



Identifying Lecturer' Perspectives on Excellent Academic Culture in the University to Improve Productivity Using Q-methodology

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Abstract. Universities are currently required to improve institutional quality to be able to compete globally. An excellent academic culture is needed to encourage lecturers to be more productive in publication achievement to achieve the goal. In the last two decades, lecturers and universities have demanded publication targets in reputable indexed international journals, such as Scopus and the Web of Sciences, which have become benchmarks for this achievement. Therefore, it needs the support of academic culture in which lecturers can work comfortably. However, the problem is that there is no detailed description of what kind of academic culture in higher education can encourage lecturers to be more productive. This study aims to identify lecturers' perspectives at a university in Indonesia about excellent academic culture. Q-methodology was used to identify and explain the subjectivity of research subjects. The results showed two viewpoints on creating excellent academic culture, one of which is excellent academic culture due to less administrative works. Another viewpoint is the responsibility of university leaders in making better academic culture. This research implies that the two viewpoints are completed by each other. The lecturer feels more comfortable improving their productivity and not because there is a reward from publication achievement.

Keywords: Academic Culture, Lecturer, Productivity, Q-methodology, Universitas Negeri Semarang

1 Introduction

Universities are currently in the middle of globalization and capitalism, making the university undergo an exceptionally rapid transformation [1]. The challenges faced by universities in Indonesia are enormous, especially concerning publication performance. The role of generating knowledge, examining ideas, and producing knowledgeable and skillful graduates is essential. Still, nowadays, the university's reputation and ranking are determined by the number of internationally indexed publications in Scopus in

particular. Therefore, the achievement of the publication output target has increased every year. However, many universities in the United States and Europe are already heading to be the entrepreneurship university. Meanwhile, universities in Indonesia still follow traditional measurements of achievement, which are centered on publication [2].

Each university has its respective strategies in increasing the publications of its lecturers. Lecturers must carry out their duties and show positive performance due to organizational workers in universities [3]. As a part of a higher education organization, the main task of a lecturer is to facilitate education and teaching, conduct research activities, and carry out community service activities that are beneficial to society. To support these tasks and boost productivity excellent academic culture is needed to create an atmosphere in which the academic community is encouraged to be more productive [4]. Academic culture is a way communication and interaction among university members are channeled down. This includes improving the lecturer management system to increase lecturer productivity through lecturer work efficiency [5]. Therefore, a university leadership style that creates a supportive atmosphere plays a crucial role in realizing an excellent academic culture [6].

Shen & Tian defines academic culture as academic outlook, academic spirits, academic ethics, and academic environments [7]. Academic culture is essential to enhance the construction of campus culture or organizational culture. In other words, to implement an excellent academic performance, all elements of academia need the support of an excellent academic culture. Creating an excellent academic culture is a form of institutional support for the academic community. A conducive and pleasant academic culture is an important factor in research productivity [8]. Lecturers can influence how academic things are done because culture is dynamic and can be changed [9]. How about Indonesian higher education? According to Law no. 20 of 2003, academic culture is a way of life of a diverse, pluralistic, multicultural scientific community founded in an institute that bases itself on the value of scientific truth and objectivity. This value is obtained from the interaction between the community, facilities/infrastructure, management organization, curriculum and involvement, and roles [10]. Building an academic culture is not easy. The quality of the academic community assesses the quality of higher education in developing and building an academic culture [5]. Moreover, Mulyati, in her study, concluded that the better the academic culture of an environment will affect the performance of individuals in that environment [10]. Apart from their factors, such as spiritual leaders and one's competence will affect one's performance.

However, there is no agreement on the definition of academic culture in Indonesia. The lecturers work under different circumstances of academic culture. Margaretha & Saragih stated that some reasons for the productivity of Indonesian lecturers are low because the reward system is still weak [11]. The teaching load of lecturers is still high when comparing the total number of lecturers with the number of students. Only 11% of lecturers have doctoral education qualifications. The higher education system in Indonesia does not yet have the same standards of productivity and efficiency measures. The non-standardized reward system for lecturers who have performed well in a predetermined time has made lecturers less enthusiastic about producing publications.

