

## QUALITIES OF A LECTURER THAT STUDENTS VALUE THE MOST: A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY

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### ABSTRACT

The question of what qualities that lecturers should possess is a central part of any new or established institution of higher learning. It is always important, but even more in the case of study when lecturers or educators need to adapt to an explicit and exceptional teaching environment that suits the needs of military students. A sample of 457 military students from three different academic backgrounds involved in the survey. A five-point Likert scale was used to assess students' ratings on the lecturers' traits, knowledge transfer, and evaluation skills. The last item was left open-ended for students to fill up other desirable qualities of a lecturer. The research found that the element of personal traits of lecturers is highly rated (47.6%) by the students and their views on an ideal lecturer is more a matter of how a lecturer presents him/herself than performance or skill. For that, being responsive is preferred the most (60%) by the respondents as an essential item to be evaluated. Based on the analysis of the open-ended question, 50 out of 297 students prefer lecturers with a pleasant and joyful character. These students' perspectives provide a broad understanding of a quality lecturer or educator in a higher institution.

**Keywords:** *evaluation skills, knowledge transfer, personal traits, students' perspectives*

### INTRODUCTION

The use of student ratings of teaching (which are, in essence, student opinions of quality teaching) is the most common practice employed at universities to evaluate the teaching quality of their lecturers. Teaching quality has been recognised as one of the major factors in student achievement and overall student success in several studies ( e.g, Hornguin, 2017; Gee, 2018; Crane & Kuyken, 2019). It has been studied through many different lenses even though there is no single definition

of teacher quality that emerges in the literature (Thompson, 2016). This suggests that even though there are common qualities of teacher, the qualities of teacher are perceived distinctly by groups of students and they are subjective in nature.

Despite abundant theories and frameworks on teaching and data on the various characteristics of educators or academicians, the teaching quality on the perspectives of students was not given worthy attention in the literature. Most of the literature documented the teaching quality from the perspective of teachers itself and the management of its constitution (Dilshad, 2010). The feedbacks of the students as the clients of higher learning institutions should be given paramount attention as they spent almost every day attending the lectures and dealing with academic matters with their lecturer for at least the entire semester. This allows students to assess the content of the course taught by lecturers, as well as their teaching performance and personalities.

Several studies suggest new approaches in the assessment or evaluation of teaching performance. The evaluation is based on three main areas, namely, lecturer characteristics, course contents, and tutorials, including several other aspects, but do not differ according to different targets of schools. The details gained from the evaluation can be used to make crucial choices as to whether a student meets the expectations that society puts on learners, including performing careers, utilising technical skills, critical thinking, participating in lifelong learning, and leading to future advancement. (Ministry of Science Technology and Innovation, 2019).

Responding to the studies, this study aims to examine how the cadet officers' perceptions of quality lecturer related to three research categories defining teaching quality: personal traits of lecturer, the ways of the lecturer impart his/her knowledge (knowledge transfer), and the methods of the lecturer evaluate his/her students (lecturer's knowledge evaluation). Specifically, this study sought to examine the qualities of lecturer that military students favour and investigate the other desirable features of lecturers concerning these qualities.

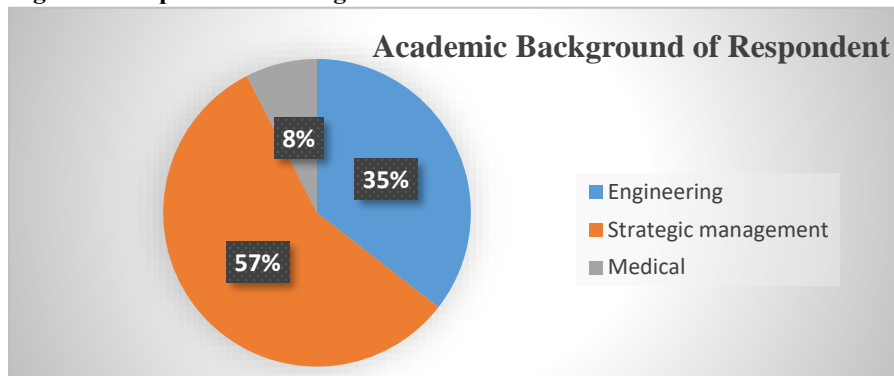
## **METHODOLOGY**

In this study, mixed-methods research was implemented to gain the students' perspective on the teaching quality at National Defense University of Malaysia. A survey using five-point Likert scale was employed indicating the level of agreement of respondents on the selection of the teaching criteria. The responses ranging from Strongly Important (SI), Important (I), Moderately Important (MI), Less Important (LI) to Not Important (NI) various elements of teaching quality obtained from an analysis by Vevere (2011). At the end of the survey questionnaire, there is one open-ended question aimed at other qualities of the lecturer that needed to be included in the analysis. The open-ended question provides a means of gaining student perspective using their own words and

