

The Ideal Psychology Teacher: Qualitative Analysis of Views from Brunei GCE A-Level Students and Trainee Psychology Teachers

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Abstract

We qualitatively explored the notion of the ideal teacher from the context of pre-university Brunei General Certificate of Education Advanced Level (GCE A-Level) psychology students and trainee psychology teachers. Both previous research and our own analyses on this concept revealed that the so-called ideal teacher was neither a perfect nor a super teacher but rather an effective instructor who was firm, fair, and a good communicator. Psychology students of various ability levels (high achievers, average students, and low scorers) gave slightly different descriptive characteristics for the ideal teacher. More-able students preferred a cognitive-oriented teacher while less-able students emphasized the affective-oriented instructor. Students in the middle range of the ability scale endorsed both cognitive and affective traits in the ideal teacher traits. Trainee psychology teachers closely resembled the higher achieving GCE A-Level psychology students in their descriptions of the ideal teacher. The findings have implications for teaching and assessing psychology students that we discuss. Further mixed-methods research was recommended to generate more insightful outcomes.

Keywords: ideal teacher, psychology trainee teacher, GCE A-Level students, teacher characteristics, Brunei

1. Introduction, Background and Setting

The notion of an ideal teacher is not new in Negara Brunei Darussalam. Indeed teachers in Brunei have for a long time been recognized for their teaching excellence through annual awards on teachers' day. From literature review we noted that salient teacher traits were not inherited but rather developed and consolidated both during and after training. There are many models for training ideal teachers of psychology. The schemes include the teacher assistant, TA model in USA (Meyers & Prieto, 2000), postgraduate certificate/diploma scheme in the UK (Foot, 1995), and the Master of Teaching (MTeach) graduate degree strategy in Brunei Darussalam (Mundia, 2012a). The three modes of training psychology teachers have both similarities and differences. For example, they all require prospective trainees first to have an initial degree with in-depth content in psychology. In addition, they all emphasize the practicum component. However, they also vary in several respects such as duration of the training program and specialist skills (e.g. for those who wish to teach general psychology in a high school or clinical psychology in further education institutions). However, the unique characteristics for the so-called ideal teacher appear to differ on many aspects depending on the subject taught (e.g. mathematics or psychology), type of students instructed (e.g. students with high support needs versus gifted/talented students), and level of education involved (e.g. preschool or upper secondary school. When assessing students an ideal teacher should preferably use a variety of testing or procedures that foster the development of higher-order skills in students such as analysis, synthesis, application, evaluation, and critical thinking (Mundia, 2010a). Literature further suggests that most of the "good/effective teacher" characteristics are acquired through teaching experience. Psychology has been taught as a senior secondary school or high school subject for many years in developed countries such as the US and UK but in Brunei it is still a new subject. Despite this, the number of students taking the subject is increasing. The popularity of the subject is attributed mainly to the subject's relevance to many careers. The apparent need to train more psychology teachers in Brunei is now real and growing. Teaching psychology is a demanding task that requires the incumbent to have deep interest in the

subject and self-motivation.

1.1 Brunei Studies Related to the Concept of the Ideal Teacher

When teaching a subject that is challenging to students such as mathematics, research indicates that an ideal or good or effective teacher needs to be both cognitive-oriented and affective-oriented (Ismail & Shahrill, 2013; Mundia, 2010b; Mundia, 2012b; Hamid et al., 2013). A cognitive-oriented teacher is one who understands the subject well and teaches it effectively whereas an affective-oriented instructor has empathy and compassion and helps students to solve their non-academic problems such as those with violent or aggressive behaviors (see Mundia, 2006). Affective teachers can also help students to develop appropriate attitudes to their school subjects as they think about possible future careers (Mundia, 1998). For less-able students in difficult subjects such as mathematics, previous research found that an effective teacher ought to use instructional methods that suit the students' learning styles and study strategies (Shahrill et al., 2013). The way teachers use questions during expository teaching interaction (questions and answers) also helps students to distinguish between a real and an abstract teacher (Shahrill & Mundia, 2014). Therefore, to embark on an effective mathematics lesson, as a prerequisite, teachers must be competent in the subject content knowledge, have good pedagogical skills, for example in questioning, and established good relationship or rapport with their students (Ismail & Shahrill, 2013; Shahrill, 2013a; Shahrill, 2013b). This further implies that the ideal teacher should, to a large extent, be a critical, reflective, creative, innovative and transformative instructor who can withstand the challenges of being an educator in the 21st century and beyond. Under the ongoing curriculum reforms known as the National Education System for the 21st Century or SPN21 (*Sistem Pendidikan Negara Abad Ke-21*, in Bahasa Melayu language), teachers in Brunei are supposed to be very resourceful and adaptive. The Ministry of Education in the Government of Brunei has also recently designated five model schools to facilitate effective teaching. Thus the notion of an ideal teacher and the concept of model schools are both efforts to promote the provision of high quality education in the country. Technically, we view an ideal teacher to be a model instructor and consider a model school as an ideal institution.

