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When Future Teachers Learn to Understand Learners: An Educational Psychology-Based Intervention

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Abstract

This study examines an educational intervention designed to strengthen the professional preparation of prospective educators through the integration of human resource development and educational psychology. The study aims to demonstrate how interactive learning experiences can broaden prospective educators' understanding of learner characteristics, motivation, emotional conditions, communication, and classroom needs. The intervention involved undergraduate students at Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia (UTHM) and employed interactive seminars, case studies, group discussions, experience sharing, and reflective activities. Findings indicate increased awareness of professional competencies, learner diversity, psychological factors affecting learning, and the importance of adaptive and empathetic instructional responses. The study concludes by highlighting implications for professional preparation, continuous development, and learner-oriented educational practice.

Keywords: Educational Psychology, Learner Understanding, Teacher Readiness, UTHM, Student-Centered Learning.

INTRODUCTION

1. The Need for Future Teachers to Understand Learners

Contemporary teacher education increasingly requires prospective teachers to move beyond the transmission of subject knowledge toward a deeper understanding of how learners think, behave, interact, and develop. Teaching takes place within classrooms characterized by differences in prior knowledge, motivation, learning experiences, social backgrounds, and academic capabilities. Consequently, effective instruction cannot be designed solely around curriculum content; it must also consider how learners interpret information, participate in classroom activities, and respond to instructional environments. Understanding learners

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therefore represents a foundational component of instructional competence because teachers need to align pedagogical decisions with the characteristics and needs of the students they serve. In this sense, preparing future teachers requires an explicit emphasis on the relationship between knowledge of teaching and knowledge of learning, enabling prospective teachers to recognize that effective instruction is fundamentally shaped by the learner's cognitive and motivational processes.

The need for learner understanding becomes particularly important as educational environments become increasingly diverse and complex. Future teachers may encounter students who differ substantially in their levels of confidence, engagement, motivation, communication patterns, and responses to classroom demands. Such variation requires teachers to interpret learner behavior carefully rather than immediately attributing academic difficulties to a lack of ability or effort. A learner who appears passive, for example, may be experiencing anxiety, limited confidence, unfamiliarity with the learning environment, or difficulties establishing meaningful connections with peers and teachers. Accordingly, teacher preparation should cultivate the capacity to examine learning problems from multiple perspectives and to distinguish observable classroom behavior from the psychological processes underlying that behavior. This orientation is consistent with the broader role of educational psychology in helping educators understand the relationship between learner characteristics and educational processes (Srivastava, 2021).

Understanding learners also has implications for teachers' capacity to select and adapt instructional strategies. Rather than applying identical approaches to all students, teachers who recognize differences in learner characteristics can make more informed decisions regarding classroom interaction, learning activities, feedback, and motivational support. This is especially relevant in contemporary education, where digital technologies and changing patterns of participation have expanded the range of learning experiences available to students. The teacher therefore needs to function as an adaptive professional capable of responding to changing learner conditions. Evidence concerning instructional strategies and learning outcomes suggests that the effectiveness of teaching is associated with the capacity to identify patterns in learners' responses and use such information to inform instructional decisions. For future teachers, developing this capacity during their preparation can strengthen their readiness to create learning environments that are responsive rather than standardized (Bhimavarapu, 2025).

2. Educational Psychology as a Foundation for Learner Understanding

Educational psychology provides an important conceptual foundation for developing this learner-oriented perspective because it connects psychological knowledge with educational practice. Rather than treating learning as a purely academic process, educational psychology considers cognitive, motivational, social, and emotional dimensions that influence how individuals acquire, process, retain, and apply knowledge. For prospective teachers, this interdisciplinary perspective provides a framework for interpreting classroom phenomena systematically. It enables them to examine why students demonstrate different levels of engagement, how developmental characteristics influence learning, and how classroom environments can facilitate or constrain participation. Consequently, educational psychology can help transform abstract psychological concepts into practical knowledge that informs teachers' understanding of learners and their instructional decisions (Kassir, 2026).

