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From Theory to Practice: Reflective Microteaching Experiences and Professional Skill Development

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Abstract

This study aimed to understand how teacher candidates experienced and interpreted the microteaching process and how they related this experience to their professional learning. The study was conducted using a hermeneutic phenomenological approach with teacher candidates enrolled in a faculty of education. Data were collected through reflective journals and a focus group interview and examined through thematic analysis using both deductive and inductive orientations. The analysis produced seven themes: Perceptions Prior to the Microteaching Process, Utilizing the Curriculum, Selection of Theory, Strategy, Method and Technique, Classroom Management, Feedback Process, Classroom Dynamics, and Evaluation of the Microteaching Process. The teacher candidates described microteaching as an opportunity to experience how theoretical knowledge could be used in lesson planning and instructional practice. They also reconsidered their previous perceptions of teaching, became more aware of the relationships among curriculum components and instructional decisions, and recognized the importance of classroom management, communication, collaboration, and feedback. Overall, the findings show how teacher candidates made sense of microteaching as a practice-based learning experience and associated it with their developing understanding of the teaching profession.

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INTRODUCTION

The strong relationship between student achievement and teacher quality places the quality of teacher education programs at the center of educational systems (Darling-Hammond, 2012). In this context, providing structured learning experiences aimed at developing teacher candidates' professional competencies has emerged as a critical necessity. However, the literature indicates that teacher candidates often fail to gain sufficient practical experience before entering real classroom settings and experience a significant disconnect between theoretical knowledge and practice (Darling-

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Hammond, 2012; Grossman et al., 2009; Kozikoğlu, 2016).

This difficulty in transferring theoretical knowledge into practice within teacher education programs prevents teacher candidates from effectively reflecting their acquired knowledge in classroom teaching processes (Korthagen, 2010). This issue becomes even more critical considering the complex, contextualand immediate decision-making processes inherent in the teaching profession. Indeed, teaching requires not only the transmission of knowledge but also multidimensional skills such as managing classroom interactions, making pedagogical decisionsand organizing learning environments. Therefore, the integration of theory and practice in teacher education is regarded as one of the fundamental components of professional development (Juhler, 2018; McGarr, 2021).

Microteaching is considered one of the most significant practices for ensuring this integration (Ahmed et al., 2019; Thompson & Woodman, 2019). Microteaching is a structured teacher education technique that enables teacher candidates to practice teaching in a controlled environment by reducing the complexity of the instructional process in order to develop their teaching skills (Rohmah, 2021). Initially developed at Stanford University, this technique makes the teaching process more manageable through features such as limited instructional time, small student groupsand a focus on specific teaching skills (Dhananjaya & Nusrath, 2018). Based on these definitions, microteaching can be described as a carefully designed teacher education technique that facilitates the implementation of teaching in a controlled environment through the use of authentic teaching situations aimed at developing or improving instructional skills.

In this respect, microteaching offers not only opportunities for teacher candidates to develop instructional skills but also an experiential learning process that fosters awareness of the authentic nature of teaching. Microteaching practices contribute to the development of teacher candidates' planning, implementationand evaluation skills, enhance their professional self-confidence, enable them to experience the role of a teacherand promote their reflective thinking skills (Arsal, 2014; Ralph, 2014; Yan & He, 2017). Furthermore, the microteaching process provides teacher candidates with opportunities to receive feedback and engage in self-evaluation within a low-risk environment, thereby creating an important learning space that supports their professional development (Fernandez & Robinson, 2006).

The microteaching process fundamentally consists of three stages: planning, implementationand reflection (Borgerding et al., 2015; Karlström & Hamza, 2019). Within this process, teacher candidates first prepare lesson plans, then implement these plansand finally evaluate their instructional practices based on the feedback they receive. The reflection stage, in particular, enables teacher candidates to critically examine their teaching experiences, recognize their strengths and areas requiring improvementand reconstruct their professional perceptions.