Moreover, the high teaching workload results in a lack of time and energy to research and produce publications [5]. Therefore, unhealthy, and unsupportive academic culture made lecturers less enthusiastic about being more productive. Academic culture is related to coordination and control in an organization, and this is the responsibility of top-level management in university. Academic culture determines whether the university fully meets its obligations to society [12, 13].

Concerning academic culture, many scholars also discussed the lack of academic freedom in the university. Academic freedom is a core value of a university that is understood as the right of academia within a university to have spoken, teach, and even do research freely without interference from other parties [14, 15]. This right of academic freedom is often taken for granted by academia in universities. Academic freedom should provide by the university by providing a comfortable condition for teaching and research. Academic freedom implies a right but also an obligation for academia [16]. Unfortunately, academic freedom is mainly discussed in a normative context only and far from the actual situation [17]. Academic autonomy and academic freedom in the university are challenged by direct teaching assessment from students, research donor organizations, and ministries, restricting academia from performing their activities to improve productivity [18]. In addition to that, academic freedom encourages lecturers and students to think creatively, innovative and quality teaching-learning activities [19].

In Indonesian universities, Yamin adds that the literacy ability of lecturers is a vital asset to revive the scientific culture, especially literacy related to scientific publications [4]. So, to increase scientific publications to increase university lecturers' productivity, it is necessary to have a good literacy policy to build an academic climate. To develop an academic culture in higher education, there are four educational pillars from UNESCO that can be applied: learning to know, learning to do, learning to be, and learning to live together [5].

This research focuses on lecturers' perspectives in interpreting academic culture at Universitas Negeri Semarang (UNNES) and what aspects of the academic culture at UNNES are influential in increasing their productivity in publications and other academic activities. To see various perspectives on the meaning of academic culture, a Q-methodology will be used to map the priority aspects of the academic culture at UNNES. This article aims to identify the viewpoints of academic culture among Indonesian lecturers in UNNES and the challenges faced by lecturers to improve their productivities.

2 Research Methodology

2.1 Research Design

This study uses Q-methodology, an approach developed by William Stephenson in the 1930s. Q-methodology is an innovative way to study one's subjectivity [20]. This study is increasingly popular to systematically obtain individual perspectives and analyze differences and overlaps of individual views using quantitative correlation analysis [21]. This method has been widely used in various social science fields, such as social

psychology, political science, and sociology. This method, for example, is used to identify views on citizenship, public interest, to political views [20]. Q-methodology is different from the quantitative survey and questionnaire methods. Suppose the quantitative method asks respondents to express their opinion through the statements that are already available. In that case, Q-methodology identifies the respondents' views on statements in the context of providing an assessment. These statements are obtained from the results of interactions between researchers and respondents. So, Q-methodology combines positivistic (quantitative) and constructivist (qualitative) approaches or mixed methods [22]. Meanwhile, how the statements are formulated is constructivist, and how the results of respondents' assessments are analyzed using a positivistic approach. To identify and explore lecturers' perspectives on superior academic culture, the use of q-methodology is very appropriate here.

This research will be located at Universitas Negeri Semarang (UNNES), Central Java, Indonesia. UNNES is a campus that using publication ranking as a sign of achievement to compete globally. Therefore, all the lecturers firmly pushed to publish their work in indexed and reputable international journals and periodically evaluate the lecturers' achievements. As an institution, UNNES more focused on the results, but the process and the atmosphere of academic culture are hardly discussed within the university.

2.2 Procedure and Sampling

Q-methodology consists of six stages as summarized by Cuppen [21] Hermans et al. [21], and Mandolesi et al. [23].

The first stage is the "construction of concourse" or forming associations. The association here is a collection of statements on the topics raised [21, 23]. This society covers a comprehensive range of perspectives on the topic in question. In this research, the association is a policymaker at UNNES. The statements will be collected from; first, the results of the analysis of scientific articles with the keywords are academic culture, academic freedom, lecturer productivity, and university performance, second from the UNNES strategic plan document and the UNNES performance report. At this stage, the researcher succeeded in collecting 177 statements extracted from the various sources mentioned above.