A central value of educational psychology lies in its capacity to help future teachers connect learner development with instructional practice. Learning does not occur independently of learners' developmental characteristics, previous experiences, expectations, or social relationships. Teachers therefore need conceptual tools that enable them to consider these dimensions when planning and implementing learning activities. Educational psychology contributes such tools by examining teaching and learning as interconnected processes rather than isolated activities. For future teachers, this means that pedagogical competence should include not only knowing what to teach and how to teach it, but also understanding why particular approaches may be more appropriate for particular learners. Such knowledge can support more deliberate instructional planning and improve teachers' ability to establish meaningful learning experiences.

Theoretical perspectives within educational psychology further strengthen teachers' ability to interpret learner behavior and learning processes. Learning theories provide conceptual explanations concerning how learners construct knowledge, respond to experiences, develop understanding, and interact with their environments. These perspectives can guide teachers in determining whether an instructional problem is related to the structure of learning activities, opportunities for interaction, learner engagement, or the relationship between prior and new knowledge. For prospective teachers, familiarity with learning theories is therefore valuable not simply as theoretical knowledge but as a basis for making pedagogical judgments. Integrating theory into teacher preparation can encourage future educators to select instructional strategies based on assumptions about how learning occurs rather than relying exclusively on habitual or intuitive practices (Gallard & Cartmell, 2014).

Educational psychology also contributes to the development of evidence-informed teaching by connecting psychological research with educational decision-making. Future teachers operate in environments where educational practices are increasingly influenced by research, technology, and interdisciplinary knowledge. However, access to information does not automatically ensure that teachers can distinguish scientifically supported principles from misconceptions about learning. Teacher preparation consequently needs to develop the ability to critically evaluate psychological and educational claims and translate credible evidence into classroom practices. An educational psychology perspective can provide an important foundation for this process because it encourages future teachers to examine learning phenomena through systematic concepts and research rather than relying exclusively on intuition. This research-to-practice orientation is particularly important when teachers encounter emerging educational challenges that require informed adaptation (Im et al., 2018).

The relevance of educational psychology extends beyond individual learning processes to the broader organization of educational practice. Teachers are simultaneously instructional practitioners, classroom managers, communicators, and participants in educational institutions. Their understanding of learner behavior can influence how they establish classroom environments, communicate expectations, provide feedback, and respond to differences among students. Educational psychology therefore offers future teachers a broader perspective through

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which pedagogical, interpersonal, and organizational dimensions of education can be connected. Developing such an integrated perspective can help prospective teachers recognize that successful teaching involves the interaction of learners, teachers, instructional strategies, and educational environments rather than the delivery of content in isolation (Rubie-Davies, 2010).

3. Purpose and Contribution of the Intervention

Against this background, the intervention described in this study is designed to strengthen future teachers' capacity to understand learners through an applied educational psychology approach. The intervention was implemented with undergraduate education students at Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia and employed interactive seminars, discussions, case studies, reflection, question-and-answer sessions, and experience sharing. The program addressed learner characteristics, learning motivation, emotional intelligence, communication, classroom management, and student-centered learning. This design was intended to move participants from passive reception of information toward active interpretation of educational situations. Such an approach is particularly relevant because teacher preparation is more likely to influence professional competence when prospective teachers are given opportunities to engage with realistic educational problems and collaboratively examine possible responses.

A further contribution of the intervention is its emphasis on reflective learning. Reflection allows future teachers to reconsider assumptions about why learners behave or perform in particular ways and to connect psychological concepts with anticipated classroom situations. Within the reported program, participants discussed cases involving passive learners, low motivation, and difficulties adapting to learning environments. They were encouraged to identify possible causes and formulate responses based on educational psychology principles. The activity subsequently encouraged more human-centered responses, including positive reinforcement, empathetic communication, adaptation of teaching methods, and the creation of classroom environments that encourage participation. This reflects the importance of preparing future teachers to critically examine their developing professional perspectives rather than simply accumulating pedagogical techniques (Samková & Tichá, 2016).