Tait and Mundia (2013) further suggest that an effective teacher must have good self-efficacy in implementing inclusive education practices in ordinary schools so that no child is left behind under the ongoing educational reforms in Brunei (see Mundia, 2009). Komarraju (2013) examined the students' academic self-efficacy and motivation in predicting preferred teacher traits. This study found that students who lacked self-efficacy valued the "caring" trait in an ideal teacher (Komarraju, 2013). However, Komarraju (2013) also observed that the extrinsically motivated students strongly endorsed the importance of an ideal teacher being "caring" (encouraging and compassionate) in addition to being "professional" (knowledgeable and confident). The implications for instructors of findings in Komarraju's (2013) included rewarding extrinsically motivated students by recognizing their performance and mentoring students who lack self-efficacy. Under the ongoing implementation of inclusive education in Brunei, ideal teachers need to accommodate and support students with severe disabilities and high support needs (Haq & Mundia, 2012). Students with high support needs often have low self-efficacy and largely depend on extrinsic motivation. There is also evidence from recent research (such as Matzin et al., 2013) that Brunei students need both intrinsic motivation (from the self) and extrinsic motivation (from different sources e.g. good teachers, supportive parents, and collaborative peers).

Further evidence has also emerged from research that pre-degree students doing GCE A-Level or Sixth Form (also known as Year 13) often face various problems while in school but do not know how to cope effectively with their difficulties (Shahrill & Mundia, 2013). It is here where ideal teachers trained in special education and guidance and counseling could help the needy students (see Mundia, 2009; Tait & Mundia, 2012a). To help teachers to develop and acquire salient qualities embedded in the notion of an ideal effective instructor, teacher education programs and other personnel (human resource) development programs in Brunei have been reformed as reported in previous studies (Mundia, 2012a; Mundia, 2012c). These efforts have required, among other things, addressing student teachers' concerns about inclusive education (Bradshaw & Mundia, 2006). However, before they can help others, it is logical that teachers will themselves need to have good mental health as suggested by some studies (Mundia, 2012d; Mundia, 2013). An educator who has many personal problems would not be able to be an ideal teacher (see Mundia, 2010c for an example). With regard to teaching clinical psychology topics, Norcross and Karpiak (2012) say that a good psychology teacher must emphasize at least three important issues: connecting to psychological science; committing to evidence-based practice; and adapting treatment to the person.

Karl A. Menninger, a famous psychiatrist back in the 1980s said "*what the teacher is more important than what he teaches*" (<http://izquotes.com/quote/290881>). This quote highlights the importance of the qualities possessed by a teacher in order to impart knowledge to students effectively rather than focusing solely on the content

knowledge. The qualities go beyond being academic-oriented to being social and other dimensions. The best or ideal teachers are often remembered in terms of how they treat the students and who they are as individuals when relating themselves to their students, qualities that are the main focus of the present study.

The concept of the ideal teacher has been numerously defined across previous studies with results ranging from the teacher's characteristics and behaviors to student achievement and motivation. There is also the concept of an ideal teacher identified as "competent" or "highly effective" based on the locally-defined "teaching competence" criteria (see Shahrill, 2009). Among the local criteria listed were: the teacher's status within the teaching profession, the respect of peers or the school community, for example nomination or recommendation from the principal, or even the teachers' active involvement, either presenting or contributing in conferences and/or professional development programs (refer to the 'Learner's Perspective Study' by Clarke, 2006). Finally, according to Acocella (2002), there has been a mixture of three main aspects in identifying the ideal teacher, namely, the teacher's behavior, characteristics, and teaching style.