The second stage is to compile the Q-set. The set of statements totaling 177 statements collected in the first stage is then selected into 42 statements. The statement is divided into several topic groups: academic freedom, academic culture, lecturer productivity in research and publication, and constraints on lecturer productivity in research and publication. Furthermore, three lecturers were tested for reading the statement and trying to rank the statement. The result is because this method was the first time they encountered it, making it difficult to understand the clues. They are also overwhelmed to rank the 42 statements. Based on the results of these trials, the researcher revised the Q-set by selecting the return statements and finally obtained 36 statements. This number is sufficient to represent the topic but can still be handled by the respondent when responding. The researcher also clarifies the description of the work instructions so that it is easy for respondents to understand.

The third stage is to select respondents. Unlike the survey method, Q-methodology does not require a large sample but a sample that can cover multiple perspectives. In this study, the population was lecturers from all eight faculties at UNNES, namely the Faculty of Education (FIP), the Faculty of Language and Arts (FBS), the Faculty of Social Sciences (FIS), the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences (FMIPA), Faculty of Sport Science (FIK), Faculty of Engineering (FT), Faculty of Economics (FE), and Faculty of Law (FH). Samples will be randomly selected and represent the various groups of gender, functional lecturer positions, faculty, and work experience.

2.3 Data Collection

The fourth stage is to rank the statements in the second stage by the respondents or Q-sort. Respondents will be asked to compile statements on boxes on the Q-sort sheet representing strongly disagree, neutral, and strongly agree (Figure 1).

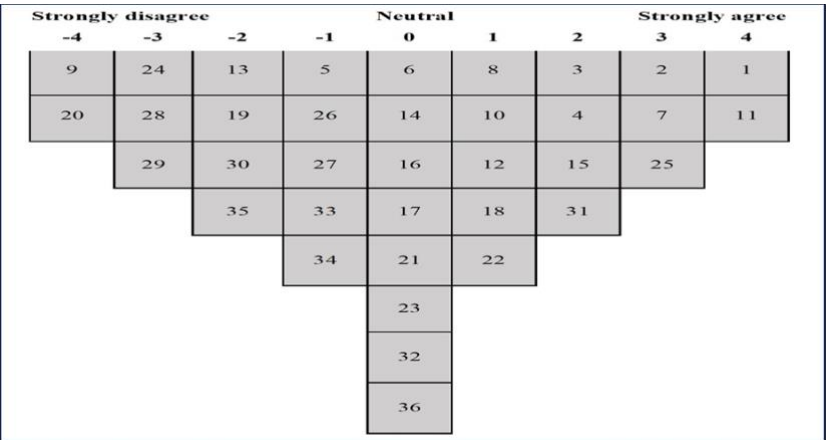


Fig. 1 Example of a completed Q-sort from one of the respondents

Interviews with individual respondents or discussion groups were also conducted to explain the reasons for their choice. This will help interpret the results. Constraints occurred during the Q questionnaire distribution stage in July - August 2020. Due to the campus policy on Work from Home (WFH) to minimize the spread of the Covid-19 virus, the available lecturers at the office were very limited as they work on a rotation schedule. However, this research still managed to collect 40 respondents from eight faculties suitable with the sampling criteria explained above. Nevertheless, all respondents stated that they worked on this form of a questionnaire for the first time. Most were eager to fill it out, and some found it too complicated and took a long time to fill.

2.4 Analysis and Perspectives

The fifth stage analyses the Q factor using a particular software Q methodology, namely the PQ Method. Previously, the completed questionnaires were recapitulated using the

Microsoft Excel program to obtain neatly organized results and easy data reading. First, we transfer the results into a Q-sheet in the original bipolar scale (-4 to +4). Then, the data were factor analyzed to identify patterns among individuals in the group [24]. The main idea is to identify several factors that explain variations in the perspective of academic culture. There are two ways of extracting (unrotated) factors: centroid analysis and principal component analysis [25]. In this paper, we use principal component analysis (PCA) with varimax rotation (automatic), as this procedure is reliable and relatively univocal in its perspective [26]. All 40 Q-sort is entered into a free-accessible PQMethod program, analyzed, and distributed along with the eight unplayed factors. This is relatively high for Q-studies because the standard number of factors is usually 2 to 4 [20] and implies that the variance in Q-sort is relatively high. We, therefore, selected the two factors with the most significant difference in their so-called eigenvalues for the varimax rotation. The two factors were selected based on which factors provide information to the communality, as this can be seen from the more respondents loaded on that factor [27]. Rotation is meant to find as many factor variations as possible. The analysis results with the PQMethod software obtained two factors with the most significant difference, called "eigenvalues." The eigenvalues (characteristic values) are the sum of the factor loads squared for that factor. The characteristic values of the two factors obtained by the varimax rotation are 12.8269 and 3.4883. We use the Q-methodology to understand differences and similarities in perspectives and not see the percentage of perspectives in the population.

