

Analysis of Visibility and Accessibility of the International Test Center (ITC) as a Foreign Language Test Center at Manado State Polytechnic

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Abstract: In the era of Education 5.0, education focuses on holistic human development by utilizing technology to create personalized and adaptive learning experiences and prepare students to face global challenges. Foreign language skills are becoming increasingly important as core competencies that support international mobility and cross-cultural collaboration. Foreign language tests serve as an evaluation tool to measure individual language skills, ensuring graduates can compete in the global market. This study aims to analyze the visibility and accessibility of the International Test Center (ITC) as a foreign language test center at the Manado State Polytechnic. The main focus of the study includes an evaluation of geographical distribution, transportation infrastructure, facilities provided, and test takers' perceptions of the ease and efficiency of services. The research method used is qualitative, including location surveys, interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. Qualitative data were obtained through interviews with institutional leaders, test implementers, partners, participants, and direct observation at the language center location. The study results indicate that the International Test Center has great potential to become one of the best foreign language test centers in North Sulawesi. However, there are still challenges regarding transportation accessibility and participant perceptions of service efficiency. The implications of this research are expected to be the basis for further development for ITC to increase the visibility, accessibility, and quality of its services as a center of excellence for foreign language testing at Manado State Polytechnic.

Introduction

Manado State Polytechnic (Polimdo) has a strategic role in improving the quality of education in the North Sulawesi region to educate the nation and improve the welfare of humanity (Rumambi & Lintong, 2018). This aligns with the vision of Manado State Polytechnic to become a center of excellence for technology, innovation, and transformative learning with an international perspective in the era of Industry 4.0 (Polimdo, 2020, 2022). One of the efforts is establishing partnerships with institutions providing internationally certified competency tests in Indonesia. Polimdo is building cooperation with the International Indonesian Education Foundation (IIEF) and the International Test Center (ITC) Jakarta to expand students' and lecturers' access to foreign language tests. This partnership aims to strengthen Polimdo's academic reputation at the national and international levels while providing opportunities for academics to take TOEFL, TOEIC, JLFW, and other globally recognized tests.

ITC is an institution that provides internationally certified foreign language test services, which has an important role in supporting the foreign language competence of Polimdo students and lecturers. Currently, ITC Polimdo utilizes space in the Central Building for operations and uses the Theatre Room in the Integrated Lecture Building for test implementation. However, the success of this service is not only determined by the quality of the tests offered but also by the visibility and accessibility of ITC services. Factors such as effective promotion, easily accessible information, and the availability of adequate facilities and infrastructure greatly determine the use

of this service.

Visibility includes the extent to which ITC services at Polimdo are popular, recognizable, and accessible to students and the general public (Pertiwi et al., 2020; Qurratu'aini et al., 2021; Saputro & Sugiharto, 2018). Promotion through communication media, both offline and online, is key to increasing awareness and utilization of these services. On the other hand, accessibility refers to the ease of registration procedures, availability of test schedules, and geographical and logistical factors such as transportation to the test location. Obstacles in visibility and accessibility can hinder the optimal utilization of ITC services, so an in-depth evaluation is needed to identify problems and appropriate solutions.

Since 2018, Manado State Polytechnic (Polimdo) has collaborated with the International Indonesian Education Foundation (IIEF) and the International Test Center (ITC) Jakarta, which is affiliated with ETS. This international institution organizes foreign language tests. Polimdo has been designated as an Authorized Test Center to administer internationally certified TOEFL tests, with TOEFL ITP being one of the graduation requirements. Recently, Polimdo was also recognized as a Center of Excellence (CeO) by ITC, making it one of 11 CeOs in Indonesia and the only one in Eastern Indonesia. This partnership positively impacts Polimdo's international reputation while opening up opportunities for students, lecturers, and the general public to improve their skills and develop their careers through international certification. Based on this background, this study aims to analyze the visibility and accessibility of the International Test Center (ITC) as a foreign language test center at Polimdo, with a focus on evaluating geographical distribution, transportation infrastructure, facilities provided, and test takers' perceptions of the convenience and efficiency of services.

