
MICRO-TEACHING AS A BRIDGE BETWEEN THEORY AND PRACTICE IN SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHER EDUCATION: PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract

This study examines micro-teaching as a pedagogical mechanism for bridging the theory–practice gap in Social Studies teacher education through a multidimensional framework encompassing cognitive, affective, and behavioural outcomes. Despite its widespread use, limited empirical attention has been given to the processes through which micro-teaching simultaneously shapes these interrelated domains, particularly within developing educational contexts. Adopting a quantitative descriptive survey design within a path-analytic framework, data were collected from 394 pre-service Social Studies teachers using a structured questionnaire. Constructs were operationalised as composite indices and analysed using multiple regression and bootstrapped mediation techniques. The findings reveal that micro-teaching significantly predicts cognitive outcomes ($\beta = 0.58$) and affective

outcomes ($\beta = 0.61$), while both cognitive ($\beta = 0.46$) and affective outcomes ($\beta = 0.50$) significantly influence behavioural competence. A direct effect of micro-teaching on behavioural competence ($\beta_s = 0.39$) was also established. Mediation confirms a partial mediation structure, with cognitive ($\beta = 0.27$) and affective ($\beta = 0.31$) outcomes operating as significant indirect pathways through which micro-teaching enhances teaching performance. Teacher education programmes should institutionalise micro-teaching as a core component of Social Studies teacher preparation, deliberately targeting cognitive understanding, lesson planning, teaching confidence and professional attitudes, while accreditation bodies such as the NUC and NCCE allocate adequate time, resources and trained supervisors to sustain quality practice.

Keywords: Affective outcomes, Behavioural competence, Cognitive outcomes, Micro-teaching, Pre-service teachers, Teacher education.

Introduction

Teacher education the pivotal strength of growth in every society has increasingly been positioned as the nucleus of educational reforms, particularly in the strives to expand and improve instructional quality and student learning outcomes (Albright et al., 2026). However, one of the most occurring challenges in teacher education programmes is the disconnect between theoretical knowledge acquired and its practical application in classroom environments. This theory–practice gap persists in undermining the effectiveness of pre-service teacher readiness globally, as very many pre-service teachers struggle not only to apply pedagogical concepts but also to integrate knowledge and skills into coherent classroom practice (Bakker et al., 2021; Kaplan & Aslan, 2025).

In Social Studies education, this challenge is particularly amplified due to the dynamic nature of the subject. It is an interdisciplinary

subject that is value-laden in nature. Therefore, for teaching endeavours to be adjudged as effective, mastery only cannot account for it but rather the dynamic integration of cognitive, affective and behavioural competencies to foster critical thinking, civic engagement and context-sensitive learning. Contemporary literature opined that teacher competence in Social Studies emerges from the foundations of interaction of the domains (Remesh, 2013; Iliasova et al., 2025; Peercy et al., 2025). However, traditional teacher education often patterned towards theoretical instruction, thereby limiting pre-service teachers' development of these interrelated competencies in either authentic or simulated teachings (Albright et al., 2026). Within the Nigerian context, studies have further demonstrated that engaging, learner-centred strategies including documentary-based instruction (Makanjuola et al., 2021) and experiential approaches such as field trips and cooperative learning (Makanjuola et al., 2017) can promote learner engagement and concept attainment in Social Studies, establishing the importance of the practice-oriented pedagogy that effectively promote teacher readiness for effective instructional delivery.

In response, micro-teaching has emerged as a widely adopted pedagogical strategy designed to bridge the gap between theory and practice. Micro-teaching provides structured, feedback-driven opportunities for pre-service teachers to practise teaching in controlled environments, thereby enabling iterative refinement of instructional approaches. Empirical evidence indicates that micro-teaching enhances pedagogical understanding, fosters reflective practice, and improves teaching performance (Iliasova et al., 2025; Jeon, 2025; Zhang et al., 2026). However, much of the existing research conceptualises these outcomes as independent effects, with limited attention to the processes through which micro-teaching simultaneously shapes multiple domains of teacher development.