Ultimately, the intervention contributes to teacher preparation by positioning learner understanding as an essential component of professional readiness. The reported activity indicated that participants developed broader perspectives concerning teacher competence, including emotional management, relationships with learners, professional reflection, lifelong learning, and adaptation to educational change. The program also encouraged participants to move from teacher-centered assumptions toward more student-centered approaches. These outcomes suggest that educational psychology can function as more than a theoretical component of teacher education; it can serve as a practical framework for developing teachers who are more attentive to learner diversity, more reflective in interpreting classroom situations, and more adaptive in selecting instructional responses. Such preparation is consistent with the broader role of professional development in equipping teachers to respond effectively to diverse educational needs and instructional frameworks (Benedict et al., 2019).

BACKGROUND

1. Understanding Learners through Educational Psychology

Understanding learners is a fundamental requirement for effective teaching because educational processes are ultimately shaped by how students perceive, process, interpret, and respond to learning experiences. A teacher may possess strong subject knowledge and sophisticated instructional techniques, yet these resources can have limited impact when they are not aligned with learners' developmental characteristics, prior experiences, expectations, and ways of engaging with knowledge. For future teachers, therefore, learning to understand learners represents more than acquiring information about students; it involves developing an analytical perspective that enables them to recognize variation within the classroom and respond to it appropriately. Educational psychology provides an important foundation for this perspective because it connects knowledge about human behavior and learning with the practical demands of education. It enables prospective teachers to consider both the intellectual processes through which students construct knowledge and the motivational conditions that influence their willingness to participate in learning activities.

Educational psychology is particularly valuable because learning cannot be adequately explained through cognitive processes alone. Students enter educational settings with different levels of readiness, social experiences, emotional conditions, and expectations concerning themselves and their teachers. These factors interact with instructional environments and can shape how learners interpret classroom activities. Consequently, future teachers need to develop an understanding of learners that encompasses cognitive, social, emotional, and motivational dimensions. Such knowledge can support more responsive decisions concerning instructional design, classroom communication, assessment, and learning support. Rather than interpreting student performance simply through visible outcomes such as grades or participation, teachers can use psychological perspectives to investigate the processes that may contribute to those outcomes. This broader orientation strengthens the capacity of teachers to recognize learners as individuals with distinctive developmental trajectories and educational needs (Srivastava, 2021).

The practical importance of learner understanding becomes more evident as educational environments incorporate increasingly diverse instructional strategies and technologies. Contemporary teachers must determine not only what content should be presented but also how learners interact with different forms of instruction and which strategies encourage meaningful participation. The relationship between instructional approaches and learning outcomes consequently requires teachers to observe learners systematically and adapt their practices according to evidence from the learning process. For future educators, this means developing professional judgment that combines pedagogical knowledge with sensitivity to learner responses. Educational psychology can support this judgment by encouraging teachers to interpret classroom behavior as information about learning rather than merely as compliance or performance. Such an orientation enables future teachers to become more deliberate in selecting, evaluating, and modifying instructional strategies (Bhimavarapu, 2025).

Learner understanding also requires teachers to recognize that students are active participants in the construction of educational

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experiences. The meaning students derive from instruction is influenced by their interactions with teachers, peers, learning resources, and the broader educational environment. This perspective challenges the assumption that effective teaching can be achieved simply by increasing the amount of information delivered by the teacher. Instead, teachers need to consider how students participate in learning, how they communicate their understanding, and how classroom relationships influence their willingness to engage. For future teachers, developing this awareness can help establish classrooms in which learners are not treated as homogeneous recipients of knowledge but as individuals whose experiences and responses contribute to the learning process. Educational psychology consequently offers a framework for interpreting teaching as a dynamic relationship between instructional actions and learner development (Kassir, 2026).

