

RESEARCH ARTICLE

TEACHER'S UNDERSTANDING OF PSYCHOLOGICAL AND DEVELOPMENTAL PRINCIPLES IN EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTION

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ABSTRACT

A teacher's deep understanding of psychological and developmental principles constitutes the essential foundation for effective instruction. This abstract discusses the critical importance of this knowledge in supporting student learning success. Psychological understanding encompasses cognitive mechanisms (such as cognitive load and memory) and motivational factors (e.g., Self-Determination Theory), enabling teachers to design learning environments and strategies that intrinsically foster student engagement. Meanwhile, developmental understanding ensures that instructional materials and expectations align with students' cognitive and socio-emotional maturity stages (Developmentally Appropriate Practice). The integration of these two knowledge bases, often termed Pedagogical-Psychological Teaching Knowledge (PPTK), allows teachers to make sound decisions, manage the classroom effectively, and implement differentiation. This study uses a literature review method, which involves examining various written sources such as books, journals, and academic reports, rather than collecting data directly from the field.

Keywords: Teacher Understanding, Psychological Principles, Developmental Principles, Effective Instruction, Student Motivation.

INTRODUCTION

To truly help teachers understand and apply psychological and developmental principles, the education system must shift its perspective on teaching and learning toward a more human-centered and continuous approach. Teacher education should not stop at theories about how children think, grow, and develop cognitively, socially, and emotionally, but should also focus on how these theories can be applied in real classroom settings. Teachers need to be trained to observe classroom dynamics how students react, interact, and learn from their surroundings. They must be sensitive to each child's background, understand their uniqueness, and be able to adapt teaching methods to ensure that every student can learn comfortably.

With such understanding, teachers become more than just instructors; they become mentors who nurture potential and humanity within each learner. Furthermore, teachers must continue to grow and learn throughout their careers. Education is constantly evolving curricula change, technology advances rapidly, and the psychological challenges faced by today's generation become increasingly complex. All of this demands that teachers never stop learning. Professional development activities such as training sessions, seminars, workshops, and reflective learning communities can serve as safe spaces for teachers to share experiences, find new inspiration, and improve their teaching practices.

Through these reflective processes, teachers learn not only how students learn, but also how

they feel. A reflective teacher becomes more attuned to the emotional climate of the classroom, more patient in handling differences, and more creative in finding ways to help students feel engaged in their learning journey. However, teachers cannot do this work alone. They need real support from their school environments and from educational policies that prioritize humanity. Schools should provide teachers with dedicated time and space for rest, reflection, and collaboration with colleagues. Support such as adequate teaching facilities, relevant learning materials, and assistance from professionals like counselors or educational psychologists is also essential.

In addition, maintaining an ideal teacher-student ratio is crucial so that teachers can give more personal attention to each student. When teachers have the time and energy to truly know their students, learning becomes more meaningful and human-centered focused not merely on test scores, but on personal growth. Equally important is the relationship between teachers and parents, which should be built on trust and open communication. True education does not end at school; the home is also a vital learning space. When teachers and parents work together sharing stories about a child's development, finding solutions to challenges, and offering encouragement the child grows in an environment filled with care and support. They feel understood, accepted, and more motivated to thrive. Ultimately, the goal of all these efforts is to make learning a living process not just the transfer of knowledge, but the shaping of whole human beings.

Education grounded in psychological understanding and human values helps children grow into individuals who are not only intellectually intelligent but also emotionally and socially wise. This is the kind of education that nurtures curiosity, empathy, and self-awareness an education that helps children not only know many things but also understand what it truly means to be human (aritonang, oley, situmeang, & turnip, 2025).

Educational psychology is not just a complex theory about how children learn it's a meaningful guide that helps teachers truly understand their students as whole human beings. Through this understanding, teachers begin to see that every child is unique, with their own way of thinking, learning, feeling,

and growing. Some students learn best through hands-on experiences, others prefer to read and imagine, while some thrive through discussion and collaboration. When teachers recognize these differences, they no longer expect all students to learn in the same way; instead, they adapt their teaching so that each child can flourish in their own way.