1.2 Other Studies Dealing with the Notion of the Ideal Teacher

The definitions of an ideal teacher have also been investigated by researchers in the education field (Creemers, 1994; Lowyck, 1994; Scheerens & Bosker, 1997). These researchers found characteristics such as communicating high expectations, providing constructive feedback, delivering content in small and structured units, clarity of instruction, and smoothness in management skills as important to be included when it comes to students' perception of an ideal teacher. In addition, research studies have pointed out that interpersonal behavior was an important factor of an ideal teacher in teaching and has strong effects on student learning, attitudes towards the subject taught, and students' interest in their future education (den Brok, Brekelmans, & Wubbels, 2004; Wubbels & Brekelmans, 1998; Wubbels et al., 2006). Interpersonal behavior or interaction refers to the two-way teacher-student relationship, which is strongly related to student achievement and motivation in all subject areas as well as an effective way of engaging students in learning activities (Wubbels et al., 2006).

Since the ultimate goal of teaching is to help students learn, acquire, build and apply knowledge, information about the preferred characteristics of the ideal teacher might improve the task of teaching, communicating, and transmitting the lesson's content more effectively. This is because, sometimes, the students' definition of a good or "idea teacher" does not match with what the teachers actually have in mind (Dehghan & Jalilzadeh, 2011). Hence, students' description of the ideal psychology teacher can be an effective tool to explore and find out the students' preferred characteristics.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

Therefore, the main purpose of this study was to determine the characteristics of the ideal psychology teacher based on the perspectives of Brunei GCE A-Level psychology students of differing abilities and Brunei trainee psychology teachers. Research has shown that teachers who are informed about the descriptions of an ideal teacher are more likely to incorporate such descriptions in their work activities, resulting in effective teaching (Schrage, 1995; Shapiro, 1995). Subsequently, this may improve students' learning and give students opportunities to learn by following the example of their teachers (Polk, 2006).

2. Methods

2.1 Design

We investigated the topic using the qualitative case study approach. This strategy required the researchers to obtain in-depth information from the participants. The method was thus different from other forms of research such as the field, postal, online, and telephone surveys.

2.2 Participants

A total of nine GCE A-Level students (one male and eight females) and three psychology trainee teachers (one male and two females) were selected purposively for the study. The GCE A-Level participants were all in Year 13 from the same Sixth Form Centre or school who took psychology as one of their A-Level subjects. The study had two main inclusion criteria based on performance and gender. First, only A-Level students who obtained high grades (Grades A-B), average-medium or middle grades (Grades C-D), and low grades (Grades E-F) in their Advanced Subsidiary (AS-Level) psychology subject examination in Year 12 were included in the study. Second, to add gender dimension to the study, the only two males studying psychology (one doing GCE A-Level and the other training as a psychology teacher) were all included in the study. There were no other inclusion and exclusion criteria. In Brunei, psychology is studied by only few students, mostly females, at the high school level. Similarly, only few Brunei student teachers (mainly females) train to teach psychology. At the time of study, there were only three trainee psychology teachers and all volunteered to participate in the present study.

2.3 Instruments

The GCE A-Level participants were requested to individually write an essay on the topic: “*The Ideal Psychology Teacher*” towards the end of the school term as part of their homework. Similarly, the trainee psychology teachers were also asked to individually write a reflection paper on the topic: “*The Ideal Psychology Teacher*” soon after their teaching practice at the end of the semester as part of their homework too. The participants were also interviewed individually and informally to follow-up and probe some of the points they raised in their written documents. Since our whole research was qualitative, we assessed the quality of data using qualitative procedures. Thus for dependability (reliability), we used the inter-coder percentage agreement (IPA). The IPA reliability by two independent raters was quite good for each group’s written documents and interview transcripts (71% and 74% for GCE A-Level students’ essays and interviews respectively; and 76% and 81% on trainee teachers’ reflections and interviews). Trainee teachers expressed themselves much better both in writing and verbally than their GCE A-Level counterparts. In addition, the obtained data from both groups were likely to have had good ecological validity as it was collected from relevant educational contexts for both groups of participants. For credibility (validity) we used each group’s habitat as a measure of quality. For example, data from GCE A-Level psychology students were obtained when these participants were at their school. In the same way, data from trainee psychology teachers were also obtained while these participants were in their usual university premises. The data from both groups of participants were also assumed to have had reasonable social validity since the findings were to be applied in training effective psychology instructors to teach psychology in Brunei sixth form colleges.

2.4 Data Analysis

Document and interview data from the two participant groups were analyzed qualitatively using techniques such as content analysis and constant comparison (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 1990) to generate categories, themes, and quotations. Interviews were transcribed prior to content analyzing them.