Method

The location of this research was the Manado State Polytechnic campus. This mixed-method study combines quantitative and qualitative methods to understand ITC visibility and accessibility better (Creswell, 2007; Staunton et al., 2019). The population of the study were students and lecturers of Manado State Polytechnic. The sample used a stratified random sampling technique, namely selecting respondents from departments to provide representative data. The research instrument was a questionnaire designed to measure visibility, accessibility, and user satisfaction with Polimdo ITC services. In-depth interviews were conducted with key informants, including test-conducting staff. Data analysis used descriptive statistical methods to describe the distribution of respondents' answers and inferential to analyze correlations to identify factors that significantly influence accessibility and satisfaction. Thematic analysis was used to identify key themes from the interview transcripts.

Result and Discussion

In this study, the results achieved can be described based on the qualitative and quantitative data analysis that has been carried out. These results provide a comprehensive picture of the visibility and accessibility of the International Test Center at Manado State Polytechnic and provide a basis for decision-making regarding the future development of this test center. This study successfully identified several important findings related to the level of visibility and accessibility of ITC. Data was collected from 50 respondents, including students, staff, and the general public. The main findings obtained are as follows—first, Visibility Level. Most respondents (60%) do not fully know or understand the existence of ITC. This indicates a need to increase promotional activities and dissemination of information through various communication channels such as social media, official websites, and cooperation with other educational institutions.

Second, Accessibility of Facilities. Regarding accessibility, most respondents (60%) considered that the physical facilities of ITC were relatively easy to access, although there were

some obstacles, such as unclear directions. Third, Obstacles in Service. One of the main obstacles identified was the test schedule, which was considered inflexible by 40% of respondents and hampered the participation of prospective test participants. In addition, 36% of respondents also stated that information related to registration procedures was still tricky to access, which affected their interest in taking the test.

Based on the results of the survey and interviews, it was found that the visibility of ITC at Manado State Polytechnic is still relatively low. Many students, staff, and the general public are not yet fully aware of the existence of this test center, even though this facility has been operating since 2022. Factors that cause low visibility include lack of active promotion, minimal collaboration with other institutions, and suboptimal social media or digital platform use. Regarding accessibility, most respondents stated that the location of ITC on campus is relatively easy for students and the general public. However, there are several physical obstacles, such as the lack of clear signs to the test center and limited access for people with disabilities. In addition, integrated promotional activities are carried out sporadically and are limited through print and digital media. No integrated marketing strategy targets all potential user segments, both internal and external to the campus.

Regarding workforce and budget, ITC still faces limitations in carrying out promotional activities and expanding the accessibility of its facilities. Understanding the importance of foreign language certification among internal and external circles of Manado State Polytechnic also has implications for the minimal demand for services provided by the Manado State Polytechnic foreign language test center. In detail, quantitative data from interviews with 50 respondents, including students, staff, and the general public, regarding the visibility and accessibility of ITC at Manado State Polytechnic can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Interview Results Regarding the Visibility and Accessibility of ITC at Manado State Polytechnic

No	Dimension	Interview Results
1	Awareness of the Existence of International Test Centers	• Very knowledgeable: 8 respondents (16%) • Generally knowledgeable: 12 respondents (24%) • Heard but do not know the details: 18 respondents (36%) • Not knowledgeable at all: 12 respondents (24%)
2	Sources of Information About International Test Centers	• From lecturers/campus staff: 15 respondents (30%) • Campus social media: 10 respondents (20%) • Friends/family: 13 respondents (26%) • Never heard of: 12 respondents (24%)
3	Accessibility of Physical Facilities	• Very easy access (Strategic location, clear signs): 10 respondents (20%) • Quite easy access (Clear location, minimal signs): 20 respondents (40%) • Quite difficult access (no clear signs): 14 respondents (28%) • Very difficult access (confusing, takes time to find): 6 respondents (12%)
4	Availability of Information and Promotion	• Information is very easy to find: 6 respondents (12%) • Information is quite easy to find: 14 respondents (28%) • Information is difficult to find: 18 respondents (36%) • Do not know where to find information: 12 respondents (24%)
5	Satisfaction with Facilities and Services	• Very satisfied: 7 respondents (14%) • Quite satisfied: 23 respondents (46%) • Less satisfied: 15 respondents (30%)