Educational psychology also reminds us that learning is not only about the mind it's about the heart and the environment, too. Factors like self-confidence, motivation, family support, and peer relationships all play a major role in shaping a child's learning spirit. Teachers who understand this strive to create classrooms that feel safe and welcoming a place where students feel accepted, unafraid to make mistakes, and encouraged to try new things. In such an environment, learning becomes more than an obligation it becomes an enjoyable and meaningful experience.

Moreover, understanding children's cognitive and emotional development helps teachers adjust their teaching methods. For instance, elementary students still think concretely and need tangible examples, while adolescents begin to think more abstractly and critically. Teachers who are sensitive to these developmental differences know when to explain simply, when to give students space to think, and when to listen attentively. This sensitivity allows the learning process to become more effective because it aligns with students' developmental stages.

In today's world where children grow up surrounded by technology and social pressures educational psychology is more relevant than ever. Teachers can no longer just focus on delivering material; they must also become emotional guides. They need to help students manage stress, maintain motivation, and build self-confidence. This is where the teacher's role becomes deeply meaningful not only teaching formulas or theories, but guiding students to become resilient, empathetic, and self-aware individuals. The relationship between teachers and students also plays a vital role. When teachers truly understand their students' psychological worlds, a warm and trusting bond can form. Students feel seen and valued, not just measured by grades. Such teachers know when to encourage, when to comfort, and when to simply listen. In a relationship grounded in

humanity, learning transforms into a shared journey not just a transfer of knowledge, but a process of mutual growth between teacher and student.

Ultimately, educational psychology reminds us that teaching is not just about imparting knowledge it's about humanizing education itself. By understanding how children think, feel, and develop, teachers can help them discover the best version of themselves. Education grounded in psychological understanding nurtures a generation that is not only intellectually capable but also emotionally, socially, and spiritually mature. In this way, teachers become more than educators they become life mentors who guide children not only to be smart, but to be fully human (cahyani & siagian, 2024).

Therefore, it is important for teachers to build open communication with students. One way to achieve this is by implementing two-way learning, where teachers and students exchange opinions, ask questions, and share their experiences and challenges encountered during the learning process (Munthe & Naibaho , 2024). In addition, motivational theories in educational psychology play a crucial role in creating effective learning strategies. Various motivation theories, such as Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs and Frederick Herzberg's two-factor theory, explain the elements that influence students' drive to learn and actively participate in the learning process. By understanding the factors that motivate students, educators can design more inspiring learning approaches that foster enthusiasm for learning. Thus, learning activities are no longer seen as obligations but as engaging and enjoyable experiences for students (aritonang, oley, situmeang , & turnip, 2025).

psychology are generally better able to tailor learning to individual student differences, personally motivate students, and create a supportive and enjoyable learning environment (Duan, Bissaker, & Xu, 2024).One possible approach is to expand teachers' knowledge of child and adolescent development within the educational context, particularly during their initial preparation as pre-service teachers (Hammond, Schachner, Wojcikiewicz, & Flook, 2024).

CONCEPT

When a teacher continually develops their teaching skills and applies personal values such as empathy, respect, and integrity in every interaction, the relationship between teacher and students becomes warmer, more meaningful, and mutually respectful. This approach allows the teacher to serve not only as a transmitter of knowledge but also as a mentor who understands each student's personality, emotional state, and learning style. By being sensitive to the unique needs of each child, teachers can create a more inclusive and supportive learning environment where students feel valued and motivated to learn.

A positive teacher-student relationship forms an essential foundation for the success of the learning process. This relationship influences students' motivation, self-confidence, and emotional well-being—all of which contribute to improved learning outcomes. When students feel that their teachers genuinely care about their development, they are more likely to engage actively in learning activities, express their opinions, and take responsibility for their own learning.

However, even when the teaching materials and methods are well-designed, learning objectives may still be difficult to achieve if classroom interactions are not well established. Therefore, open communication becomes a crucial element in building strong teacher-student relationships. Through two-way communication, teachers and students can exchange perspectives, ask questions, and collaboratively find solutions to challenges that arise during the learning process.