provided insight into their comprehension and thinking about lecturers' teaching quality (Sutton & Austin, 2015). Thematic analysis of the student responses to the open-ended question was thus useful in gaining a meaningful understanding of the students' points-of-view.

A total of 504 registered students for the academic session of 2018/ 2019 volunteered to participate in the study. Of the 504 respondents, 457 of them (82.2%) completed all the items of self-ministered questionnaires. Most of the respondents (57%) were students of the Strategic Management programme, while 35% of them were students of engineering courses. Only 8% of the respondents were the students of the medical programme. The academic background of respondents is presented in figure 1 below.

**Figure 1. Respondents' background**



## FINDINGS AND DATA INTERPRETATIONS

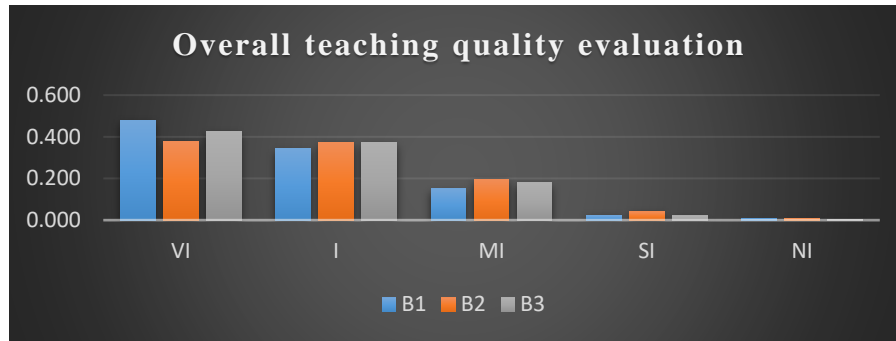
### Overall teaching quality

Generally, most respondents agree that personal traits, knowledge transfer, and knowledge evaluation are essential criteria for lecturers' assessment. Personal trait (B1) became apparent to be the most crucial item, followed by knowledge evaluation (B2), and knowledge transfer (B3). The details of the above analysis are presented in tables and figures below.

**Table 1. Respondents' ratings on overall teaching quality**

Criteria	VI	I	MI	LI	NI
Personal trait (B1)	0.476	0.343	0.150	0.023	0.006
Knowledge transfer (B2)	0.378	0.374	0.196	0.041	0.009
Knowledge evaluation (B3)	0.425	0.372	0.179	0.021	0.004

**Figure 2. Respondents' ratings on overall teaching quality**

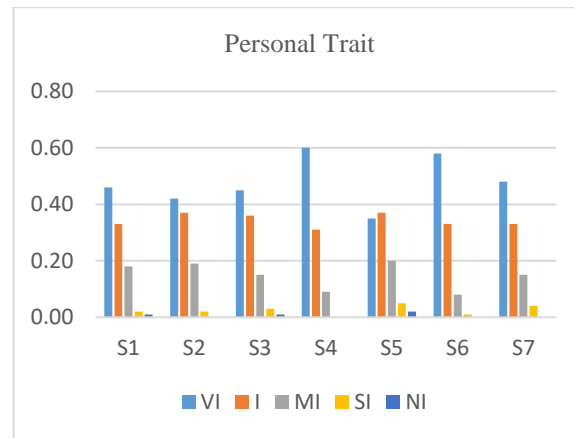


## Personal trait

**Table 2. Respondents' ratings on lecturers' personal traits**

	VI	I	MI	LI	NI
P1-1	0.46	0.33	0.18	0.02	0.01
P1-2	0.42	0.37	0.19	0.02	0.00
P1-3	0.45	0.36	0.15	0.03	0.01
P1-4	0.60	0.31	0.09	0.00	0.00
P1-5	0.35	0.37	0.20	0.05	0.02
P1-6	0.58	0.33	0.08	0.01	0.00
P1-7	0.48	0.33	0.15	0.04	0.00