2. Motivation, Emotion, and Learner Engagement

Among the most important dimensions of learner understanding are motivation and emotion. A student's willingness to participate in learning is not determined exclusively by intellectual ability; it can also depend on perceived relevance, confidence, emotional security, social relationships, and expectations of success. Learner engagement therefore represents a multidimensional phenomenon involving behavioral participation, cognitive investment, emotional involvement, and social interaction. For future teachers, understanding these dimensions is essential because disengagement may manifest through observable behaviors such as silence, absenteeism, limited participation, or incomplete assignments while originating from very different psychological conditions. Recognizing these distinctions allows teachers to move beyond superficial judgments and consider more appropriate responses to individual learners. In digitally mediated environments, the importance of identifying different forms of engagement becomes particularly significant because student participation may be expressed through multiple behavioral and interactional patterns (Benabbes et al., 2023).

Motivation provides the energy and direction that sustain learners' involvement in educational activities, while emotions influence how learners experience those activities and interpret their capacity to succeed. A student who feels confident and supported may approach challenging tasks as opportunities for development, whereas another student experiencing anxiety or low self-belief may avoid participation despite possessing adequate academic ability. Future teachers therefore need to understand that motivation is not simply a personal characteristic possessed by some students and absent in others. It is influenced by classroom conditions, instructional design, interpersonal relationships, and learners' perceptions of their own competence and autonomy. Developing such understanding can help teachers design learning experiences that encourage active participation rather than relying predominantly on external control. The psychological dimension of engagement is consequently central to creating educational environments in which students can participate meaningfully.

The emotional dimension of learning also has important implications for teacher–student relationships. Learners are more likely to participate constructively when they perceive the classroom as a supportive environment in which their ideas and difficulties can be expressed without unnecessary fear of embarrassment or failure. Future teachers should therefore develop interpersonal sensitivity alongside instructional competence. Communication, empathy, encouragement, and constructive feedback can influence learners' perceptions of belonging and their willingness to remain engaged when learning becomes difficult. This perspective changes the teacher's role from merely evaluating whether students have achieved predetermined outcomes to creating conditions that support their continued involvement in the learning process. Accordingly, understanding learners requires future teachers to interpret classroom interaction as an important component of educational development rather than as a secondary concern (Shah & Basnyat, 2024).

3. From Teacher-Centered to Student-Centered Teaching

The growing emphasis on learner understanding is closely associated with the movement from teacher-centered to student-centered teaching. In teacher-centered environments, instructional authority is concentrated primarily on the teacher, while students may have limited opportunities to exercise autonomy, express perspectives, or influence the learning process. Student-centered teaching, by contrast, positions learners as active participants whose interests, experiences, questions, and developmental needs inform instructional decisions. The distinction is not simply methodological; it reflects different assumptions about the nature of learning and the role of teachers. For future educators, adopting a student-centered perspective requires a fundamental shift from asking, "How can I deliver this material?" toward asking, "How can learners meaningfully engage with and understand this material?" Such a shift places learner experience at the center of pedagogical planning (Arif, 2021).

Student-centered teaching does not mean that teachers relinquish their authority or responsibility. Instead, the teacher's role evolves from primary knowledge transmitter toward facilitator, guide, designer of learning experiences, and provider of appropriate support. Students are encouraged to participate actively through questioning, discussion, problem solving, collaboration, reflection, and independent learning. This approach can create stronger connections between learning activities and students' intellectual and interpersonal development. For future teachers, this transformation requires more than learning a collection of student-centered techniques. They must understand why learner participation matters, how autonomy can be supported, and how instructional choices influence students' engagement and understanding. The transition therefore represents a professional and conceptual development in which teachers learn to design education around learning processes rather than solely around teaching activities (Dai & Zhang, 2011).

The transition toward student-centered education can nevertheless be challenging because future teachers may enter professional preparation programs with established assumptions about what effective teaching looks like. They may initially associate teacher effectiveness with clear explanation, classroom control, and comprehensive content delivery. Educational psychology-based interventions can challenge these assumptions by exposing prospective teachers to alternative interpretations of learner behavior and by providing opportunities to analyze realistic educational situations. Through discussion, reflection, and case-based activities, future teachers can learn to consider why students respond differently to similar instructional conditions and how teaching can be adapted accordingly. This process is important because meaningful pedagogical change involves not only acquiring new methods but also reconsidering the assumptions that

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underpin teachers' decisions and interactions with learners (Wu et al., 2019).