The sixth stage is interpreting the factor analysis results by looking at the statements with the highest and lowest scores. Looking at the most different statements from one respondent to another is also helpful for interpreting factors. The sixth and final stage of our Q-method consists of identifying the perspectives resulting from the factor analysis. The statistical analysis resulted in two factors (factors A and B). Respondents with similar perspectives on academic culture were distributed within the same factors. The results informed us of the degree of agreement and disagreement between the factors for each statement [28]. The advantage of the Q-methodology is that the researcher can determine which respondents are included in what factors. This makes it possible to compare the perspectives of lecturers between faculties with different work experiences and ranks.

3 Results and Discussion

3.1 Demographics of Respondents

A total of 40 respondents from eight faculties (i.e., each faculty five respondents) in UNNES were willing to fill out the Q sort. These respondents consist of 15 male and 25 female lecturers. The respondents are active lecturers with various academic positions and work experience. The profile of respondents is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Respondents based on Work Experience

Length of Work	Number of Respondents
0-2 years	5

3-5 years	10
6-10 years	5
11-19 years	15
20 years and over	5
Total	40

Respondents’ work group length varies from junior to the senior lecturer with more than 20 years of work experience. In the university, academic positions are related to the rights, obligations, and responsibilities carried out by lecturers. In Indonesia, there are four layers of academic position, in Bahasa namely *Asisten Ahli*, *Lektor*, *Lektor Kepala*, and *Guru Besar*. However, based on the Decree of the Minister of Research, Technology and Higher Education of the Republic of Indonesia Number 164/M/KPT/2019 concerning the Mention of Lecturer Academic Position in English, the four-layer is simplified into three; namely, Assistant Professor is equal to *Asisten Ahli* and *Lektor*, Associate Professor is equal to *Lektor Kepala*, and Professor is *Guru Besar*. Lecturers who do not have yet the academic position we called them lecturer or faculty members because they still new or less than two years length of work, for the detailed respondents based on the academic position in Table 2.

Table 2. Respondents based on Academic Position

Academic Position	Number of Respondents
Lecturer	8
Assistant Professor	25
Associate Professor	5
Professor	0
Total	40

The number of assistant professors in more than half of the respondents is understandable because it consists of two positions; *Asisten Ahli* and *Lektor*. They are the biggest group in the university. In this research, there is no representative from the group of professors. Although it could be interesting to see their perspective, it does not affect the result.

3.2 Perspective 1: Excellent Academic Culture is Less Administrative Workload

The number of respondents in the first perspective was 22 people (out of 40 people). More respondents agree that an excellent academic culture can be created if lecturers focus on research and publication without any administrative workload (Table 3). Of the eight faculties at UNNES, only respondents from the Faculty of Education (FIP) are all in perspective 1, while other faculties are divided into factors 1 and 2. Meanwhile, there is no significant effect of functional lecturer positions on distribution factors 1 and 2. Lecturers with functional positions Assistant Professor and Associate Professor are more in the perspective of 1. However, there is a slight difference when seen from work experience. There are two groups based on the length of work. For lecturers who

have worked for more than ten years, they are in perspective 1, while junior lecturers (less than ten years) are the same in factors 1 and 2.