6	Barriers to Accessing Testing Services	• Not satisfied: 5 respondents (10%) • Inflexible test schedule: 20 respondents (40%) • Location too far from home: 5 respondents (10%) • Lack of information about registration procedures: 18 respondents (36%)
7	Desire to Take Tests at International Test Centers	• Test costs considered too high: 7 respondents (14%) • Have taken the test: 8 respondents (16%) • Plan to take the test in the next 4 months: 15 respondents (30%) • Interested but do not know when: 17 respondents (34%) • Not interested: 10 respondents (20%)
8	Recommendations for Increasing Visibility and Accessibility	• • Increase promotion through social media: 35 respondents (70%) • • Add more flexible test schedules: 30 respondents (60%) • • Provide more information through the campus website: 32 respondents (64%) • • Improve physical facilities and directional signs: 28 respondents (56%) • • Collaborate with external institutions to increase accessibility: 25 respondents (50%)

Source: processed (2024)

Table 1 shows that the Interview related to the Visibility and Accessibility of ITC at Manado State Polytechnic covers eight dimensions: Awareness of the existence of the International Test Center, Sources of Information About the International Test Center, Accessibility of Physical Facilities, Availability of Information and Promotion, Satisfaction with Facilities and Services, Barriers in Accessing Test Services, Desire to Take the Test at the International Test Center, and Recommendations for Improving Visibility and Accessibility. Based on this study, there are five Recommendations for Improving Visibility and Accessibility: Increasing promotion through social media: 35 respondents (70%), Adding more flexible test schedules: 30 respondents (60%), Providing more information through the campus website: 32 respondents (64%), Improving physical facilities and directions: 28 respondents (56%), and Cooperation with external institutions to expand accessibility: 25 respondents (50%).

The results of this study also provide implications for ITC to make breakthroughs that can attract participants, both from students, staff, and the general public, and contribute more widely to improving foreign language skills in local and regional environments. The results of this study also provide a strong foundation for further development, both in the form of further research and the implementation of more targeted and targeted policies. Ultimately, the results of this study can be a foundation for optimizing the role of ITC at the Manado State Polytechnic as a credible and quality center for foreign language education and certification. This aligns with the Manado State Polytechnic's vision to become a center of excellence for technology, innovation, and transformative learning with an international perspective in the industrial era 4.0 (Polimdo, 2020, 2022).

Conclusion

This study has analyzed the visibility and accessibility of the International Test Center (ITC) as a foreign language test center at Manado State Polytechnic. The study results indicate that the visibility and accessibility of the International Test Center (ITC) of Manado State Polytechnic can still be improved through various strategic steps. Several things that need to be considered include more effective promotion, facility improvements, and service adjustments. The main obstacles identified, such as the lack of easily accessible information and inflexible test schedules,

provide valuable insights for managers in designing more efficient and targeted strategies in the future. This study provides an in-depth understanding of the current conditions while offering practical recommendations that can be immediately implemented to enhance the role of ITC as a competitive foreign language test center in the region. By implementing the recommended improvements, ITC is expected to attract more participants from students, staff, and the general public and contribute to improving foreign language skills at the local and regional levels. The results of this study provide a strong foundation for further development, both through further research and the implementation of more targeted policies. In addition, this study is expected to support the optimization of the role of the ITC of Manado State Polytechnic as a credible and quality foreign language education and certification center.

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