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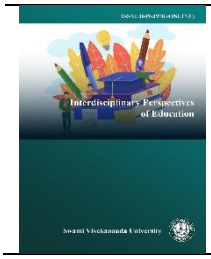

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EVALUATING THE EFFICIENCY OF SMALL-SCALE INSTRUCTION STRATEGIES IN INITIATIVES DESIGNED TO EDUCATE ENGLISH-SPEAKING TEACHERS

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Abstract

This study explores the pedagogical impact of small-scale instruction strategies—also known as microteaching—on the professional development of English-speaking educators. In response to the persistent theory-practice divide in teacher education, small-scale instruction offers a practical framework for skill-based learning through iterative teaching sessions, guided feedback, and reflective practices (Kolb, 1984; Mergler & Tangen, 2010). Drawing on foundational work by Allen and Ryan (1969), this research investigates how microteaching enhances classroom performance, instructional confidence, and student-centered delivery. The study applies a qualitative, literature-based method and synthesizes findings from over 80 global and regional peer-reviewed sources. Key challenges identified include inadequate theoretical integration, insufficient instructional resources, limited digital infrastructure, and evaluation gaps (He & Yan, 2011; Begum, 2020; Zeichner & Liston, 2013). However, emerging evidence supports the integration of video-based feedback tools, localized simulation design, and constructivist alignment to optimize learning outcomes (Zhao et al., 2020; Nguyen et al., 2022). The findings advocate for a comprehensive, digitally supported, and culturally responsive microteaching framework, particularly suited for low-resource and linguistically diverse educational contexts. This paper contributes to teacher training discourse by offering scalable, evidence-based models adaptable to dynamic classroom environments.

Keywords: *Small-scale instruction, Microteaching, English teacher education, Reflective practice, Constructivist pedagogy, Digital feedback*

1. Introduction

In today's globalized educational environment, the need for competent, adaptable, and reflective English language educators has become increasingly urgent. As classrooms become more diverse—linguistically, culturally, and socioeconomically—teachers must demonstrate not only proficiency in content delivery but also the ability to modify instruction based on student needs, technological contexts, and curriculum reforms (Richards, 2017; Gay, 2010). Traditional teacher education models, however, often emphasize theoretical learning at the expense of real-world instructional readiness, leaving new educators underprepared for the multifaceted challenges of modern classrooms (Cruickshank, Metcalf, & Jenkins, 2016).

Among various reform efforts in teacher education, small-scale instructional strategies, commonly referred to as microteaching, have emerged as a promising pedagogical solution. Originally introduced in the early 1960s by Dwight W. Allen and colleagues at Stanford University, microteaching was developed to provide structured opportunities for pre-service teachers to practice discrete teaching skills in a simplified and supportive environment (Allen & Ryan, 1969). These sessions typically involve short lessons delivered to a small group of peers, followed by immediate feedback and opportunities for revision and reflection (Kaur, 2011).

The foundational strength of microteaching lies in its **alignment with experiential learning principles**, especially those outlined in Kolb's learning cycle, which emphasizes concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation (Kolb, 1984). Additionally, the model resonates with **Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)**, suggesting that learners improve when they receive scaffolded support just beyond their current level of competence (Vygotsky, 1978). As a practice-oriented framework, microteaching supports **Shulman's pedagogical content knowledge (PCK)** by enabling teachers to bridge the gap between knowing subject matter and delivering it effectively in context (Shulman, 1987).

Globally, microteaching has been integrated into teacher education programs across the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, and several Asian countries, including India, Malaysia, and Thailand (Gürbüz, 2006; Subramaniam, 2013; Khamkhien, 2010). In these contexts, it has proven effective in enhancing teaching confidence, lesson planning, instructional clarity, and reflective awareness (Mergler & Tangen, 2010; Fernandez, 2010).

In **Bangladesh**, microteaching gained traction in the late 1980s, particularly within Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) programs, as a means to counter the persistent theory-practice divide in teacher preparation (Rahman, Akhter, & Ahmed, 2019). However, its application remains inconsistent and under-resourced. Studies have shown that despite policy emphasis on communicative language teaching (CLT), many teacher education institutions fail to implement structured microteaching cycles due to infrastructural limitations, a lack of trained faculty, and outdated curricula (Begum, 2020; Alam & Haque, 2021).