Recent advances in teacher education research suggest that the impact of micro-teaching is not merely direct but operates through a developmental process involving reflection, feedback assimilation, and iterative practice. Within this process, gains in pedagogical knowledge (cognitive outcomes) and instructional confidence

(affective outcomes) are expected to interact and jointly influence teaching performance (behavioural competence). This perspective shifts the focus from simple outcome evaluation to a more nuanced understanding of how micro-teaching facilitates multidimensional teacher development.

Despite these insights, there remains limited empirical research, particularly within developing contexts such as Nigeria, that systematically examines the interrelationships among cognitive, affective, and behavioural outcomes in micro-teaching contexts. Although recent Nigerian studies have begun to investigate practice-based and collaborative approaches to teacher preparation, such as virtual team teaching among pre-service teachers (Ayantunji et al., 2024), the processes through which micro-teaching simultaneously shapes the cognitive, affective, and behavioural domains remain underexplored. Existing studies tend to focus on general teacher education outcomes without adequately exploring how these domains interact to produce classroom readiness, especially within subject-specific areas such as Social Studies.

Micro-teaching plays an important role in developing pre-service teachers' cognitive strength, pedagogical concepts, instructional design and subject-specific teaching strategies. Through structured practice, feedback and reflective engagement (Hanson & Appleby, 2025), pre-service teachers are able to dynamically connect theory with practical implementation, to effectively expand conceptual clarity and instructional attainment (Kaplan & Aslan, 2025; Zhang et al., 2026).

Beyond cognitive gains, micro-teaching influences affective dimensions such as confidence, motivation, self-esteem, teaching self-efficacy and readiness for pedagogical changes. Participation in simulated teaching environments reduces anxiety and promotes positive attitudes towards teaching and learning, which are determinants of instructional engagement (Jeon, 2025; Wang & Wang, 2025). These affective outcomes redefine how pre-service teachers approach classroom challenges and adopt learner-centred practices. Further studies suggests that behavioural competences in teaching are

not basically direct outcome of training but rather they are mediated by cognitive and affective engagement. Pedagogical knowledge provides the foundation for instructional decision-making, while confidence and self-efficacy influence the execution of teaching practices. Studies show that teachers with cognitive mastery but with low confidence may struggle with classroom practice, whereas those that are well fortified with both skills (knowledge and positive dispositions) certainly display strong and higher levels of instructional efficiency (Bakker et al., 2021; Obrovská et al., 2025). This therefore, underscores the necessity of accessing behavioural outcomes as a function of both the cognitive and affective domains, since the repeated cycles of practice and feedback within micro-teaching enable pre-service teachers to integrate these domains and thereby enhance their classroom readiness and teaching performance.

This study is therefore underpinned in Experiential Learning Theory and Social Learning Theory, which together provide a complementary explanation for how micro-teaching facilitates multidimensional teacher development. Experiential Learning Theory posits that learning occurs via a cyclical process involving concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation and active experimentation. Within the context of teacher education, micro-teaching represents a structured experiential platform where pre-service teachers engage in simulated teaching, reflect on their performance, refine their pedagogical understanding and reapply improved strategies. This iterative process therefore, promotes the transformation of theoretical understanding into practical competence worthy of a teacher.

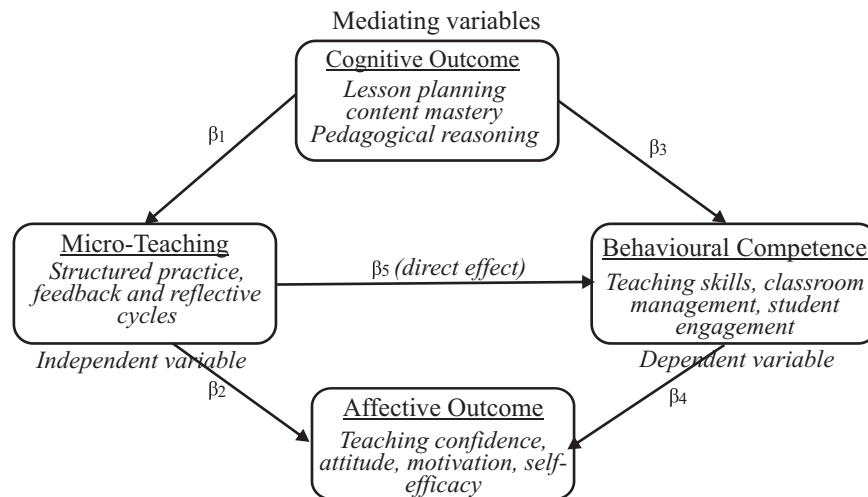
In this study, experiential learning explains how micro-teaching enhances cognitive and affective outcomes, which subsequently influence behavioural competence. The emphasis on reflection and feedback as mechanisms of learning underscores the role of micro-teaching in fostering deep, practice-oriented understanding (Kolb, 2014; Hanson & Appleby, 2025).