**Fig.3 Respondents' ratings on lecturers' personal traits**



Referring to Table 2 and Figure 3, 'responsive' (P1-4) is preferred the most (60%) by the respondents as an essential item to be evaluated in terms of personal traits of lecturers. In comparison, 'punctuality' (P1-5) is marked as the least one (35%). Amongst all the seven items, 'speech culture' (P1-1) is perceived as a moderate vital trait to be possessed by lecturers. None of the respondents thinks that 'show respect for student' (P1-2), 'responsiveness' (P1-4), 'good manners' (P1-6), and 'ability to control and discipline students' (P1-7) are not essential items. However, there are few respondents (1-2%) who think that 'speech culture' (P1-1), 'appropriate appearance' (P1-3), and 'punctuality' (P1-5) are not essential items for consideration.

**Table 3. Summary Statistics Table for Interval and Ratio Variables of Lecturers' Traits**

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>SE<sub>M</sub></i>	Min	Max	Skewness	Kurtosis
P1-1	4.28	0.82	501	0.04	1.00	5.00	-0.92	0.40
P1-2	4.19	0.81	503	0.04	2.00	5.00	-0.62	-0.51
P1-3	4.23	0.86	495	0.04	1.00	5.00	-1.04	0.81
P1-4	4.50	0.68	495	0.03	2.00	5.00	-1.09	0.25

P1-5	3.97	0.97	503	0.04	1.00	5.00	-0.78	0.15
P1-6	4.48	0.67	500	0.03	2.00	5.00	-1.02	0.16
P1-7	4.23	0.86	502	0.04	1.00	5.00	-0.90	0.04

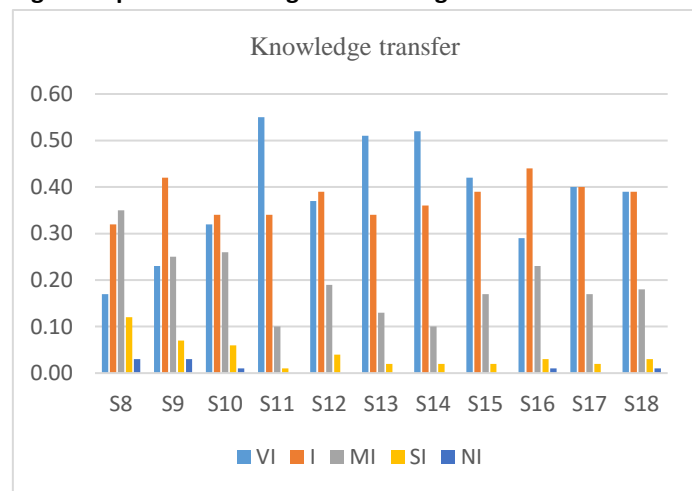
As shown in Table 3, the observations for P1-1 had an average of 4.28 ( $SD = 0.82$ ,  $SE_M = 0.04$ ,  $Min = 1.00$ ,  $Max = 5.00$ ,  $Skewness = -0.92$ ,  $Kurtosis = 0.40$ ). The observations for other teaching criteria are presented in Table 2. If the skewness is higher than 2 in absolute value, the variable is regarded as asymmetric for its mean. According to Westfall and Henning (2013), if the kurtosis is greater than or equal to 3, the distribution of the variable is significantly different from a normal distribution in its propensity to make outliers

## Knowledge transfer

**Table 4. Respondents' rating on knowledge transfer**

	VI	I	MI	LI	NI
P2-1	0.17	0.32	0.35	0.12	0.03
P2-2	0.23	0.42	0.25	0.07	0.03
P2-3	0.32	0.34	0.26	0.06	0.01
P2-4	0.55	0.34	0.10	0.01	0.00
P2-5	0.37	0.39	0.19	0.04	0.00
P2-6	0.51	0.34	0.13	0.02	0.00
P2-7	0.52	0.36	0.10	0.02	0.00
P2-8	0.42	0.39	0.17	0.02	0.00
P2-9	0.29	0.44	0.23	0.03	0.01
P2-10	0.40	0.40	0.17	0.02	0.00
P2-11	0.39	0.39	0.18	0.03	0.01