Table 3. Significant Values of Perspective 1

No.	Statements	Z-score
Considered important in academic culture:		
2	Academic culture in higher education affects the performance of lecturers	1.902
8	The large teaching load is the reason for the lack of time for research and publication	1.899
16	Administrative and institutional duties lead to a lack of time for research and publication	1.580
Considered not important in academic culture:		
20	Lack of awards received causes lecturers to lack motivation for research and publication	-1.102
19	The productivity of research and lecturer publications is driven by the motivation to gain promotion	-1.156
27	Inadequate facilities and infrastructure (such as adding library materials, internet access, and free access to journal databases) have resulted in lecturers being unable to produce quality writing	-1.174
29	Creating a supportive academic atmosphere is the sole responsibility of higher education leaders	-1.530
21	The campus community is directed to think single and uniformly in seeing problems	-2.255

The respondents in perspective one firmly assumes that the academic culture in higher education affects the performance of lecturers (statement number 2). They felt that the large teaching load was the cause of a lack of time for research and publication (statement number 8) and that administrative and institutional tasks led to a lack of time for research and publication (statement number 16). Respondents in factor 1 think that their performance will improve if given the space and time to focus more on research and publication rather than on administrative work. Meanwhile, respondents in factor 1 did not consider promotions and awards for achievements in research and publication (statements number 19 and 20). Likewise, with facilities, facilities, and infrastructure such as journal database access, it is not a barrier for lecturers to produce quality writing (statement number 27).

3.3 Perspective 2: Excellent Academic Culture is the Leader's Support

The number of respondents who are in factor 2 is 18 people (out of 40 respondents). Respondents who chose factor 2 were in seven other faculties with an equivalent ratio of 3 - 2 or 2 - 3 in each faculty. The respondents in perspective two still see the academic

culture with positive and normative thinking. They agree with the definition of academic culture itself (statements number 11 and 22). It is different from respondents in perspective one who has seen the implementation of academic culture during their careers in tertiary institutions so that it is based on their experience. Following the summary table for factor 2, we present only a few statements that are most important and least important in the picture of the respondents' academic culture (Table 4).

Table 4. Significant Values of Perspective 2

No.	Statements	Z-score
Considered important in academic culture:		
11	Academic culture aims not only to improve intellectuality but also to honesty, truth, and dedication to humanity	1.799
22	The academic culture that all academicians and their leaders strongly hold can improve the performance of all academicians in higher education	1.670
1	Academic freedom is the freedom to teach and carry out research without fear of outside intervention	1.647
Considered not important in academic culture:		
9	The lack of discussion culture in higher education	-1.530
13	Academic freedom is often discussed in normative rather than empirical terms	-1.587
29	Creating a supportive academic atmosphere is the sole responsibility of higher education leaders	-1.729

Respondents in this perspective see that academic culture can be created as long as the leader makes it possible to actualize excellent academic culture. Although creating an academic atmosphere is the responsibility of all elements of the academic community in a university, the leadership is responsible for policies that support the habituation of a conducive and supportive academic culture.

3.4 Discussion

Academic culture can be interpreted differently by everyone. The academic culture in higher education is considered superior because it produces many products of deep thought such as scientific articles, research, books, innovative products, etc. From the results above, academic culture, according to the lecturers, is an academic atmosphere or atmosphere where lecturers can freely develop their knowledge and self-development through research, teaching, and dedication. Lecturers in UNNES perceived academic culture as not results from reward or achievement, but rather a supportive atmosphere where lecturers can work comfortably and become more productive is the expectation. As explained in the results, received rewards or higher positions is not the primary goal in the university. Moreover, during the interviews, lecturers also point out academic freedom that they do not feel yet. Academic freedom is also referred to activate scientific forums so lecturers from multidisciplinary could discuss or even joint research.

UNNES lecturers have views on academic culture, which they imagine can increase their productivity in implementing the tri dharma of higher education, especially publications. At first, we assume that their working experience and academic position might influence the lecturer's perspectives. However, the results showed that it is not always the case. The senior lecturer does not always have the first perspective and vice versa, the junior lecturer, does not always have the second perspective about academic culture. If it is related to the superior academic culture developed by UNNES, then there is compatibility between the university and the wishes of the lecturers. However, in its implementation, lecturers face challenges in increasing their productivity in an established academic culture environment. However, realizing a good academic culture in the university might nothing like what they expected. They faced some challenges.