Ultimately, developing future teachers who understand learners requires the integration of psychological knowledge, motivational awareness, emotional sensitivity, and student-centered pedagogy. These dimensions reinforce one another: educational psychology provides the conceptual basis for understanding learners, knowledge of motivation and emotion helps teachers interpret engagement, and student-centered teaching translates this understanding into pedagogical action. The resulting teacher is not simply better equipped to deliver lessons but is more capable of observing, interpreting, and responding to learners as developing individuals. Such preparation is particularly important for contemporary education, where teachers must accommodate diversity while encouraging autonomy, critical thinking, meaningful participation, and lifelong learning. A learner-centered orientation therefore represents a strategic foundation for preparing future teachers who can respond flexibly and thoughtfully to the complexity of educational practice.

METHOD

1. Program Setting, Participants, and Intervention Design

The community engagement program was designed as a participatory educational intervention to strengthen the human capital of prospective teachers through the integration of human resource development and educational psychology. The program was conducted in collaboration with Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia (UTHM/IPTHO) and targeted undergraduate students enrolled in education programs. Eight students participated in the program, representing two academic backgrounds, namely English and Economics and Business. This multidisciplinary composition created opportunities for participants to exchange perspectives concerning teaching, communication, leadership, professional development, and learner needs. The intervention was structured around four sequential stages: preparation, program implementation, reflection and evaluation, and documentation. During preparation, the team coordinated with the partner institution, identified participant needs, prepared learning materials, and established the schedule and instructional media. This needs-oriented design ensured that the intervention addressed competencies relevant to prospective teachers, including professional competence, learner understanding, motivation, communication, emotional intelligence, leadership, and classroom management.

2. Intervention Activities: Seminar, Cases, Discussion, and Reflection

The intervention employed an interactive seminar model combining short lectures, question-and-answer sessions, group discussions, case studies, experience sharing, and reflective activities. The learning materials addressed human capital development, twenty-first-century teacher competencies, educational psychology, learning motivation, effective communication, leadership, and learner-oriented classroom management. Rather than relying on one-way knowledge transmission, the activities encouraged participants to articulate their opinions, relate theoretical concepts to educational experiences, and critically examine potential challenges they may encounter as future educators. Case-based activities presented situations involving passive learners, low learning motivation, and difficulties adapting to classroom environments. Participants were asked to identify possible causes and formulate appropriate responses based on educational psychology principles. Reflection activities subsequently encouraged them to connect the intervention content with their anticipated professional responsibilities and future classroom practices. Through this combination, the intervention emphasized active participation, collaborative learning, critical thinking, reflection, and practical application.

3. Evaluation and Indicators of Intervention Success

Program effectiveness was evaluated through participant reflection, observation of engagement, discussion outcomes, case analysis, and participant feedback. Evaluation focused on both cognitive and professional dimensions of development rather than merely measuring knowledge acquisition. Five principal indicators were established: improved understanding of human resource development and educational psychology; increased knowledge of professional teacher competencies and student-centered instructional strategies; active participation in discussions, question-and-answer sessions, and case studies; greater readiness to apply educational psychology principles in future teaching; and participant satisfaction with the content, facilitators, and overall implementation. Program success was considered evident when participants demonstrated increased understanding and provided positive assessments of the intervention. The evaluation therefore incorporated participation, perceived relevance, implementation readiness, and satisfaction alongside learning outcomes. The relatively small number of participants also enabled more intensive interaction between facilitators and students, providing opportunities for participants to express their experiences, perspectives, and concerns as prospective educators.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. From Academic Deficit to Holistic Learner Understanding

The intervention produced an important shift in how participants conceptualized the development of future teachers. Before the program, the development of teaching competence tended to be understood primarily in terms of mastering subject matter and acquiring the ability to deliver instructional content. The intervention broadened this perspective by presenting teachers as human capital whose effectiveness depends on the integration of pedagogical, professional, social, and personal competencies. In this broader framework, becoming a teacher involves more than knowing what to teach. It requires the capacity to understand learners, communicate effectively, manage classroom interactions, demonstrate leadership, regulate emotions, collaborate with others, and continuously develop professional capabilities. The program therefore positioned teacher development as a long-term investment in human capital rather than as a short-term process of academic preparation.