The implementation of two-way learning where dialogue replaces the traditional one-way lecture method encourages students' active participation and critical thinking skills. In this model, students are no longer passive recipients of information but active participants who help shape the learning experience. The teacher acts as a facilitator who guides discussions, fosters curiosity, and helps students connect the material to real-life situations. According to Munthe and Naibaho (2024), such an approach not only enhances students' understanding of the subject matter but also strengthens the emotional bond between teachers and students, creating a more dynamic and enjoyable learning atmosphere.

Thus, effective teaching begins with strong relationships. When teachers combine professional competence with genuine care and open communication, they cultivate a classroom environment filled with respect, collaboration, and continuous growth as a natural part of the learning journey (Munthe & Naibaho, 2024).

At the data analysis stage, the researcher conducted an integration and comparison process of perspectives from various authors to identify main themes, relational patterns, as well as similarities and differences among theoretical concepts. This process not only involved an in-depth reading of the literature but also a critical analysis of the approaches, methodologies, and research outcomes used in previous studies. Consequently, the researcher was able to construct a comprehensive and coherent conceptual framework explaining how educational psychology theories can be practically applied to enhance the effectiveness of the learning process.

Furthermore, this study aims to bridge theory and educational practice specifically, how conceptual understandings derived from various studies can be implemented in real classroom teaching strategies. For example, theories of learning motivation, cognitive development, and social behavior can serve as foundations for designing learning activities that align with students' characteristics. In this way, the results of the literature review not only broaden theoretical insights but also provide practical benefits for teachers, counselors, and other educational practitioners.

Moreover, this research is expected to contribute to the broader development of educational psychology as a scientific discipline. By summarizing, comparing, and interpreting previous research findings, this study helps identify research gaps that require further exploration and provides direction for future studies. As stated by Urhahne and Wijnia (2023), a comprehensive literature analysis can enrich scientific understanding and serve as a solid foundation for improving the quality of educational practices in the future.

Thus, this literature review is not merely an activity of reading or summarizing theories, but a systematic scientific process aimed at building new understanding, expanding perspectives, and offering relevant

recommendations for the field of education so that teaching and learning processes can be more effective, humane, and oriented toward the holistic development of students (Urhahne & Wijnia, 2023).

DISCUSSION

From various studies and experiences in the world of education, one thing becomes very clear: a teacher's understanding of child psychology and development is not merely additional knowledge, but the very foundation that gives life to learning. A teacher who understands educational psychology does not simply teach from textbooks but also reads the "language of the heart" of their students. They notice how students smile, stay silent, lower their heads, or show excitement. From these small gestures, teachers can recognize the story behind each child what interests them, what scares them, and what they are struggling with in their learning journey.

Educational psychology provides teachers with a kind of map of the soul helping them understand that every child is a world of their own. Some children think logically and prefer structure, some learn through experience, and others understand through emotions. A teacher who grasps this no longer forces every student to learn in the same way. Instead, they help each child find their own path to grow. The classroom then transforms not merely a place for memorization, but a space where children learn to know themselves, dare to explore, and discover the true meaning of learning.

A teacher who is sensitive to children's and adolescents' developmental stages understands that learning is not only about intellectual ability but also about emotional readiness. Sometimes a student is excellent at mathematics but not yet ready to handle the pressure of grades. A teacher who understands this does not force but patiently guides. They know when to encourage a child to take a step forward and when to pause, giving them space to breathe and regain motivation. When teaching aligns with students' developmental stages, the learning atmosphere becomes more alive. Children no longer learn out of fear of making mistakes but because they feel safe, understood, and appreciated. Here, intrinsic

motivation begins to grow the inner drive to learn, which is far stronger than the mere desire for good grades.