2.5 Procedure

Prior to collecting the data, permission to conduct the study was obtained from the principals of the GCE A-Level students’ schools as well as from the research ethics committee of the university for the trainee psychology teachers. Ethical conditions for being involved in the study were explained verbally and in writing to both groups of research participants (six GCE A-Level psychology students and three trainee psychology teachers). The discussion of the participants’ legal and ethical rights in research focused on issues such as voluntary participation, privacy, anonymity, confidentiality, protection from harm (physical and psychological), deception, debriefing, duty to care, and informed consent. All the nine participants who voluntarily agreed to participate in the study signed a consent form guaranteeing anonymity and confidentiality, among other rights. Based on this informed consent, they were then administered the data collection instruments (the essay to be written in English and the unstructured individual interviews conducted in English language). In this way, data collection conformed to the requirements of the Helsinki Declaration on the use of human participants in research studies.

3. Results

The major findings of the study are presented below according to the two research groups. For GCE A-Level subgroups of participants, both categories and themes are provided. With regard to trainee psychology teachers we indicate the categories, themes, and quotations.

3.1 Low Achieving GCE A-Level Students (2 with D Grades and 1 with E Grade)

List of characteristics of the ideal psychology teacher (13 categories):

- 1) Lively study environment
- 2) Doing some warm up exercise before the start of lesson
- 3) Lots of class activities like presentation, research on case study
- 4) Teacher must have deep knowledge and better understanding of the subject to deliver it well to the student
- 5) Delivery of the content properly (by defining, detailed but simplistic way of explaining it to the students, real-life examples given)
- 6) Provide lots of examples and easy to follow types of information
- 7) Exercises given e.g. practice past year exam questions
- 8) Activities in class related to the study taught like group presentation, case study

- 9) Friendly, not too strict, fun, suitable and preferable teaching technique to best suit student's needs
- 10) Get to know the students well.
- 11) One-one sessions with student
- 12) Able to guide and provide assistance to students whenever needed.
- 13) Respect student's confidentiality

Low achieving psychology students had the highest number of characteristics for an ideal psychology teacher, an indication that they had high support needs. Content analyses and constant comparison (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 1990) revealed several themes from these categories. Firstly, these learners believed that a lively study environment (Theme 1) was good to have in the classroom and that the teacher should do some sort of a warm up exercise before starting the lesson. Moreover, these students preferred teachers who were friendly, fun, and not too strict with the students (Theme 2) and teachers who could use suitable teaching techniques (Theme 3) that best suit the students' learning and study needs. Furthermore, the ideal psychology teacher should have a deep and better understandings of the subject taught (Theme 4) so they can deliver the content well to the students. Above all, these students seemed to prefer teachers whose delivery method of the subject content was simple and not too complex (Theme 5) so that students are able to understand it better. Teacher should also be able to provide lots of examples in relation to the study and an application of theory to real-life examples so students are able to see its relevance. In terms of the exercises given, these students preferred to practice answering past exam questions (Theme 6) in addition to a preference for class activities in form of group presentations (Theme 7). Lastly, most of these students shared the most common features of an ideal psychology teacher which is that the teacher should be able to get to know the students well enough (Theme 8) by having a one to one session occasionally with needy students and provide guidance.

3.2 Average GCE A-Level Achievers (4 Grade C Students)

List of characteristics of the ideal psychology teacher (11 categories):

- 1) Clear teachings
- 2) Absence of bias and discrimination
- 3) Know students' needs and learning styles
- 4) Punctual and strict at times
- 5) Consistent recap on lessons learnt
- 6) Approachable and fun
- 7) Use real-life examples
- 8) Fluent in English
- 9) Keep track with students' performance
- 10) Good motivator
- 11) Fixed learning approach.

According to the data obtained from the open-ended essays, we observed that most middle achievers focused mainly on the interpersonal behavior among the students and with the teacher (Theme 1). The four respondents in this group unanimously stated that they preferred psychology teachers who were approachable and with whom students could easily interact and communicate with. In maintaining good relationship with the students, middle achievers mandated their ideal teachers to be firm and punctual when it comes to learning and monitoring their progress (Theme 2). Middle achievers also preferred ideal teachers who treated students equally, without any bias or discrimination (Theme 3). The ideal teacher must pay attention to all categories of students in the class (e.g. the less-able, the more-able, and those in the middle of the range). Furthermore, the ideal teacher would have to create a learning environment in which every student participates actively in learning activities (Theme 4).