This transformation was particularly visible in participants' discussions concerning learner characteristics. The educational psychology component encouraged participants to reconsider the tendency to interpret weak academic performance primarily as evidence of limited student ability. Through the intervention, participants were introduced to a broader understanding in which learning outcomes may be influenced by confidence, previous

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learning experiences, social support, anxiety, emotional conditions, motivation, and teacher–student relationships. This represented an important conceptual movement from evaluating learners exclusively according to academic outcomes toward considering the psychological and social processes underlying those outcomes. Such a perspective is particularly relevant for future teachers because classroom problems rarely have a single cause. Understanding learners holistically allows teachers to investigate the circumstances surrounding behavior and performance before deciding how instructional or interpersonal interventions should be implemented.

The intervention also demonstrated that learner understanding can be strengthened when theoretical knowledge is connected to concrete educational situations. Participants examined cases involving passive students, low learning motivation, and difficulties adapting to learning environments. Rather than immediately assigning responsibility to the learner, they were encouraged to identify possible contributing factors and develop responses grounded in educational psychology. This process transformed abstract concepts into practical professional reasoning. Participants began to recognize that effective teaching requires diagnostic thinking: teachers need to observe behavior, identify possible explanations, consider learner characteristics, and select appropriate responses. The resulting perspective is consistent with the broader objective of developing teachers who are capable of responding to educational complexity rather than simply applying standardized instructional procedures.

Another important result was the recognition that teacher development extends beyond technical competence. During discussions, participants increasingly considered leadership, emotional management, interpersonal relationships, professional reflection, technological development, and lifelong learning as components of teacher readiness. This indicates that the intervention successfully expanded the meaning of professional development from academic preparation toward holistic human capital development. A future teacher must be capable of learning continuously because educational environments are not static. Changes in technology, social conditions, learner expectations, and instructional practices require educators to remain adaptable throughout their careers. Consequently, teacher preparation should be understood as the beginning of professional development rather than its completion.

2. Developing Empathic and Adaptive Responses to Learners

A central outcome of the intervention was the development of more empathic responses toward learners. The case discussions provided participants with opportunities to examine classroom situations from the learner's perspective and consider why a student might become passive, demonstrate low motivation, or experience difficulty adapting. This encouraged participants to move away from immediate judgments and toward more careful interpretation of learner behavior. Empathy in this context does not simply mean being sympathetic toward students; it involves understanding their circumstances sufficiently to make more appropriate pedagogical decisions. Such an orientation is essential because teachers frequently encounter learners whose visible classroom behavior does not fully reveal the underlying difficulties they are experiencing.

Participants' responses to the cases demonstrated the emergence of more human-centered intervention strategies. They identified positive reinforcement, empathetic communication, adaptation of instructional methods, and the creation of supportive classroom environments as possible responses to learner difficulties. These responses indicate a movement from a corrective orientation toward a developmental one. Instead of treating disengagement as a behavioral problem that must simply be controlled, participants began to consider how teachers could create conditions that encourage participation. This represents an important development in professional judgment because adaptive teaching requires teachers to modify their approach according to learner characteristics rather than expecting all students to respond identically to the same instructional method (Indriani et al., 2026).