However, a review of the literature reveals that microteaching studies have largely focused on teaching skills and performance outcomes (Apling & Haryani, 2019; Megalina et al., 2025; Msimanga, 2021; Zhumabayeva et al., 2025), . In contrast, the experiential and perceptual dimensions of teacher candidates' engagement with the microteaching process have received relatively limited attention. In this regard, examining the microteaching process through the lived experiences of teacher candidates may provide a deeper understanding of the nature of teacher education. In particular, exploring the experiences teacher candidates encounter during the microteaching process, the meanings they attribute to these experiencesand the ways in which these experiences influence their professional development represents an important area of inquiry. Drawing upon this gap in the literature, the present study approaches the microteaching process from a hermeneutic phenomenological perspective and aims to examine teacher candidates' experiences, perceptionsand awareness in depth. Accordingly, the study seeks to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: How do teacher candidates retrospectively describe their initial perceptions of microteaching and the teaching profession?

RQ2: How do teacher candidates experience and interpret the use of the curriculum when selecting learning outcomes and planning instruction during microteaching?

RQ3: How do teacher candidates experience the process of selecting theories, strategies, methods, and techniques and translating them into practice?

RQ4: How do teacher candidates experience and interpret classroom management, communication, and collaboration during microteaching?

RQ5: How do teacher candidates interpret the role of peer and instructor feedback in their professional awareness and instructional practices?

RQ6: How do teacher candidates evaluate the microteaching process in relation to their professional learning and instructional practices?

Literature Review

Microteaching is a structured teacher education approach that enables teacher candidates to develop their skills in planning, implementing, observingand evaluating instructional processes by delivering short lessons to small groups of students (Fernández, 2005). Initially developed at Stanford University, microteaching functions not only as a means of providing teacher candidates with preliminary teaching experience but also as a research and in-service training tool that allows instructional processes to be systematically examined under controlled conditions (Allen, 1967). In this respect, microteaching offers a multidimensional learning environment aimed not only at improving instructional skills but also at analyzing and enhancing teaching processes.

In microteaching practices conducted within a controlled learning environment, the teacher candidate assumes the role of the teacher, while peers share the roles of students and observers. This structure enables teacher candidates to evaluate instructional processes from multiple perspectives and places feedback processes at the center of teacher education (Subramaniam, 2024). The microteaching process is generally characterized by short teaching sessions (5–20 minutes), the observation of these sessionsand subsequent feedback discussions (Fernández, 2010; Ro & Kim, 2024). Through this process, teacher candidates gain teaching experience during the early stages of their professional development and are provided with opportunities to critically reflect on their own teaching competencies through reflective practices.

One of the primary aims of microteaching is to systematically develop specific instructional skills among teacher candidates. These skills include fundamental components of the teaching process such as lesson planning, lesson introduction, explanation, exemplification, reinforcement, providing stimulus variation, questioning, the use of audiovisual materials, classroom managementand lesson closure (Allen, 1967). However, these skills should not be regarded merely as technical practices; rather, they should also be considered part of the pedagogical decision-making processes through which teacher candidates determine when and how particular strategies, methodsand techniques should be employed during instruction.

The process of acquiring instructional skills in microteaching programs generally follows a cyclical sequence consisting of Plan, Teach, Observe/Critique/Feedback, Re-plan, Re-teachand Re-Observe/Re-Critique/Re-Feedback stages (Alex & Thomas, 2023; Benton-Kupper, 2001; Ike, 2017). During the planning stage, preservice teachers make decisions regarding what will be taught, the concepts to be addressed, instructional objectives and goals aligned with national standardsand how student learning will be assessed (Diana, 2013). Subsequently, during the teaching stage, they implement the lesson module they have planned by teaching it to their peers. Feedback constitutes another critical and indispensable component of microteaching, as it plays a central role in supporting learning processes (Grainger, 2020). Feedback involves the communication of performance-related information from an agent to a learner (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Yan & He, 2017). In a typical microteaching setting, these agents are teacher educators and peers. Teacher educators provide teacher candidates with feedback regarding their microteaching performance, encouraging them to reflect on their instructional practices and improve their professional

competencies (Ishino & Ro, 2025; Jeon, 2025). Within microteaching practices, feedback from teacher educators enhances preservice teachers' classroom instructional skills (Topal & Yiğitoğlu-Aptoula, 2022) while also deepening their reflections on their own microteaching performances (Walsh & Mann, 2015). Similarly, peer feedback in teacher education supports professional development by contributing to the development of fundamental teaching competencies (Prilop & Weber, 2023; Tripp & Rich, 2012).