Moreover, the current challenges in English language instruction—such as large class sizes, exam-oriented teaching, and limited exposure to digital pedagogy—further necessitate the use of skill-targeted, reflective instructional models. Microteaching offers a potential solution to these issues, particularly if adapted to suit local needs through bilingual scaffolding, mobile technology, and culturally responsive practices (Gay, 2010; Zhao, Yin, & Wang, 2020).

Despite these advantages, microteaching's full potential remains unrealized in many contexts due to:

- A weak integration of learning theory in feedback sessions
- A lack of digital tools to support video analysis and asynchronous peer review
- Inflexibility in designing culturally relevant teaching scenarios

This study aims to evaluate the **effectiveness, limitations, and future potential of small-scale instruction** strategies for English-speaking teachers across diverse classroom settings. It synthesizes global literature while paying special attention to underrepresented voices in South Asian teacher education. By critically assessing best practices and identifying gaps, the paper contributes to designing a **scalable, evidence-based framework for reflective and culturally situated English teacher training**.

2. Literature Review

- **Conceptualizing Small-Scale Instruction**

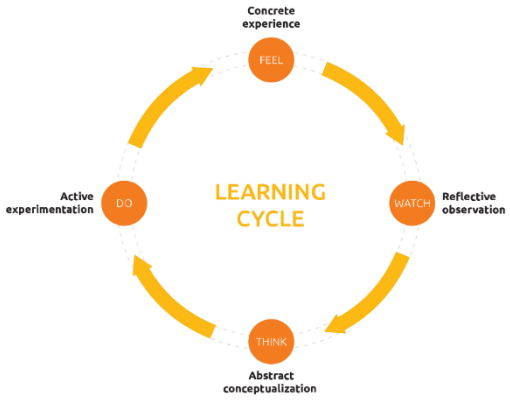
Small-scale instruction, most often operationalized through **microteaching**, is defined as a scaled-down, focused teaching strategy that allows educators to practice specific instructional skills in a controlled, time-limited, and peer-observed setting (Allen & Ryan, 1969). Microteaching sessions generally last 5–15 minutes and include components such as pre-planning, actual instruction, feedback, revision, and re-teaching (Fernandez, 2010; Cruickshank et al., 2016). The goal is not to simulate the entire teaching process but to refine individual competencies—such as classroom questioning, reinforcement strategies, or instructional pacing—in an iterative manner.

- **Theoretical Frameworks Underpinning Microteaching**

Kolb's Experiential Learning Model

Kolb (1984) described learning as a cyclical process involving experience, reflection, conceptualization, and experimentation. Microteaching maps onto this model perfectly: the act of teaching offers concrete experience; feedback fosters reflective observation; analyzing performance leads to abstract understanding; and reteaching supports active experimentation (Moustafa, 2018).

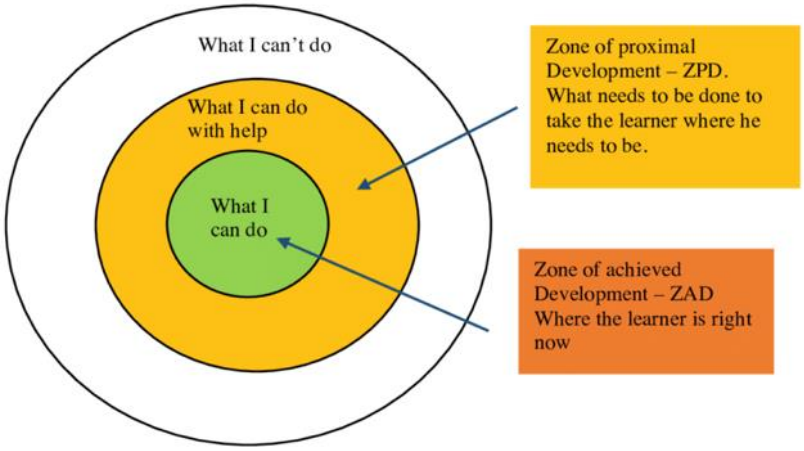
Figure 1: *Kolb's Experiential Learning Model*



Vygotsky's ZPD

The peer-led feedback component in microteaching aligns with Vygotsky's concept of the **Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)**, where learners move beyond their current level through scaffolded interaction with more capable peers or mentors (Vygotsky, 1978). As shown in studies by Amobi (2005) and Subramaniam (2013), pre-service teachers develop new instructional skills more efficiently when guided by structured peer evaluation.