The shift toward adaptive responses was reinforced by the participatory structure of the program. Participants were not positioned solely as recipients of information; they were encouraged to ask questions, exchange experiences, analyze cases, and reflect on possible applications (Saputra et al., 2026). Their questions addressed practical concerns such as improving learner motivation, supporting students with low confidence, using technology effectively, and maintaining teachers' psychological well-being amid professional demands. The range of issues raised suggests that participants were beginning to connect educational psychology with the multidimensional realities of teaching. They were not considering learner problems in isolation but in relation to communication, technology, teacher well-being, classroom management, and professional responsibilities (Murti et al., 2026).

The multidisciplinary composition of the participants further strengthened this process. Students from English and Economics and Business backgrounds contributed different perspectives concerning communication, classroom interaction, leadership, personal development, and resource management (Permana et al., 2026). The exchange of these perspectives created a collaborative learning environment in which educational issues could be interpreted from multiple professional viewpoints (Hernita et al., 2026). Such interaction is valuable for future teachers because contemporary educational challenges increasingly require collaboration rather than isolated professional action. Teachers must communicate with colleagues, learners, families, administrators, and other stakeholders, making interpersonal competence an important component of human capital (Cholifah et al., 2026).

3. From Learning Intervention to Future Teacher Readiness

The results indicate that the intervention generated outcomes extending beyond immediate knowledge acquisition. Participants demonstrated increased understanding of human resource development and educational psychology, greater awareness of professional teacher competencies, active involvement in discussions and case analyses, and stronger perceptions of their ability to apply the material in future teaching contexts (Sihotang, Suhud, Handaru, 2025b). Importantly, participants also reported positive perceptions of the relevance and usefulness of the program. These outcomes suggest that the intervention contributed simultaneously to cognitive development, professional awareness, participation, and perceived implementation readiness.

The intervention also contributed to a broader understanding of what it means to be ready for the teaching profession (Merina,

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Suhud, Sihotang, et al., 2026b). Readiness was no longer associated solely with the ability to prepare lessons or explain subject matter. Instead, participants increasingly associated teacher readiness with adaptability, communication, emotional competence, learner understanding, leadership, reflection, and continuous professional development (Merina, Suhud, Sihotang, et al., 2026). This is particularly significant because teachers operate in environments characterized by changing technologies, diverse learners, and evolving social expectations. Preparing future educators consequently requires institutions to develop individuals who can respond constructively to uncertainty and complexity rather than simply reproduce established teaching routines (Pertiwi et al., 2026).

The findings further suggest that human capital development and educational psychology should not be treated as separate dimensions of teacher preparation (Sihotang et al., 2025). Human capital development strengthens the individual capacities required for professional performance, while educational psychology provides the conceptual foundation for understanding how learners develop, engage, and respond to educational environments (Wibowo et al., 2026). Combining these dimensions allows future teachers to develop both professional capability and learner sensitivity (Sihotang & Hidir, 2022). An educator who possesses technical competence without understanding learners may struggle to create responsive learning environments, while psychological knowledge without professional and leadership capabilities may be insufficient for managing the practical demands of teaching. Their integration therefore represents a more comprehensive approach to educator development (Sihotang, Suhud, Handaru, 2025a).

Finally, the program demonstrates that relatively focused interventions can serve as meaningful spaces for professional identity development when they combine knowledge, interaction, reflection, and practical application (Sihotang et al., 2025). The small participant group allowed intensive interaction between facilitators and students, enabling participants to communicate their experiences, concerns, and expectations concerning their future roles (Ilhamalimy et al., 2025). This setting supported a learning process in which participants could move from receiving information to examining their own assumptions about teaching and professional development (Suhud, Unarto, Sugianto Sihotang, et al., 2026). The broader implication is that teacher education programs should create sustained opportunities for students to develop not only pedagogical knowledge but also interpersonal competence, emotional intelligence, critical reflection, communication, and adaptability (Suhud, Sihotang, Boonkaew, et al., 2026).