3.3 High GCE A-Level Achievers (2 Grade a Students)

List of characteristics of the ideal psychology teacher (10 categories):

- 1) Fluent English
- 2) Real-life examples

- 3) Clear explanations
- 4) Appropriate teaching style
- 5) Strict class management
- 6) Make lesson interesting
- 7) Not biased/No favoritism
- 8) Gives lots of exercises
- 9) Positive teacher-student relationship
- 10) Motivator

The following four main themes emerged from the analyses of open-ended essay documents for the high achieving psychology students regarding the salient traits in an ideal teacher:

- 1) Clarity of expression and effective exposition of points in a lesson (Theme 1).
- 2) Emphasis on teaching methods that match students' learning styles and study strategies (Theme 2).
- 3) Absence of bias or favoritism in student-teacher relationships (Theme 3).
- 4) Mentor and motivator (Theme 4).

3.4 Views of Trainee Psychology Teachers

List of characteristics of the ideal psychology teacher (6 main categories and themes):

- 1) Being specific when teaching psychology contents.
- 2) Be well versed with the ongoing curriculum reforms known as the National Education System for the 21st Century or SPN21 (*Sistem Pendidikan Negara Abad Ke-21*, in Bahasa Melayu language).
- 3) The teacher must be capable and inspirational in his/her work.
- 4) An ideal Psychology teacher should be innovative.
- 5) Ability to design an active learning experience that can constantly inspire the students to come to class wanting to learn more about Psychology.
- 6) Have the capabilities to design a lesson in which the students are able to develop the 21st Century skills such as collaboration skills, knowledge building, self-regulation, using ICT, and more.

3.5 Quotations from Trainee Psychology Teacher 1

- 1) "An ideal psychology teacher is specific..... This is because every individual has his or her own ideas as to what constitutes, not only psychology but, the ideal teacher".
- 2) ".....what is the ideal psychology teacher according to or suitable for the SPN 21 system?is the perception of the students' in line with that of this system?"

3.6 Quotations from Trainee Psychology Teacher 2

- 1) they make a difference in our lives by inspiring us, motivating us, giving us new paths in life, challenge us so we can always give our best....."
- 2) ... by being innovative I mean teachers will need to be more in-depth with their teaching methods..... needs to make the students 'think' and 'understand'

3.7 Quotations from Trainee Psychology Teacher 3

- 1) "should be able to grasp the student's attention throughout the learning process.....In order to do this, the teacher should not be reluctant to experiment new teaching methods in class or to explore new teaching strategies that best suit the students....."
- 2) "an ideal psychology teacher should possess good leadership skills to maintain a harmonized learning environment....."

4. Discussion

Based on the data collected from the high achievers, it can be seen that these students emphasized that an ideal teacher should be able to explain the content and instruction clearly, make the lessons fun and interesting but at the same time be strict towards the students. Low achieving students usually require teachers to explain clearly when in classroom so that they can understand the content when the teacher is currently teaching the topic and

ask questions if they have any confusion. This is so in order that these students do not have to worry about not understanding the lesson when they are at home or doing their revisions. In any classroom, it is inevitable that the lesson should be interesting to capture the students' attention especially for high scorers or achievers who have ample background knowledge but requiring interesting cues to capture and maintain their attention. The present study found that the more-able GCE A-Level psychology students preferred a cognitive-oriented teacher while their less-able counterparts emphasized the affective-oriented instructor. In addition, the present study also noted that GCE A-Level psychology students in the middle range of the ability scale endorsed both cognitive and affective traits in the ideal teacher. To a large extent, the three trainee psychology teachers closely resembled the more-able GCE A-Level psychology students in their descriptions of the salient traits for an ideal teacher. However, all three categories of GCE A-Level psychology students on the ability continuum (low, average, and high achieving) and the three trainee psychology teachers considered a strict instructor as an ideal teacher who handles classroom management effectively for teaching and learning to occur efficiently. The other characteristics of an ideal teacher mentioned by the participants were fluency in English, using real-life examples when teaching, employing an adaptable teaching style, being not biased, always giving practical exercises, motivating students, and having good relationship with the students.

From this research, it can be concluded that different students have different needs. Different levels of students (low, middle and high achievers) prefer distinctive qualities that a teacher must possess. For the low achieving students, one of the most common characteristics of their ideal psychology teacher is having a good relationship with the expectation that the teacher should know the student's learning capabilities and needs very well. These students believed that this can be achieved by having a one-on-one session with the teacher so they could seek assistance from the teachers whenever in need. This expectation reflected low self-esteem among these students. Students' perceptions of themselves influence the amount of effort they are willing to put forth in school, their educational aspirations and their academic achievement (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977; Byrne & Shavelson, 1986). Research has also shown that positive attitudes towards the self and school ultimately determines the students' motivation and effort in doing schoolwork (Haladyna, Shaughnessy, & Shaughnessy, 1983). Moreover, Chesebro et al. (1992) found that students who are academically at risk have lower self-perceptions of their interpersonal communication skills than do students who are not academically at risk. Thus, this may explain why these students would want to have a one-to-one session with the teacher as they can be seen as having less confident with their communication skills.