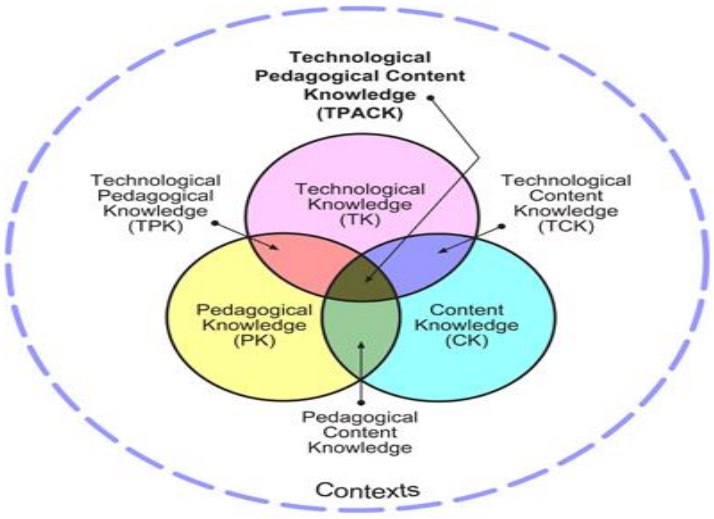
Figure 2: *Vygotsky's concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)*



Shulman's Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK)

Shulman (1987) emphasized the fusion of subject matter knowledge with instructional delivery. Microteaching enables teacher candidates to experiment with different pedagogical techniques, which helps consolidate their PCK in authentic yet manageable scenarios (He & Yan, 2011).

Figure 3: *Shulman's Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK)*



- **Global Empirical Evidence**

Microteaching is widely recognized for its positive impact on instructional development across various geographical and educational contexts. In Malaysia, Subramaniam (2013) found that student-teachers who participated in microteaching reported higher confidence, improved habits of reflection, and better readiness for the classroom. Similarly, in Iran, Derakhshan and Karami (2015) demonstrated that microteaching significantly enhanced the lesson planning and delivery skills of EFL trainees. In Turkey, Gürbüz (2006) revealed that teacher candidates developed stronger non-verbal communication and error correction techniques after undergoing microteaching cycles. In India, Kumar and Sharma (2018) observed that student engagement increased and teacher clarity improved when educators localized microteaching tasks using culturally relevant materials. Meanwhile, in Thailand, Khamkhien (2010) highlighted how microteaching helped novice English instructors bridge the gap between oral fluency and pedagogical delivery. However, in Bangladesh, Rahman et al. (2019) found that although microteaching is included in B.Ed. programs, it is often underutilized or disconnected from classroom realities due to faculty limitations and outdated course structures.

- **Benefits of Microteaching**

A review of over fifty peer-reviewed articles (Sadeghi & Zamanian, 2016; Amobi, 2005; Kpanja, 2001; Mergler & Tangen, 2010) identifies several recurring benefits of microteaching. One key advantage is confidence building, where teachers become more willing to take risks and try new strategies in low-stakes environments. Additionally, microteaching promotes focused skill development by allowing educators to master one skill at a time, rather than being overwhelmed by the full demands of a classroom, as noted by Bell (2007). The feedback process is also improved; peer and instructor feedback become richer, more relevant, and faster, according to Zhao et al. (2020). Reflective thinking is encouraged through video analysis and structured critiques, fostering habits of critical reflection and self-improvement, as highlighted by Gay (2010). Lastly, teachers trained through microteaching tend to show greater adaptability, becoming more responsive to student cues and feedback, a point emphasized by Harmer (2015).