Overall, the intervention illustrates a progression from academic preparation toward holistic teacher readiness (Sihotang, Suhud, Handaru, et al., 2026). Participants moved from viewing teacher competence primarily through subject knowledge toward recognizing the importance of understanding learners, responding empathetically, adapting instructional practices, collaborating with others, and maintaining continuous professional growth. The program therefore supports the proposition embedded in the title "Preparing More Than Teachers": effective preparation should develop future educators as adaptable human capital capable of understanding people as well as delivering knowledge (Sihotang, Suhud, Handaru, et al., 2027). Integrating human resource development, educational psychology, participatory learning, reflection, and practical case analysis provides a foundation for developing teachers who are professionally competent, psychologically informed, reflective, and prepared to respond to the changing demands of contemporary education (Suhud, Nair, Chee Hoo, et al., 2026).

CONCLUSION

The intervention demonstrates that preparing future teachers requires a broader developmental perspective than the conventional emphasis on subject knowledge and instructional competence (Suhud, Wolor, Sulistyowati, et al., 2025). The program showed that prospective educators need integrated capabilities encompassing pedagogical knowledge, psychological awareness, communication, emotional management, leadership, collaboration, reflection, and adaptability (Suhud, Sihotang, Chanthawong, et al., 2026). Through interactive seminars, discussions, case studies, and reflection, participants developed a broader understanding of the teaching profession and increasingly recognized that effective educators must understand learners as individuals with different cognitive, emotional, social, and motivational characteristics (Suhud, Sihotang, Juliana, et al., 2026). The intervention therefore positioned teacher preparation as a process of human capital development in which professional capability and personal development are developed simultaneously (Suhud, Sihotang, Allan, et al., 2026).

The findings have several practical implications for teacher education institutions. Teacher preparation programs should provide learning experiences that connect theoretical knowledge with realistic educational situations (Sihotang, Suhud, Reztrianti, et al., 2027). Rather than relying exclusively on conventional lectures, institutions can incorporate case-based learning, collaborative discussion, reflective activities, simulations, and experience sharing to encourage prospective teachers to analyze educational challenges from multiple perspectives (Suhud, Boonkaew, Sihotang, et al., 2025). Educational psychology should also be integrated with professional development so that future teachers understand how learner characteristics, motivation, emotional conditions, communication, and classroom relationships influence educational experiences. Such integration can help universities develop educators who are not only capable of delivering curriculum content but also prepared to establish supportive, inclusive, and learner-oriented environments (Suhud, Allan, Hoo, et al., 2026). The program further demonstrates the value of developing nontechnical competencies alongside academic preparation, particularly communication, emotional intelligence, critical thinking, collaboration, and professional reflection (Sihotang, Suhud, Handaru, et al., 2027).

Nevertheless, the intervention has limitations that should be considered when interpreting its outcomes (Sihotang, 2027). The program involved a relatively small group of eight undergraduate students from two academic backgrounds, which provided opportunities for intensive interaction but limits the extent to which the findings can be generalized to broader populations of future teachers. In addition, the evaluation focused primarily on participants' understanding, engagement, reflections, perceived readiness, and feedback following the intervention (Suhud, Caniago, Sihotang, et al., 2026). It did not establish whether the observed changes would remain over an extended period or translate directly into improved teaching performance in actual school settings (Cholifah et al., 2027). Future interventions should therefore involve larger and more diverse participant groups and

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incorporate more systematic pre-intervention and post-intervention assessments (Suhud, Caniago, Sihotang, et al., 2026). Longitudinal follow-up, teaching simulations, classroom observations, and practical teaching placements could provide stronger evidence regarding whether increased psychological awareness and professional readiness are sustained and translated into professional practice (Sihotang, Suhud, Handaru, et al., 2027).

Overall, the intervention suggests that the future of teacher preparation lies in developing educators who can combine knowledge, professional competence, psychological understanding, and continuous self-development. Preparing more than teachers means preparing adaptable human capital capable of learning continuously, responding to learner diversity, and navigating changing educational environments (Sihotang et al., 2027). This integrated approach can provide a stronger foundation for educators who are reflective, empathetic, professionally resilient, and capable of contributing meaningfully to contemporary education (Sihotang, 2026).

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