

# Helping her students learn better

Taking psychology courses has enabled teacher Tan Sini to design more engaging maths lessons

BY AUDREY NG

**M**athematics teacher Tan Sini, 37, sometimes found difficulty engaging students who gave impulsive answers to maths problems they found too difficult, while other students were dependent on the teacher to guide them.

The onset of home-based learning further added to her challenges and she turned to professional psychology courses for solutions.

Having taken professional learning courses offered by the National Institute of Education (NIE) that were related to psychology, she had a keen interest in the subject, particularly how psychological theories could be applied to engage learners.

For instance, when she learned about the “recency effect” – a concept where we are more likely to remember things that are presented last – she designed activities that required shorter teaching time and allotted more time for students to practice what they learnt.

Studying psychology also helped her to be more aware of and identify the cause of students' learning difficulties, which could be problems with reading or paying attention.

“The knowledge I gain from studying psychology would help me understand my students' thought processes, how they perceive challenges, and their coping mechanisms with mathematics,” she says. “This would enable me to customise



Studying psychology has enabled primary school teacher Tan Sini to better understand her students and create customised learning experiences for them. PHOTO: FRENCHESCAR LIM

suitable learning experiences for them.”

She initially thought about furthering her studies with a master's degree in psychology but was uncertain if she could cope with the demands of work and family commitments.

## Encouraged to keep learning

Fortunately for the mother of one, she found out about the NTU FlexiMasters programme offered through NIE (then called MiniMasters) in 2020.

She enrolled in the FlexiMasters in Learning and Development programme which offers several psychology courses for professionals working in education and education-related contexts.

NTU FlexiMasters is a Continuing Education and Training initiative by Nanyang Technological University.

Comprising four to six courses, each FlexiMasters programme can be counted towards a corresponding mas-

ter's programme. In the case of Ms Tan, the FlexiMasters in Learning and Development would allow her to pursue a Master of Education (Developmental Psychology).

Classes for each course were held once a week in the evenings for about 13 weeks, which she found manageable.

Her initial plan was to just complete the FlexiMasters programme but she found that she enjoyed her experience so much that she wanted to keep on learning.

Going back to school, interacting and exchanging ideas with her classmates, plus learning from knowledgeable and patient lecturers also contributed to her desire to continue learning for her professional and personal growth.

Find out more about the NTU FlexiMasters programme at [www.ntu.edu.sg/pace/programmes/fleximasters](http://www.ntu.edu.sg/pace/programmes/fleximasters)