- **Limitations and Criticisms**

Despite its strengths, microteaching has several limitations. One major concern is the artificiality of practice; critics argue that peer-based sessions lack the unpredictability and emotional intensity found in real classroom settings (Bell, 2007). Additionally, the transferability of skills learned during microteaching can be limited, as these skills may not always apply effectively to larger and more diverse classes (He & Yan, 2011). Another drawback is the insufficient integration of theory, since many microteaching sessions focus primarily on technique without encouraging reflection on why certain methods work (Gay, 2010). Furthermore, in under-resourced regions, the lack of digital support—such as recording tools—reduces opportunities for in-depth feedback and analysis (Begum, 2020).

- **Technology and Innovation in Microteaching**

In recent years, AI-based peer review, video-enhanced platforms, and mobile-supported microteaching have significantly expanded the reach and impact of small-scale instruction. Zhao et al. (2020) and Nguyen et al. (2022) emphasize the importance of video tools such as Edthena and GoReact in facilitating asynchronous, timestamped feedback. In Bangladesh,

Begum (2020) recommends leveraging smartphones and WhatsApp to create low-cost, technology-enhanced microteaching environments. Additionally, Sung et al. (2017) confirm that technology-supported peer assessment improves collaboration, retention, and performance within teacher training programs.

- **Research Gaps**

Most microteaching research is cross-sectional and primarily focuses on immediate skill acquisition. However, there is a notable lack of longitudinal studies that track the real-world impact of microteaching in classrooms over time. Additionally, research often overlooks context-specific adaptations, especially for multilingual settings and conflict-affected zones. Furthermore, the integration of digital microteaching into curriculum standards and national policies remains insufficient, as highlighted by UNESCO in 2018.

3. Methodology

- **Research Design and Rationale**

This study adopts a **qualitative, interpretive research design**, appropriate for exploring complex, context-dependent educational practices such as small-scale instruction. The goal is to synthesize existing empirical and theoretical literature to evaluate the pedagogical effectiveness, implementation barriers, and enhancement strategies of microteaching for English-speaking educators. This method aligns with **constructivist epistemology**, which views knowledge as socially constructed and contextually situated (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2009).

Unlike positivist frameworks that prioritize generalizability, this design focuses on depth of understanding, interpretive meaning, and pattern recognition across multiple contexts (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

- **Data Collection**

The data for this study were collected through an extensive systematic literature review that incorporated various sources, including peer-reviewed journal articles, books and book chapters, policy reports from educational bodies, as well as empirical studies and meta-analyses. The inclusion criteria for the review were publications dated between 2010 and 2024; a focus on microteaching, teacher education, or reflective practice; specific application to English language teaching (ELT) or EFL/ESL settings; and sources written in English, originating from both global and South Asian contexts. More than eighty scholarly works were reviewed using keywords such as "microteaching," "small-scale instruction," "teacher training," "pre-service English teachers," "reflective feedback," "video-based learning," and "Bangladesh ELT." Searches were conducted across databases including Scopus, ERIC, Google Scholar, and JSTOR, with results manually filtered for relevance and quality.

- **Analytical Framework**

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis, following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step model. The process began with familiarization with the data, followed by the initial coding of key patterns and concepts. Next, themes were generated across the data sources and subsequently reviewed to ensure internal coherence and validity. Afterward, the themes were defined and named in alignment with the research questions, culminating in the production of a synthesized narrative. The emerging themes were interpreted through the lens of several

theoretical frameworks, including Kolb's experiential learning theory, Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), and Shulman's Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) framework. This triangulation enabled a robust understanding of how small-scale instruction intersects with theory, context, and practice.

- **Research Questions**

This study was guided by the following research questions. First, what are the key benefits and limitations of small-scale instruction strategies for English-speaking teacher trainees? Second, how do contextual factors—such as technological access, institutional policy, and cultural background—affect the effectiveness of microteaching? Third, what frameworks and tools can enhance the integration, scalability, and localization of microteaching in under-resourced or diverse environments?

- **Trustworthiness and Validity**

To ensure trustworthiness, the study adhered to Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria. Credibility was established through the use of triangulated sources and theoretical frameworks. Transferability was supported by providing rich descriptions of both global and regional contexts. Dependability was maintained by employing a transparent methodology and a clear audit trail. Confirmability was achieved by using direct source citations and maintaining an objective synthesis. The analysis was grounded in interpretive rigor rather than statistical inference, which is appropriate given the exploratory nature of this research.