First, too much administrative work. Most of the lecturers wrote that reduced administrative work could increase lecturer productivity. Many lecturers feel that they are too burdened by administrative work, which takes up time and energy. As a result, time and opportunities for carrying out research and dedication are reduced. The consequence is that it is no longer productive to write quality scientific articles. Besides, of course, good-quality articles come from quality research as well. Even lecturer respondents stated briefly and clearly that making finance report activities could not increase lecturer productivity. Lecturers should be freed from administrative workloads that are not related to the scientific development of the lecturers, including sudden work. Often lecturers are confused if there is an invitation and sudden work to not carry out plans/schedules that have been arranged in advance, including teaching. Almost all respondents saw administrative work as an obstacle for them to be more productive in carrying out research and publications or just scientific discussions. Time and energy are consumed in carrying out administrative work that educational personnel should have done, or the process has been cut short.

Second, limited scientific forum. It turns out that many lecturers feel the lack of scientific discussions held and developed at UNNES. It is necessary to develop open and rational, and objective discussions in the department's scope to the university. They hope and long for scientific discussion forums to upgrade their knowledge and inspiration for research and publication on the side-lines of their busy schedule. Scientific discussions also need to be responded to by my colleagues and other academicians. Many research universities such as UGM have many thematic study centers where there are lecturers from various disciplines. The study center was very active in conducting research and obtaining grants from foreign institutions.

Meanwhile, UNNES does not have anything like that. Even if a study center is still faculty-based and even department-based, no multidisciplinary discussion is being held. It is unfortunate even though UNNES has wider research opportunities with education. Thus, it is necessary to activate multidisciplinary scientific discussions so that research development is also of higher quality. This discussion forum aims to stimulate lecturers in developing critical, innovative, and creative thinking. Enabling interdisciplinary scientific discussions is related to the next challenge, namely academic freedom in higher education.

Third, the guarantee of academic freedom. Academic freedom is part of the academic culture, but many universities ignore this and close the room for academic

freedom. Several lecturers stated the importance of academic freedom in a superior academic culture. So, an academic culture gives lecturers freedom of thought. Lecturers hope that they will be given the freedom to develop their knowledge according to their field of expertise. Lecturers also want academic freedom in terms of teaching. For example, freedom in conveying material and even the media used. It also provides opportunities for lecturers, such as offering research or funding, or training, which provides equal opportunities for all lecturers regardless of education level and rank. An academic culture that can increase productivity is an academic culture that supports freedom of thought, openness, and a critical attitude. It means that lecturers are given freedom in rational critical thinking with exposure to self-development.

In general, the respondent's written answers are that the three conditions above must be overcome to create an academic culture that supports lecturers to be more productive. The reduction in administrative work, the growth of scientific and multidisciplinary forums, and the guarantee of academic freedom were the conditions most frequently mentioned by the respondents. The support of a conducive academic atmosphere such as being in a productive academic, cultural environment that contains people who are indeed productive to improve their abilities is not just an academic requirement. Apart from the above conditions, a small proportion of respondents mentioned facilitation issues that need to be enhanced for self-development through access to international journals. No respondent said the problem of reward as a condition of academic culture that can increase lecturer productivity. It means that lecturers are more concerned with input and processes that support their productivity, especially in writing and researching, not only on the reward results that lecturer will receive.

4 Conclusion

Academic culture can have different meanings for lecturers. Academic culture is not only an atmosphere but how the academic community can work comfortably to be more productive. The lecturer's perspective on the academic culture at UNNES is known using Q-methodology. With a long stage, two factors from the perspective of academic culture are obtained they are "Excellent Academic Culture is Less Administrative Workload" and "Excellent Academic Culture is the Leader's Support". Lecturers with more experience and more than 10 years of work want an academic culture that gives them the flexibility of time and energy to be productive in writing and researching, unfortunately, administrative work is still inherent. Meanwhile, lecturers with a tenure of fewer than 10 years still see the academic culture as something ideal in organization. So, in strengthening the superior academic culture at UNNES it is necessary to combine these two factors. Creating an academic culture that can increase lecturer productivity. Lecturers place more emphasis on input and process, not on the results obtained when they are productive. This is interesting because it turns out that reward for publication achievement is not the goal of lecturers, but academic freedom and academic atmosphere are important to be productive. Further research should focus on the possible criterion of academic culture for lecturers in the university so that the top

leader management could create a better academic culture climate to support the productivity improvements.

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