Another fundamental component of the microteaching process is reflective practice. Reflection enables teacher candidates to analyze their teaching experiences, identify their strengths and areas requiring improvementand enhance their pedagogical practices (Cirocki & Widodo, 2019; Yuan & Mak, 2018). In particular, video-supported reflection practices contribute to the development of self-evaluation skills by allowing teacher candidates to examine their own instructional processes from an external perspective (Widodo & Ferdiansyah, 2018). In this context, reflection is regarded not only as the evaluation of past experiences but also as a dynamic learning process that involves the reconstruction of future teaching practices (Rushton & Suter, 2012).

A review of the literature indicates that microteaching studies have predominantly focused on teaching skills, performance levelsand the development of specific pedagogical competencies (Amobi, 2005; Arsal, 2014; Benton-Kupper, 2001). These studies primarily highlight the effects of microteaching on the improvement of instructional skills, the enhancement of classroom management competenciesand the evaluation of teaching performance. However, comparatively limited attention has been paid to deeper and more subjective dimensions, such as how teacher candidates experience the microteaching process, the meanings they construct throughout this experienceand the ways in which their professional perceptions are transformed (Cirocki & Widodo, 2019; Yuan & Mak, 2018). Yet, teacher development extends beyond the acquisition of technical skills and constitutes a holistic process through which individuals reconstruct their professional beliefs, perceptionsand identities through experience (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Flores & Day, 2006). In this regard, examining the microteaching process through teacher candidates' lived experiences, meaning-making processesand transformations in professional awareness is considered essential for understanding the experiential and transformative dimensions of teacher education.

Method

Research Model

This study was designed within the framework of qualitative research using a hermeneutic (interpretive) phenomenological approach to explore how teacher candidates experienced and interpreted the microteaching process and the meanings they attributed to this experience. Hermeneutic phenomenology focuses not on phenomena as objectively observable entities, but on how individuals experience, interpret, and make sense of them within particular contexts (Van Manen, 1990). It also recognizes that understanding is interpretive and that meanings are constructed through an engagement between participants' accounts, the context in which the experience occurs, and the researcher's interpretive perspective (Ramsook, 2018; Sloan & Bowe, 2014).

This approach was considered appropriate because the research questions focus on how teacher candidates described their initial perceptions retrospectively, experienced the use of the curriculum and the translation of theoretical knowledge into practice, interpreted classroom interactions and feedback, and evaluated the microteaching process in relation to their professional learning. Accordingly, the purpose was not to objectively measure whether microteaching improved particular competencies, but to understand how teacher candidates perceived, interpreted, and assigned meaning to their experiences. Reflective journals were used to obtain individual accounts of the experience, whereas the focus group interview provided an opportunity to explore shared, elaborated, and differing interpretations. Thus, the research design and data collection methods were structured in accordance with the interpretive orientation of hermeneutic phenomenology.

Research Participants

The participants were 37 teacher candidates enrolled in a microteaching course at a faculty of education. Criterion sampling, a purposive sampling strategy, was used to identify participants who had direct experience of the phenomenon under investigation. Consistent with the hermeneutic phenomenological design, eligibility criteria included enrollment in the 12-week microteaching course, active participation in the planning, implementation, feedback, and reflection activities, and voluntary consent to participate in the study. These criteria ensured that all participants could provide experience-based accounts of the phenomenon rather than views formed without direct involvement (Van Manen, 1990).

