	9,0
	Accountant	1,4	-	-	3,6	1,4	1,4	5,2	1,4	-	14,2
	Management	1,4	2,2	-	2,7	-	-	4,9	-	-	11,2
Law, Social & Political Sciences	State Administration	1,1	1,6	-	-	7,7	-	-	-	-	10,4
	Communication	-	-	-	1,9	16,1	1,1	0,0	2,7	-	21,9
	Administration Sciences	-	-	-	4,1	19,1	-	-	-	0,5	23,8
Math & Natural Sciences	Biology	1,4	0,0	2,5	-	-	-	-	-	-	3,8
	Agribusiness	-	-	-	-	1,1	-	-	-	-	1,1
	Statistics	-	-	-	-	-	-	4,6	-	-	4,6
TOTAL		5,2	3,8	2,5	12,3	54,4	2,5	14,8	4,1	0,5	100,0

1 = Ambon 3 = Bandung 5 =Jember 7 = Surabaya
2 = Bandar Lampung 4 = Gorontalo 6 = Medan 8 = Surakarta

One important thing in choosing the location for F2F tutorial is location (Ragman and Sadat, 2010). Almost 75% respondents strongly agree and agree that F2F location is close to their domicile as well as easy to reach (Figures 3 and 4). This could be also responsible for almost respondents participated in all the F2F tutorial sessions. Easiness to come to the location means respondents did not have to spend a lot of time and a lot of money. Two things that they usually lack of, especially for money. The Government does provide Bidikmisi students with staple of about Rp.6000.000/month but it could only provide for the very basic necessities.

In term of tutors, Figure 5 depicts that respondents in general agree that tutors met their schedules (85,3%), facilitating the respondents to understand learning materials (93,3%), and last but not least providing feed back for all the assignments (93,9%). On-time tutors, with the implementation of ISO 9001:2008 at UT, is inevitable. Every process in F2F tutorial is closely guided by procedure and periodically monitored, controlled, and evaluated. The respondents evaluation on the tutors' timelines in giving tutorial demonstrate UT success in implementing its quality assurance

system. However, solely resting evaluation on the tutor's timeliness will not beneficial for students if they do not benefit form the tutors' presence. Hence, it is exhilarating that almost all of the respondents (93,3) mentions that tutors help them understanding all subject matters.

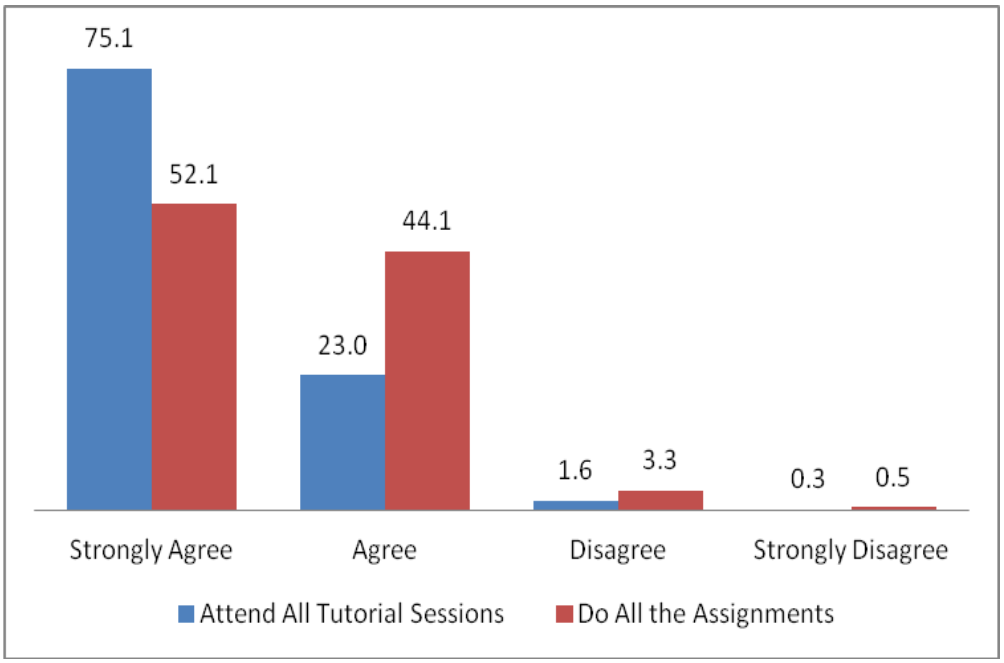

Figure 3. Respondents attandance and assingments on the F2F tutorial sessions.

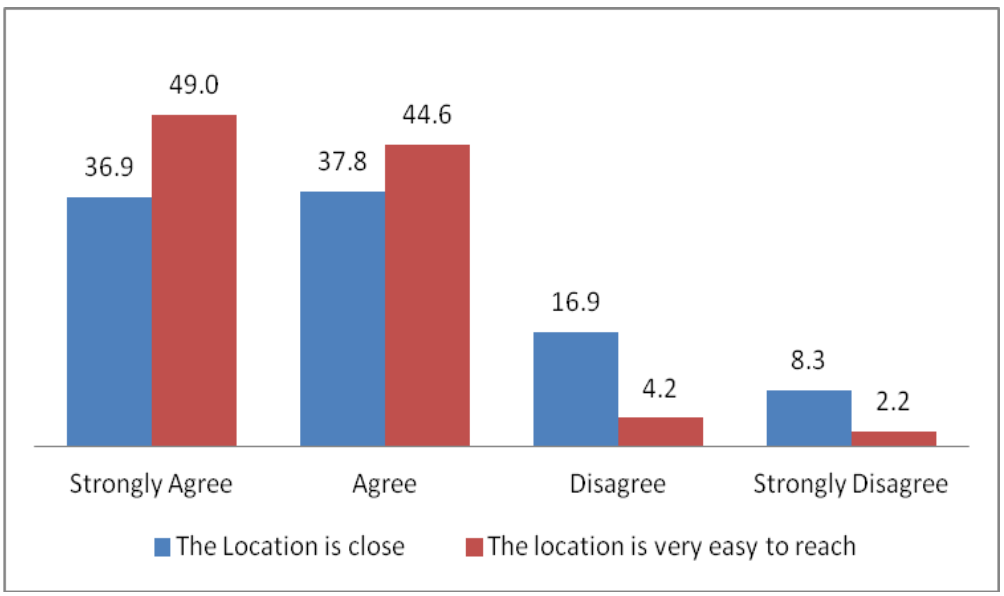

Figure 4. The location of F2F tutorial sessions.