Beyond knowledge and methodology, the core of a teacher's success lies in their ability to build humane relationships with students. An empathetic teacher one who listens and seeks to understand can create a classroom filled with warmth and mutual respect. In such a space, every child feels accepted, unafraid of making mistakes, and confident to be themselves. The classroom ceases to be a rigid environment and becomes a living learning community where teachers and students learn, mature, and grow together. This kind of education aligns with holistic education, which teaches that learning is not only about the mind but also about the heart, character, and humanity.

Of course, the reality in the field is not always as ideal as the vision. Many teachers struggle amid limitations. Some teach classes with far more students than ideal. Others are overwhelmed by administrative tasks that leave little time for reflection. Some young teachers are full of passion but unsure how to translate psychological theory into real practice. Often, they struggle alone without sufficient support, space for reflection, or opportunities to share experiences. Yet, to understand others, teachers themselves also need to be understood, supported, and heard.

Therefore, genuine collaboration is needed among educational institutions, schools, and the government. Teachers must be given opportunities for continuous learning through training, mentoring, and reflective practice. This should not merely be about collecting certificates but about cultivating the awareness that every day in the classroom is a chance to understand another human being more deeply. Reflection is the heart of the teaching profession from it grows wisdom. A teacher who is willing to reexamine their own practice, listen to student feedback, and improve their approach is a teacher who continues to grow alongside their students.

Ultimately, understanding educational psychology means understanding the essence of humanity itself. A teacher who is attuned to the psychological dimensions of children does not see students merely as recipients of knowledge but as growing human beings with curiosity, anxieties, and dreams. Such a teacher does not

only teach students to be smart but also to be strong, empathetic, and self-aware. They know that learning is a lifelong journey, not a race toward perfect grades.

Therefore, strengthening teachers' psychological literacy is not just an academic discourse but a moral imperative. Teacher education both pre-service and in-service must provide significant space for understanding child psychology and development. Teachers must go beyond knowing theories; they must bring them to life in every interaction, in every reassuring word, and in every encouraging glance.

When this is achieved, education will no longer be merely about curricula and examinations but about human connection. Schools will become places that nurture life not just measure intelligence. And teachers, more than just professionals, will once again become guardians of the light of humanity kindling the flames of curiosity, compassion, and hope in the hearts of every child they encounter.

In conclusion, a teacher's understanding of psychological and developmental principles serves as the core of effective and meaningful instruction. When teachers are able to integrate theoretical knowledge with emotional sensitivity and self-reflection, the learning process produces not only academically competent students but also individuals who are empathetic, confident, and possess strong character. Education grounded in psychological understanding creates a humane learning environment where teachers and students grow together in mutual respect and support. Therefore, the greatest investment in education lies not merely in technology or curriculum, but in enhancing teachers' psychological literacy and their awareness of humanity.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on various findings and perspectives from multiple sources, it can be concluded that teachers' understanding of psychological and developmental principles is the key to creating learning experiences that are not only effective but also meaningful and human-centered. A true teacher is not merely an instructor of knowledge but also a companion in a child's growth and development. Therefore, teacher education programs should emphasize the

importance of knowledge in educational psychology and child development, ensuring that teachers not only know *what* to teach but also *how* children learn, think, and grow.

In teacher education, theory alone is not sufficient if it remains confined to the classroom. Prospective teachers need firsthand experience through classroom observation, student behavior analysis, and reflection on real-life teaching experiences. Through these practices, they can connect theory with application and better understand the diversity of learning styles among students. Teachers with strong psychological sensitivity are better equipped to adapt their teaching methods to suit the cognitive, social, and emotional developmental stages of their students.

Moreover, learning does not stop once someone officially becomes a teacher. The world of education continues to evolve, and teachers must adapt to the changing needs of new generations. Continuous professional development such as Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), seminars, workshops, and mentoring programs provides valuable opportunities for teachers to share experiences, engage in discussions, and collaboratively discover new ways of teaching. Teachers who are willing to learn from experience and remain open to change tend to be more creative, reflective, and capable of facing classroom challenges with empathy and wisdom.