Social learning theory provides further insight into the behavioural aspect of teacher development by ensuring that learning is ascertain

through observation, imitation and social interaction. In micro-teaching environments, the pre-service teacher observes peers, model effective teaching behaviours and predicate his mastery on the feedback from instructors. These processes encourage both skill acquisition and the development of teaching self-efficacy. Bandura (1986) further argues that behaviour is shaped through the reciprocal interaction of cognitive processes, environmental influences and personal factors. This triadic interaction is in tandem with the present study's framework with (cognitive understanding and affective dispositions interact to produce observable teaching competence). Thus, Social Learning Theory explains how micro-teaching not only builds knowledge but also translates that knowledge into effective classroom practice. The integration of Experiential Learning Theory and Social Learning Theory provides a robust foundation for understanding the pathways through which micro-teaching influences teacher development. While experiential learning explains the process of knowledge construction and reflection, social learning theory accounts for the social and behavioural mechanisms through which teaching skills are acquired and enacted. Together, these theories support the study's proposition that micro-teaching operates through interconnected cognitive, affective, and behavioural pathways, rather than producing isolated outcomes. This integrated perspective justifies the adoption of a path-analytic model that captures both direct and indirect relationships among the study variables, thereby offering a comprehensive explanation of how micro-teaching bridges the gap between theory and practice in Social Studies teacher education.

To provide a structured explanation of the relationships among the study variables, a conceptual model was developed to illustrate the pathways through which micro-teaching influences pre-service teachers' development. The model is grounded in experiential and social learning perspectives, which emphasise learning through practice, reflection, and interaction. Specifically, the model positions micro-teaching as a central pedagogical process that enhances cognitive and affective outcomes, which in turn contribute to the development of behavioural competence. In addition, a direct pathway from micro-teaching to behavioural competence is included to capture the immediate effects of practice and feedback. This

framework reflects a multidimensional and partially mediated process of teacher development, as presented in Figure 1



Legend

Direct effect (tests H_{05}): β_5

Indirect effect via cognitive (tests H_{06a}): $\beta_1 \times \beta_3$

Indirect effect via affective (tests H_{06b}): $\beta_2 \times \beta_4$

Figure 1. Conceptual model of micro-teaching and multidimensional teacher development.

Source: Author's conceptualisation (2026).

The conceptual model positions micro-teaching as the independent variable influencing pre-service teachers' development through multiple interrelated pathways grounded in experiential and social learning perspectives. Specifically, micro-teaching is expected to enhance cognitive outcomes (β_1), including lesson planning knowledge, content mastery, and pedagogical reasoning, through structured practice and reflective processes (Hanson & Appleby, 2025). It also improves affective outcomes (β_2), such as teaching confidence, attitudes, and motivation, as a result of repeated engagement and feedback.

Furthermore, the model assumes that both cognitive and affective outcomes contribute significantly to behavioural competence. In this