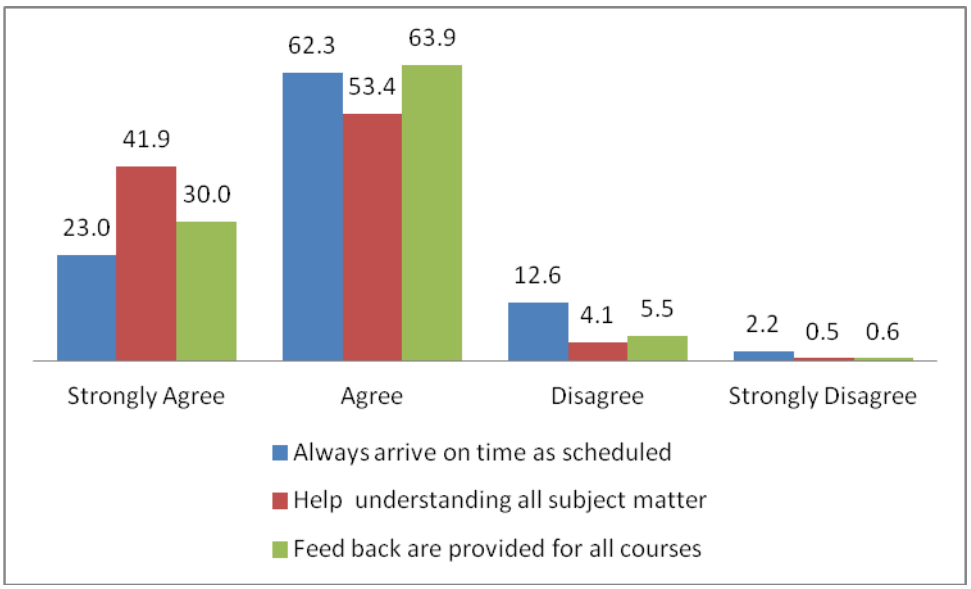

Figure 5. Respondents' perceptions on tutors in F2F tutorial.

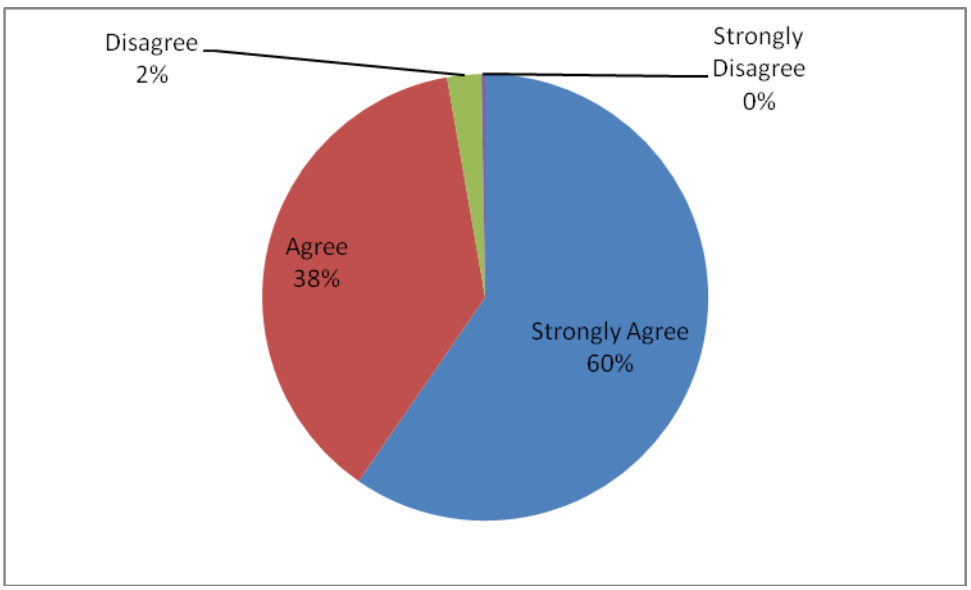

Figure 6. Joining F2F tutorial helps students in final exams.

In line with Putra (2014) research which resulted in small but positive and significant correlation between score in tutorial and those in final exam, 98% of respondents perceived their activities in F2F tutorial helping them in their final exams (Figure 6). This also align with one of the reasons UT providing F2F tutorial, facilitating students in their learning process so they would master their learning materials and as a consequence be able to take the exams successfully.

5. Conclusion

Almost all respondents perceived the necessity to attend F2F tutorial sessios and they handed in the assignments timely. The respondents also experinced benefits from joining teh tutorial in terms of getting feed back for the asignments as

well as mastering learning material which in turn helping the respondents in doing their final exams. In short, F2F tutorial which UT provided for Bidikmisi students have been positively agreed to be beneficial for students.

It is therefore suggested to continue providing F2F tutorial for young-bright-fresh graduate Bidikmisi students to facilitate them in mastering all learning materias required to graduate.

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