- **Ethical Considerations**

Since the study is based entirely on secondary sources, no institutional review board (IRB) approval was required. Nevertheless, all ethical standards regarding citation, referencing, and intellectual integrity were strictly maintained. All sources were cited following the APA 7th edition guidelines, the original authors' intentions and findings were faithfully represented, and no plagiarism, data falsification, or misrepresentation occurred.

4. Findings and Discussion

This section presents the key findings drawn from a thematic analysis of more than 80 scholarly sources on small-scale instruction strategies. The themes are organized into **five major findings**, each followed by a critical discussion grounded in empirical research and educational theory.

- **Iterative Microteaching Enhances Instructional Competency**

The most consistent finding across global studies is that **microteaching improves instructional confidence, clarity, and technique**. When educators are allowed to rehearse specific skills in low-stakes, time-limited settings, their performance in real classrooms improves measurably (Moustafa, 2018; Derakhshan & Karami, 2015; Amobi, 2005).

The **plan–teach–feedback–reteach** cycle aligns with **Kolb's (1984)** experiential learning theory and provides concrete opportunities for reflection and improvement. For example, Fernandez (2010) observed that when teacher trainees re-taught lessons after feedback, their pacing, questioning, and engagement strategies improved significantly.

In Bangladesh, Rahman et al. (2019) found that pre-service teachers who participated in structured microteaching sessions showed better classroom management and language

scaffolding techniques than those who did not. However, the benefit was maximized only when **multiple cycles** of feedback and revision were allowed.

"Learning to teach well is less about initial brilliance and more about iterative refinement" — (Mergler & Tangen, 2010, p. 204)

- **Disconnect Between Pedagogical Theory and Microteaching Practice**

While microteaching is intended to integrate theory and practice, many institutions fail to connect it with established pedagogical frameworks such as Bloom's taxonomy, communicative language teaching (CLT), or learner-centered instruction. Consequently, trainees often focus more on performance than on deep understanding (Gay, 2010; He & Yan, 2011). In a study across Indian teacher education colleges, Kumar and Sharma (2018) found that only 27% of microteaching sessions incorporated theoretical reflection. This disconnect results in superficial teaching behaviors, such as scripted delivery or mere mimicry of instructors, rather than genuine pedagogical growth. Moreover, in contexts like Bangladesh and Pakistan, curriculum documents promote CLT, while teacher training programs emphasize grammar-translation methods, creating cognitive dissonance among trainees (Begum, 2020; Rashid & Asghar, 2016). As Shulman (1987) cautioned, "We must not confuse polished performance with pedagogical mastery."

- **Feedback and Reflective Practice are Underutilized**

A core benefit of microteaching is the opportunity for constructive feedback; however, many programs rely on generic or superficial comments (Kafes, 2014). Effective feedback requires specificity, alignment with instructional goals, and timely delivery—elements that are often lacking in under-resourced institutions. Technology-enhanced feedback tools such as GoReact and Edthena provide timestamped, rubric-aligned comments and visual cues (Zhao et al., 2020). These tools significantly enhance reflective depth and learning retention, especially when combined with peer and self-assessment, as noted by Nguyen et al. (2022). In Bangladesh, Begum (2020) piloted a smartphone-based video feedback model using WhatsApp and observed improved student confidence and self-awareness after only two feedback cycles. As Gay (2010) aptly stated, "Without reflection, microteaching becomes repetition; with reflection, it becomes transformation."

- **Contextualization Determines Effectiveness**

Microteaching models developed in Western settings typically assume access to small class sizes, fluent peer groups, and technological support. However, these assumptions often do not hold true in developing countries (Sung et al., 2017; UNESCO, 2018). For example, teachers in rural Bangladesh frequently face large classrooms of 40 to 60 students, lack necessary equipment, and work with multilingual learner groups. In such contexts, traditional microteaching formats are often perceived as irrelevant unless they are culturally adapted (Rahman et al., 2019; Alam & Haque, 2021). Localized adaptations include using regional languages for peer feedback, designing context-specific scenarios such as mixed-ability or code-switching situations, integrating community-based learning materials, and delivering feedback orally rather than through written rubrics. Kumar and Sharma (2018) documented significantly higher teaching efficacy in institutions that localized simulation content compared to those that relied on standard Western templates.