regard, cognitive outcomes are hypothesised to positively influence behavioural competence (β_4) by facilitating effective classroom practices, while affective outcomes are expected to enhance behavioural competence (β_5) through increased confidence and motivation that support instructional performance. In addition to these indirect pathways, the model includes a direct relationship between micro-teaching and behavioural competence (β_6), suggesting that rehearsal and immediate feedback inherent in micro-teaching can independently improve teaching skills. Overall, the model reflects a partial mediation structure, in which cognitive (β_1, β_2) and affective (β_3, β_4) pathways serve as mechanisms through which micro-teaching translates into behavioural competence, alongside a direct pathway (β_6) linking micro-teaching to teaching performance. Against this backdrop, this study is anchored in a multidimensional developmental framework that conceptualises micro-teaching as a structured pedagogical process influencing pre-service teachers through interconnected cognitive, affective and behavioural pathways. Focusing on Social Studies education, the study provides context-specific insights into how micro-teaching contributes to bridging the theory–practice gap through these interrelated mechanisms. Therefore, the aim of this study is to examine the role of micro-teaching in shaping multidimensional teacher development and bridging the gap between theory and practice in Social Studies teacher education. Specifically, the study seeks to:

- i. investigate the extent to which micro-teaching predicts cognitive outcomes among pre-service teachers in Social Studies education;
- ii. determine the influence of micro-teaching on pre-service teachers' affective outcomes;
- iii. examine the effect of cognitive outcomes on the development of pre-service teachers' behavioural competence;
- iv. examine the effect of affective outcomes on the development of pre-service teachers' behavioural competence;
- v. determine the direct effect of micro-teaching on pre-service teachers' behavioural competence; and
- vi. examine the mediating roles of cognitive and affective outcomes in the relationship between micro-teaching and pre-service teachers' behavioural competence.

Hypotheses

- H01: Micro-teaching has no significant effect on pre-service teachers' cognitive outcomes in Social Studies education.
- H02: Micro-teaching has no significant influence on pre-service teachers' affective outcomes.
- H03: Cognitive outcomes have no significant effect on behavioural competence among pre-service teachers.
- H04: Affective outcomes have no significant influence on behavioural competence among pre-service teachers.
- H05: Micro-teaching has no significant effect on behavioural competence among pre-service teachers.
- H06_a: Cognitive outcomes do not significantly mediate the relationship between micro-teaching and pre-service teachers' behavioural competence.
- H06_a: Affective outcomes do not significantly mediate the relationship between micro-teaching and pre-service teachers' behavioural competence.

Methods

This study adopted a quantitative descriptive survey design within a path-analytic framework to examine how micro-teaching influences cognitive outcomes, affective outcomes and behavioural competence among pre-service Social Studies teachers. A multistage procedure yielded a sample of 394 participants from selected tertiary institutions. Data were collected after micro-teaching sessions using the Micro-Teaching and Pedagogical Development Scale (MTPDS), which was expert-validated and returned a Cronbach's alpha of 0.82. Multiple regression estimated five direct pathways (β_1 – β_5), while mediation analysis used bias-corrected bootstrapped confidence intervals (5,000 resamples) to test indirect effects. All hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 significance level.

Results

This section presents the results of the regression and mediation analyses. The first five hypotheses (H01–H05) examine the direct pathways specified in the conceptual model, while H06_a and H06_a test the mediating roles of cognitive and affective outcomes.

Table 1: Summary of Regression Results for Hypothesised Pathways (H₀₁–H₀₅)

Predictor	Outcome Variable	Unstandardized Coefficient (B)	Std. Error	Beta (β)	t-value	p-value	Hypothesis
Micro-teaching	Cognitive Outcomes	0.62	0.05	0.58	12.40	0.000	H ₀₁ Rejected
Micro-teaching	Affective Outcomes	0.65	0.06	0.61 (β ₂)	10.83	0.000	H ₀₂ Rejected
Cognitive Outcomes	Behavioural Competence	0.49	0.06	0.46 (β ₃)	8.17	0.000	H ₀₃ Rejected
Affective Outcomes	Behavioural Competence	0.52	0.05	0.50 (β ₄)	10.40	0.000	H ₀₄ Rejected
Micro-teaching	Behavioural Competence	0.41	0.07	0.39 (β ₅)	5.86	0.000	H ₀₅ Rejected

Micro-teaching significantly predicted cognitive outcomes ($\beta = 0.58, t = 12.40, p < 0.05$) and affective outcomes ($\beta = 0.61, t = 10.83, p < 0.05$), leading to the rejection of H₀₁ and H₀₂. In turn, both cognitive ($\beta = 0.46, t = 8.17, p < 0.05$) and affective outcomes ($\beta = 0.50, t = 10.40, p < 0.05$) significantly predicted behavioural competence, resulting in the rejection of H₀₃ and H₀₄. Micro-teaching also exerted a significant direct effect on behavioural competence ($\beta_5 = 0.39, t = 5.86, p < 0.05$), leading to the rejection of H₀₅. All five direct pathways specified in the conceptual model were therefore empirically supported.

