

ISSN 1675-9192

VOL. 1 NO. 1 Tahun 2004



PROSIDING KOLOKSIUM 2004



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KOLOKIUM 2004

UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA
CAWANGAN KEDAH
KAMPUS SUNGAI PETANI

Tema:
Budaya Kesarjanaan

Pada:
13 Mei 2004

Tempat:
Dewan Mini
Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Kedah
Kampus Sungai Petani
Kedah Darul Aman

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STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES ON TEACHING QUALITY DETERMINANTS: A COMPARATIVE STUDY BETWEEN SOCIAL SCIENCES AND PURE SCIENCES STUDENTS IN THE NORTHERN REGION UNIVERSITIES

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ABSTRACT

The present study seeks to determine the possible criteria that would affect the level of teaching quality among academicians of Institute of Higher Learning from the students' perspectives. Three universities in the Northern region were selected in this study, which include Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Kedah, Perlis and Pulau Pinang Branch Campuses, Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), and Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM). A sample of 500 Social Sciences and Pure Sciences students from the three universities was selected for this study.

The findings showed that the teaching quality determinants that are ranked as very important to both social sciences and pure sciences students are as follows; Clarity, Feedback, Syllabus, Creativity, Practicality, Exercises, Attention, Enthusiasm, Availability, Approachable, Communication And Language Use. Moreover, the social sciences students also perceived the other five determinants i.e Motivation, Extra Reading, Technology, Punctuality and Current Issues as very important, while the pure sciences students perceived them as important except for current issues, which is perceived as not important.

INTRODUCTION

The University recognizes that the quality of teaching is one of the most important determinants of learning outcomes. Exploration of students' opinions about the value accorded to teaching is very important to enhance the development of quality

teaching methods in the future. It improves the quality of students' learning, encourages the development of both specialist knowledge and more general competences. By helping students to develop skills of a lifetime learning (such as independence, critical thinking, and willingness to learn) it enhances the capacity of graduates to contribute to the well being of the society in which they live.

There are many factors that give impacts on the achievement and processes judged as quality in higher education. One of the most important factors is the lecturer's intellectual capability in transmitting the knowledge to the students. In a wider community, there is a perception that university lecturers are "experts", "professional repositories" of complex knowledge skilled in the transmission of the knowledge to the students or recipients.

Ramsden as stated in Franklin et al. (2000) indicate that teachers may see themselves as transmitters of information, thereby reflecting the wider expectation, as opposed to that of transformers of students' learning. The teacher is portrayed in one of the three roles-the manager of the learning environment, the facilitator of learning, and the spoon-feeder.

Nightingale and O'Neil (1994) suggest that in looking for a meaningful definition of quality in learning in higher education, we should be looking at education as a transformative process involving a change in roles of the students and the teachers, and gear it to an assumption of quality being part of a continuous improvement process.

Ellis et al. (1993) state that, in its simplest form, quality in university teaching would be that which satisfies the primary consumer, the students. Two approaches to quality assurance for university teaching are identified as being most widespread. The first involves the planning, validation and review of courses, while the second is the use of feedback from students on the perceived quality of teaching.

According to Acosta (2000), the formulation of the objectives of the course has to be understood as one of the most important aspects of course design, since it is upon it that the choice of the most appropriate didactic means, the teaching methodology and the evaluation forms will depend. Acosta (2000) also states that, an aspect of unquestionable importance for improving teaching quality consists of establishing a good communication link between the educator and the student.

OBJECTIVES

- To determine the teaching quality factors among lecturers from the social science and pure science students' perspective.
- To promote and recognize teaching effectiveness so that they are held continuously by lecturers in higher education.
- To promote towards Quality Management in the process of upgrading the lecturers' skills, productivity, motivation, innovation and creativity in their teaching process.