However, these efforts will not succeed without a supportive work environment and sound educational policies. Schools and governments need to create systems that allow teachers to grow both professionally and emotionally. This can be achieved by maintaining reasonable class sizes to enable teachers to focus on individual students, providing adequate learning resources, and allocating time for teachers to reflect and collaborate. Teacher well-being is equally important, as those who are mentally exhausted will struggle to offer genuine emotional support to their students. A positive and supportive work environment fosters enthusiasm, care, and commitment among teachers toward their profession.

Furthermore, additional research is needed to explore how teachers' psychological knowledge influences students' motivation, behavior, and academic performance. Such studies help bridge the gap between theory and

practice and identify the most effective approaches for different cultural and social contexts, ensuring that education remains relevant to students' real lives.

Ultimately, all these efforts share a common goal: to realize education that humanizes humanity. Teachers who understand child psychology do not merely teach to sharpen the mind but also to nurture the heart and guide the soul. They create learning spaces that are safe, compassionate, and joyful places where every child feels valued and encouraged to grow according to their potential. Therefore, strengthening teachers' psychological literacy is not just an academic supplement but a fundamental necessity for our education system. When this is achieved, schools will become more than places of learning they will be spaces of life, where curiosity, empathy, and humanity flourish. In such places, teachers will not only ignite knowledge but also kindle the light of the heart and the flame of passion within every child they meet.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study reaffirms that teachers' deep understanding of psychological and developmental principles serves as the cornerstone of effective, meaningful, and human-centered education. Teachers who master educational psychology are able to design learning environments that respond to students' cognitive, emotional, and social needs. This understanding bridges the gap between theory and classroom practice, transforming learning from a mere transfer of information into an experience that engages the mind, heart, and character of the learner. Educational psychology not only provides teachers with theoretical foundations on how students think, learn, and stay motivated but also guides them in cultivating empathy, patience, and respect for diversity within every learning interaction.

The integration of psychological and developmental knowledge enables teachers to apply Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP)—an approach that aligns instruction with students' readiness and developmental stages. Through this perspective, teachers can

better recognize individual differences and foster intrinsic motivation, allowing students to learn out of genuine curiosity and joy rather than obligation. In such an environment, learning becomes meaningful, inspiring, and inclusive nurturing curiosity, creativity, and emotional security.

Furthermore, this research emphasizes the importance of continuous professional development as a vital aspect of a teacher's growth. True education does not end when one completes teacher training; it is an ongoing process of reflection, adaptation, and renewal. Activities such as mentoring, workshops, *Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)*, and peer collaboration empower teachers to remain responsive to changing educational needs. Teachers who engage in continuous reflection and learning tend to be more creative, adaptable, and emotionally intelligent qualities that directly enhance classroom effectiveness.

However, these efforts depend greatly on systemic and institutional support. Schools, universities, and policymakers must foster an environment that supports teachers' professional and emotional well-being. This can be achieved by maintaining manageable class sizes, providing sufficient learning resources, allocating time for reflection, and encouraging collaboration. When teachers feel valued, supported, and trusted, they pass that same sense of care and enthusiasm to their students creating a cycle of empathy and growth within the learning community.

Additionally, further research is needed to explore how teachers' psychological literacy influences students' motivation, behavior, and academic achievement. Such studies can inform culturally relevant teaching strategies and promote the universal application of psychological and developmental principles in education.

Ultimately, education grounded in psychological understanding is education that humanizes. Teachers who understand child psychology and development do not simply aim to sharpen the intellect but also to nurture the heart and shape character. Such teachers serve as companions in the human journey of growth

igniting curiosity, resilience, and compassion in every learner. When teachers combine knowledge with empathy, and when educational systems support their growth and well-being, teaching evolves into a profoundly human experience.

Therefore, enhancing teachers' psychological literacy must be recognized not merely as an academic pursuit but as a moral, social, and professional obligation. Through this integration, education can fulfill its highest goal: to cultivate intelligent, empathetic, and virtuous individuals capable of contributing positively to society. In this light, teachers are not merely transmitters of knowledge but true keepers of light guiding, inspiring, and kindling the flame of learning and humanity within every child they teach.

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