Table 2: Summary of Mediation Analysis showing Indirect, Direct and Total Effects of Micro-teaching on Behavioural Competence (H_{06a} and H_{06a})

Effect	Pathway	Estimate (β)	Boot SE	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper	Decision
Indirect (via cognitive)	Micro-teaching _a Cognitive _a Behavioural	0.27	0.04	0.19	0.35	H _{06a} Rejected
Indirect (via affective)	Micro-teaching _a Affective _a Behavioural	0.31	0.04	0.23	0.39	H _{06a} Rejected

Effect	Pathway	Estimate (β)	Boot SE	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper	Decision
Total indirect	Combined cognitive + affective	0.58	0.06	0.46	0.69	Significant
Direct	Micro-teaching _a Behavioural	0.39	0.07	0.25	0.53	Significant
Total effect	Direct + Total indirect	0.96	—	—	—	—
Mediation type	—	—	—	—	—	Partial mediation

Note. Confidence intervals are bias-corrected bootstrap intervals based on 5,000 resamples. An indirect effect is significant if the 95% CI does not include zero.

The mediation analysis in Table 2 shows that cognitive outcomes ($\beta = 0.27$, 95% CI [0.19, 0.35]) and affective outcomes ($\beta = 0.31$, 95% CI [0.23, 0.39]) each significantly mediated the relationship between micro-teaching and behavioural competence, as neither confidence interval contained zero; H_{5b}s and H_{5c}s were therefore rejected. The total indirect effect ($\beta = 0.58$) was substantial, while the direct effect remained significant ($\beta = 0.39$, 95% CI [0.25, 0.53]), confirming partial rather than full mediation.

Discussions

The findings demonstrate that micro-teaching significantly enhances pre-service teachers' cognitive outcomes, indicating that structured practice strengthens their grasp of pedagogical concepts, lesson planning and content delivery. This aligns with evidence that experiential learning fosters deeper conceptual understanding through the active application of theory (Bakker et al., 2021; Kaplan & Aslan, 2025). Its equally significant influence on affective outcomes suggests that repeated practice and feedback build confidence, motivation and positive attitudes towards teaching, echoing findings on enhanced self-efficacy and reduced anxiety among pre-service teachers (Jeon, 2025; Wang & Wang, 2025). Both cognitive and affective outcomes, in turn, predicted behavioural competence, affirming Social Learning Theory's premise that behavioural change is shaped jointly by cognition and affect (Kruis et al., 2020; Obrovská et al., 2025; Zhang et al., 2026).

The significant direct effect of micro-teaching on behavioural competence, together with indirect pathways through both cognitive and affective domains, empirically validates Bandura's (1986) triadic interaction of cognitive, environmental and personal factors and confirms that experiential and social learning operate as complementary rather than competing mechanisms. These results are especially pertinent to Social Studies, where teaching demands content mastery alongside critical thinking, civic responsibility and value formation, and they reinforce the case for practice-based teacher education that deliberately targets both cognitive and affective domains to maximise behavioural competence.

Conclusion

This study contributes to and support the discourse on teacher preparation by providing empirical evidence that micro-teaching is not merely a supplementary activity but a core pedagogical strength for bridging the theory and practice gap in teacher education programme.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, teacher education programmes should institutionalise micro-teaching as a core component of Social Studies teacher preparation, with structured opportunities for repeated practice, peer observation and feedback. Since cognitive and affective outcomes jointly mediate its influence on behavioural competence, micro-teaching sessions should deliberately target conceptual understanding, lesson planning, teaching confidence and professional attitudes in equal measure. Accreditation bodies such as the NUC and NCCE should review existing guidelines to allocate adequate time, resources and trained supervisors for micro-teaching.

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