DEFINITION OF TERMS AND CONCEPTS

Teaching Quality Determinants

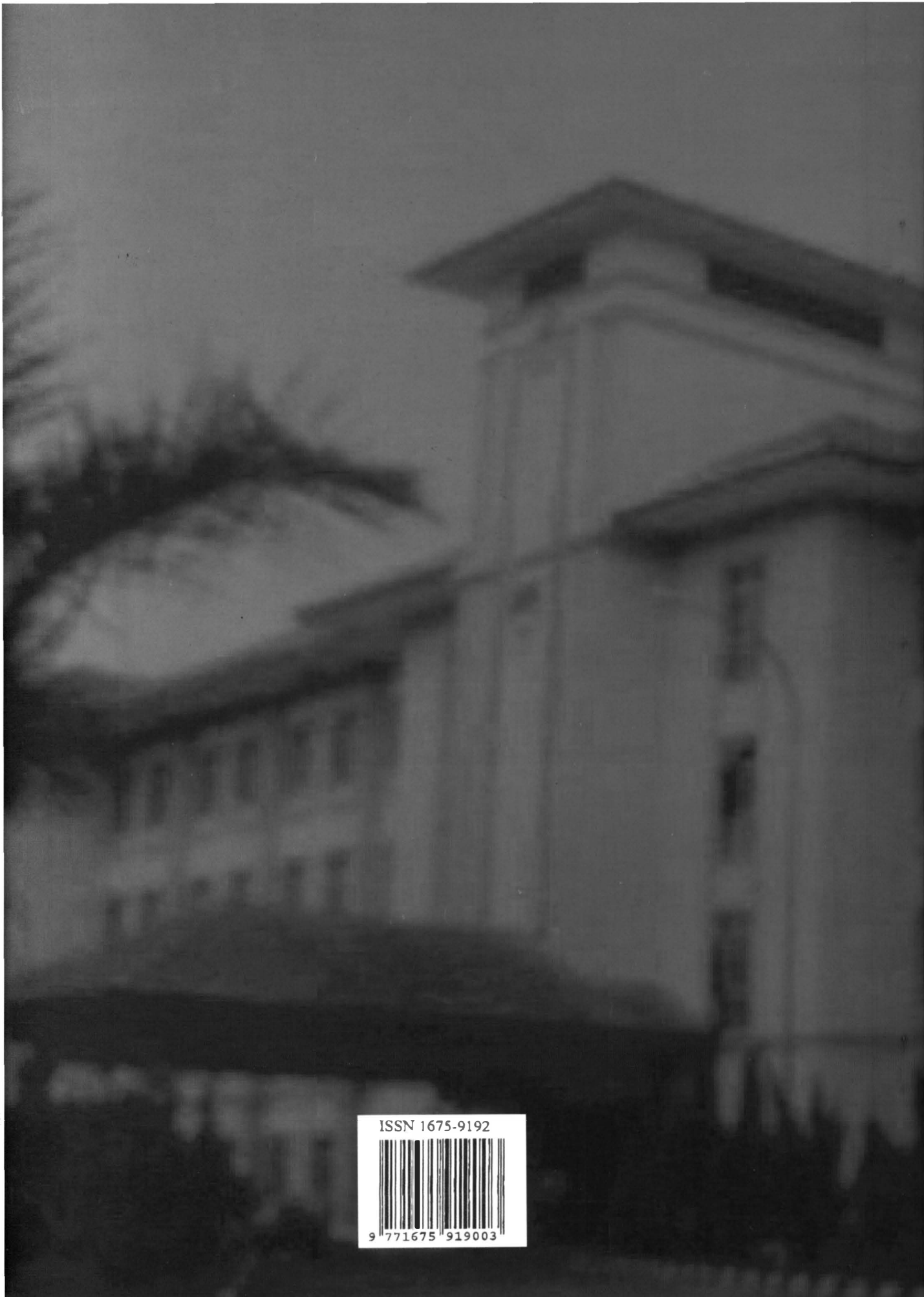
This study will identify the teaching quality determinants/factors, which includes:

NO.	DETERMINANTS	EXPLANATION
1.	CLARITY	Lecturers' explanation are clear and easily understood.
2.	PRACTICALITY	Lecturers relate the lesson with practical issues.
3.	EXERCISES	Lecturers give a lot of exercises
4.	ATTENTION	Lecturers give individual attention to students and maintain good relationship with them inside and outside classroom.
5.	ENTHUSIASM	Lecturers show enthusiasm and capability in the subject.
6.	CREATIVITY	Lecturers are creative and make the class interesting.
7.	FEEDBACK	Lecturers give feedback on each exercise and test/quizzes done by students.
8.	SYLLABUS	Lecturers cover the syllabus content fully.
9.	MOTIVATION	Lecturers motivate students in achieving success.
10.	EXTRA READING	Lecturers encourage students to do extra reading.
11.	AVAILABILITY	Lecturers can be contacted easily for any problem related to students' studies.
12.	TECHNOLOGY	Lecturers always relate the subject with new technology advancement.
13.	PUNCTUALITY	Lecturers always come to class on time and finish lecture on time.
14.	CURRENT ISSUE	Lecturers try to relate the subject with the local and international current issues.
15.	APPROACHABLE	The students can easily approach the lecturers.
16.	LANGUAGE USE	Lecturers use language at par with student's level of understanding.
17.	COMMUNICATION	There is a two-way communication permissible during and after classroom.

Note: For determinants No. 1-11, this study referred to a research conducted by Choo H.C and Norhayati Samba (1995).

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ISSN 1675-9192



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