**Fig. 4 Respondents' rating on knowledge transfer**



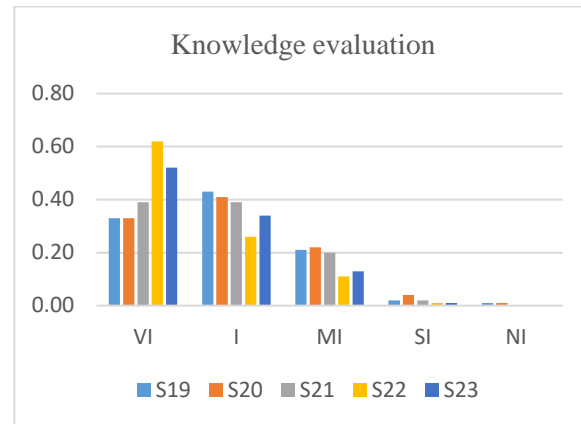
Regarding the evaluation of knowledge transfer, Table 4 and Figure 4 reveal that ‘introduce topic appropriately’ (P2-4), ‘encourage students to focus on their interests and goals’ (P2-6), and ‘provide appropriate practical example’ (P2-7) are amongst the favoured items considered by the respondents. More than half of respondents (51-55%) marked the aforementioned items as the essential items for a lecturer to practice. In comparison, more than a quarter of them (17-42%) regarded the remaining items as crucial. Less than 4 % of the respondents perceived some items for instance ‘supply with adequate workloads’ (P2-1), oppose different theories’ (P2-2), ask students about their goals’ (P2-3), ‘ensure the required supply of literature and handout materials’ (P2-9), as well as ‘inspire students for further reading’ (P2-11) as not important.

## Knowledge Evaluation

**Table 5. Respondents' rating on knowledge evaluation**

	VI	I	MI	LI	NI
P3-1	0.33	0.43	0.21	0.02	0.01
P3-2	0.33	0.41	0.22	0.04	0.01
P3-3	0.39	0.39	0.20	0.02	0.00
P3-4	0.62	0.26	0.11	0.01	0.00
P3-5	0.52	0.34	0.13	0.01	0.00

**Fig. 5 Respondents' rating on knowledge evaluation**



Apart from looking at the personal traits and knowledge transfer, knowledge evaluation is also the interest of this study. Table 5 and Figure 5 show that 'explain to students why they were right or wrong' (P3-4) and 'open new learning opportunities' (P3-5) are agreed by the majority of respondents as the most important items. Besides, not more than 40% of them fairly agree with the other items, such as 'offer students to evaluate themselves' (P3-1), 'ask students how they intend to achieve the goals and tasks set' (P3-2), 'offer students to share their ideas and knowledge' (P3-3) as very important items. Only 1% of them regarded P3-1 and P3-2 as not important items, while none of them considers the other items as not important.

## Responses to Open-Ended Question

The open-ended question asked students the other qualities of the lecturer that they value the most. Responses in the form of comments (words and phrases) by the respondents are analysed using thematic analysis proposed by (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Firstly, their responses to the open-ended survey question were read repeatedly to gain understanding and familiarity with the data. Next, the comments that were meaningful to the study were noted, the recurring pattern was identified, and codes were generated to represent the significant data. For this study, the coding was implemented by hand. For an illustrative example, we took the first five randomly selected respondents' answers. The examples are shown in Table 6 below:

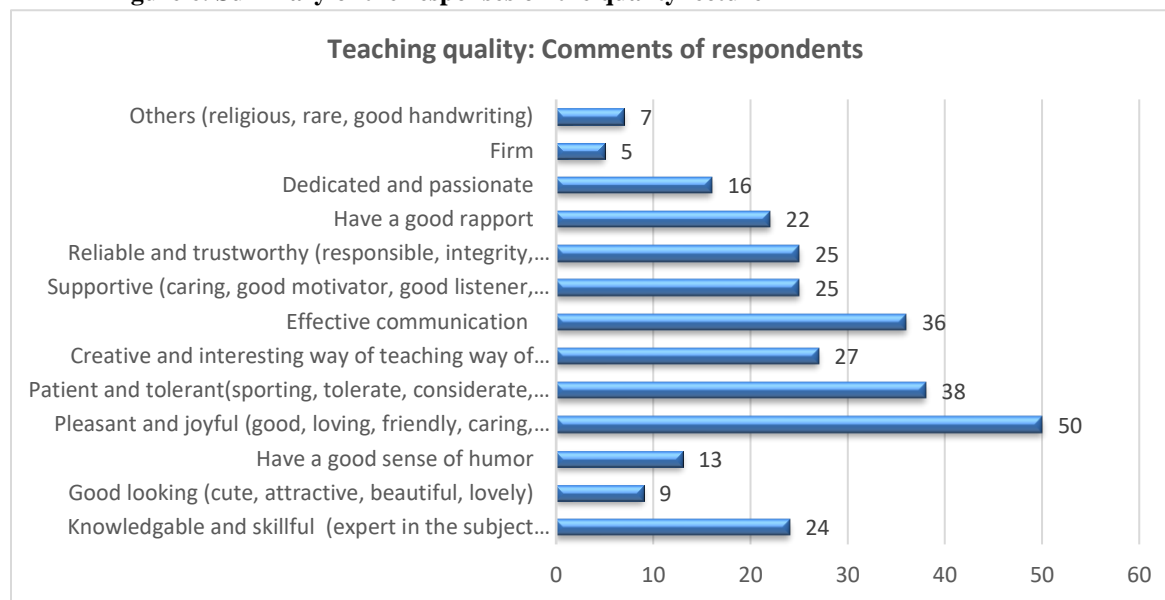
**Table 6: Codes and themes of responses to the open-ended question**

No.	Respondent responses (indicating preferences for other lecturer's teaching quality)	Codes highlighting respondent ideas	Themes
1	Lecturer must lecture the student with the correct explanation about the syllabus the lecturing.	Explain clearly	-Effective Communication
2	Patient, open-minded, more encouraging, caring, more dedicated to work.	Patient, open-minded, caring, encouraging	-Pleasant and joyful -Patient and tolerant
3	Add funny elements during lectures.	Funny	-Have a good sense of humour
4	Friendly, caring, strict, and cute.	Friendly, caring, good looking	-Good looking -Pleasant & Joyful -Firm
5	Don't make the class session boring.	Creative	-Creative and interesting way of teaching

The codes were then collated to determine an overall idea for categorisation of the identified word or phrases, which Braun and Clarke (2006) describe as “searching for themes”. The themes were labelled and reviewed to ensure that they were appropriate and comprehensive in describing the data. For instance, two themes identified by respondents such as “prefer the lecturers to be more friendly, caring, and strict” were categorised into three themes i.e. ‘Patient & Tolerant’, ‘Pleasant & Joyful’ and ‘Firm’.

A summary of responses to the open-ended question on the other quality of a desirable lecturer is displayed in the following chart.

**Figure 6. Summary of the responses on the quality lecturer**



As seen in Figure 6, most of the comments made by respondents surprisingly fall under the criterion of personal traits. The comments are considered for analysis if only they are not redundant with the items of personal traits in the questionnaires. The comments suggest that the lecturer should be knowledgeable and skillful, firm, good-looking, dedicated and passionate with their work, have a sense of humour, have a good rapport, patient and tolerant, reliable and trustworthy, communicate effectively, be creative in teaching, and others. On top of that, most of the respondents (51.5%) stated that the lecturer should be pleasant and joyful to develop a conducive environment in the classroom. Apart from personal qualities, a lecturer with effective communication skills is highly desirable by the respondents. Thirty-six of respondents favour a lecturer with effective communication skills as it will also ensure the effective delivery of subject matter in the teaching and learning process. ‘Firm’ and other elements such as ‘rare’, and ‘religious’ are among the quality of lecturers less favoured by the respondents. Not more than 2.4% of the respondents consider them as essential elements for a quality lecturer.

## Conclusion

Overall, the findings show that the personal traits of lecturers with responsive behaviour and have good speech culture are among the top-rated items valued by the respondents. Apart from that, having effective ways of delivering lessons, leading the classroom with pleasant and joyful, and be patient and tolerant in dealing with students were perceived as the most essential elements for being a quality lecturer. The results also suggest that students from different academic backgrounds shared the same view on the lecturer’s quality. Exploring teaching quality from the lens of students is critically important in the discussion of quality lecturers and their teaching. This study provides substantial feedback to lecturers in improving the quality of teaching and helps the institution's top management in academic decision-making processes. Further research should



consider the other elements influencing the perceptions of teaching quality such as pedagogical practices, content standards, and teaching effectiveness.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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