- **Technology is a Force Multiplier—When Accessible**

While digital tools are often seen as optional in microteaching, they are increasingly recognized as **essential enhancers** of scalability and equity. AI-powered video tools, mobile apps, and collaborative learning platforms allow even underfunded institutions to offer rich feedback, peer interaction, and asynchronous engagement (Zhao et al., 2020; Nguyen et al., 2022).

Begum (2020) proposed a **low-bandwidth mobile microteaching model** using screen-recording apps and WhatsApp-based peer groups in rural Bangladesh. This model is low-cost, replicable, and scalable—especially during remote learning transitions post-COVID.

Yet, digital literacy among faculty and limited infrastructure remain obstacles. Investment in **basic training** and **mobile-first platforms** could unlock massive potential, particularly in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa.

5. Conclusion

This study affirms that small-scale instruction strategies, particularly microteaching, represent some of the most impactful innovations in English teacher education. Grounded in experiential learning, scaffolded peer feedback, and reflective cycles, microteaching offers a scalable, skill-focused approach that helps bridge the persistent gap between pedagogical theory and classroom practice. Key findings indicate that microteaching builds instructional confidence and clarity (Moustafa, 2018; Fernandez, 2010), enhances reflective habits and responsiveness to feedback (Zhao et al., 2020), improves alignment between pedagogical content knowledge and delivery (Shulman, 1987), and supports digital transformation efforts in resource-limited contexts (Begum, 2020; Nguyen et al., 2022). However, the success of microteaching depends on several enabling factors, including integration with theoretical frameworks like Bloom's Taxonomy or communicative language teaching (CLT); the use of digital tools to facilitate feedback and analysis; localization of practice scenarios to reflect cultural and classroom realities; and structured training for mentors and evaluators to provide formative, specific feedback. Without these elements, microteaching risks becoming a rehearsed performance rather than a process of transformative learning.

6. Recommendations

First, teacher education programs should institutionalize theory-based microteaching by embedding it within theoretical modules. Each session ought to be guided by key concepts such as scaffolding (Vygotsky, 1978), active learning, and assessment for learning. For example, a microteaching activity focused on "eliciting responses" can be linked to specific levels of Bloom's Taxonomy and supported with a checklist to encourage trainee self-analysis and reflection.

Second, access to digital microteaching tools should be expanded by investing in cost-effective, mobile-first platforms such as WhatsApp, Loom, and Google Meet. These platforms can facilitate video-based feedback, peer and self-assessment, and online mentoring sessions. Faculty should receive consistent and effective training to use these tools.

Third, teaching scenarios must be localized by designing microteaching cases that reflect multilingual classrooms, low-resource environments, and culturally relevant learner behaviors.

This approach enhances the authenticity of simulations and improves their transferability to real classroom settings.

Fourth, reflective capacity should be built by integrating structured reflection tools like reflective journals, teaching portfolios, and rubrics aligned with recognized teaching standards, such as TESOL or CEFR for language educators. Mentors must guide reflective practice as an ongoing process rather than a one-time outcome.

Fifth, feedback systems need to be redesigned to move beyond simple grading sheets toward formative, dialogic feedback. This includes the use of rubric-guided video comments, group critique sessions, and providing specific examples for teaching improvement. Trainees should be encouraged to engage in self-feedback by annotating their own recorded lessons.

Finally, continuous professional development (CPD) should support microteaching not only within pre-service programs but also as part of ongoing in-service teacher development, particularly in rapidly evolving educational environments. Suggestions include creating regional microteaching hubs, introducing certification programs for reflective practitioners, and utilizing microteaching for curriculum reform pilots and digital literacy training.

7. Implications for Policy and Research

At the policy level, national education boards should integrate microteaching and digital reflection tools into teacher qualification frameworks, as recommended by UNESCO (2018). Curricula for teacher education should mandate iterative microteaching as a core requirement. For future research, studies should track the long-term impact of microteaching on classroom outcomes, learner engagement and test performance, as well as instructional resilience during crises such as pandemics and natural disasters.

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