Interaction is one of the most important factors in teaching (Veenman, 1984). Teacher interpersonal behavior is supposed to be closely linked to the quality of the educational processes, and thus is believed to be a significant component of educational quality. The middle achieving GCE A-Level psychology students emphasized on the interpersonal behavior within the teachers and the students. This set of students requires their teacher to form positive rapport with the students in class, as well as out of class. This form of relationship does not only apply to particular students but with the class as a whole. According to Arends (2001), in the learning environment, teacher-student interaction plays a major role in influencing the cognitive and affective development of students. To support this, Dart et al. (2000) found that when the teacher demonstrated supportive and helpful interpersonal behaviors, students were more actively involved in learning and developed deep learning approaches. Using this method, students can develop the skills needed in achieving high scores in psychology, which includes critical and analytical thinking. Recent research has indicated that Brunei student teachers have potential to have good interpersonal interaction with colleagues of both genders after graduating (Mahalle et al., 2014). Moreover, an ideal teacher is not only supposed to work together with other teachers and the school counselor/psychologist in resolving students' problems but also be capable of working cooperatively with the students' parents particularly when handling disabled learners with high support needs (Tait & Mundia, 2012b; Tait et al., 2014). However, in pursuing this method, middle achievers also favor a teacher who can be strict when it comes to learning and workloads. This is in line with the findings by Khine and Atputhsammy (2005) who observed that teachers need to ensure a balance between control and freedom for students.

GCE A-Level high achievers focused on the teaching styles and personality of teacher such as being able to explain clearly and being strict but at the same time, foster positive relationships with the students. Supportive and positive relationships between teachers and students can promote a "sense of school belonging" and plays an important role to encourage students to work cooperatively in classroom activities (Hughes & Chen, 2011). In addition, according to a qualitative study conducted by Dalley-Trim (2007), being strict (firm and fair) was actually viewed by students as a normal teaching practice and positively accepted by them in their learning process. Ideally, a psychology teacher should convey knowledge and subsequently, clearly show the students how to apply that knowledge, teaching them the ability to use their higher order thinking skills. In that way,

students can learn the material better as well as develop critical thinking skills, which is an essential skill if they want to pursue or take up psychology-related courses and careers. There is also the fact that not every educator can be an ideal teacher. The question then is how would other teachers be helped to be ideal instructors? The answer here lies mainly in modeling the ideal teacher (s) and team teaching with the ideal teachers. An ideal teacher is supposed to be an innovator and mentor to both students and colleagues. In short, such a teacher is supposed to be a transformational leader rather than a transactional leader. This would require teachers in Brunei to have good interpersonal trust and relationships. A recent study has shown that Brunei student teachers of both genders form good interpersonal trust and relationships among themselves while in training (Mahalle et al., 2013). If they did this after training and while serving as teachers, they would then be able to collaborate or cooperate and network in many professional undertakings to complement each other's strengths and weakness to the advantage of the students they teach. The SPN21 educational reforms and concept of model schools encourage teachers in Brunei to be collaborative.

5. Conclusion

The present study investigated the traits of an ideal teacher. According to the findings, qualities attributed to the ideal teacher were not always fixed or consistent but differed qualitatively depending on several factors such as the school subject concerned, level of education, students' ability level, and the rater who assesses the teacher's characteristics. Based on our findings we believe that the ideal teacher has potential to be modeled by other teachers especially those that are still new to the profession. We recommend that salient ideal teacher characteristics be included teacher education curriculum and programs to promote awareness of the desirable attributes in teachers. Moreover, we recommend that further mixed-methods research be conducted to shed more light on the ideal teacher phenomenon in Brunei.

6. Limitations of the Study

This study had three main limitations. First, as a case study, it could not show cause-and-effect relationships among the variables investigated. Second, with a small non-random sample, the findings could not be generalized to other GCE A-Level students and trainee psychology teachers in Brunei or elsewhere. Third, the number of male participants in the study was too small and this gender inequality inhibited the results from being generalizable to other males.

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