All 37 teacher candidates contributed reflective journals to the study. Among them, 15 teacher candidates additionally volunteered to participate in the focus group interview. The adequacy of the participant group was considered in relation to the relevance and richness of participants' experiences rather than statistical representativeness. The reflective journals enabled the experiences of the entire course group to be examined, while the focus group accounts provided further elaboration of the meanings attributed to these experiences. To protect confidentiality throughout the analysis and reporting, participants' names were replaced with the codes S1, S2, S3, and so forth.

Data Collection Tools

Two complementary qualitative data sources were used in accordance with the interpretive orientation of hermeneutic phenomenology: reflective journals and a focus group interview. These data sources were selected because they enabled the teacher candidates to describe how they experienced, interpreted, and assigned meaning to the microteaching process in both individual and group contexts (Ramsook, 2018; Van Manen, 1990).

All 37 teacher candidates completed one individual reflective journal after their group had carried out its microteaching practice. The journals were used to obtain individual accounts of the candidates' reflections, self-evaluations, and perceptions concerning the microteaching process and the teaching profession. They were structured around broad, open-ended prompts aligned with the research questions. These prompts addressed the candidates' retrospective descriptions of their initial perceptions of microteaching and teaching, their use of the curriculum, the selection and enactment of theories, strategies, methods, and techniques, classroom management, feedback, classroom interaction, and their overall evaluations of the microteaching experience. Because the reflective journals were completed after the candidates' group practices, accounts concerning their initial perceptions were retrospective rather than collected before the microteaching experience. Although the prompts provided a common focus, the candidates were able to elaborate on experiences and issues that they considered personally significant.

In addition, a single 35-minute focus group interview was conducted with 15 teacher candidates who volunteered to participate. The focus group interview was used to explore the candidates' shared and differing interpretations of their microteaching experiences and to elaborate on the issues addressed in the reflective journals. Open-ended questions focused on the candidates' experiences of curriculum use, the translation of theoretical knowledge into practice, classroom management and interaction, peer and instructor feedback, and their overall evaluations of the process. Before the interview, the participants were informed about its purpose and procedure, and participation was based on voluntary consent. The interview was audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed verbatim for analysis. Together, the reflective journals and focus group interview provided complementary individual and interaction-based accounts of the phenomenon under investigation.

Microteaching Course Process

In this study, the microteaching process was designed to enable teacher candidates to systematically apply their theoretical knowledge in practice. The stages included in the microteaching course process are presented in Figure 1.

- ✓ *Preparation and Theoretical Foundation:* At this stage, the prerequisite knowledge required for the microteaching process was

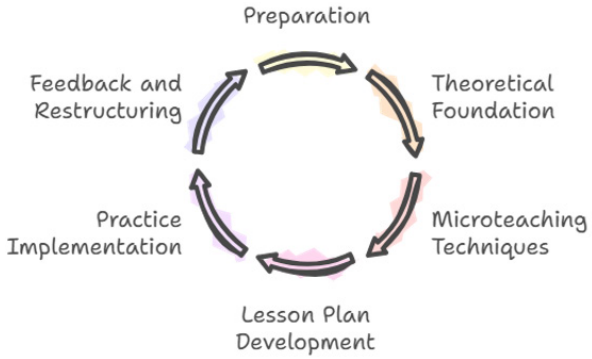

Fig. 1: Microteaching Course Process

identified among the teacher candidates. In this context, reviews of instructional principles, learning theories, instructional strategies, methodsand techniques were conducted in order to strengthen the candidates' theoretical foundations. Teacher candidates were also guided to examine the curriculum related to their respective subject areas, thereby ensuring that they entered the implementation process with adequate preparation.

- ✓ *Information on Microteaching Technique:* Following the preparation stage, teacher candidates were provided with detailed information regarding the purpose, scope, implementation stagesand evaluation processes of the microteaching technique. In this way, the candidates were enabled to understand their roles and responsibilities within the process and to participate in the implementation in a well-prepared manner.
- ✓ *Development of the Lesson Plan:* Teacher candidates were asked to prepare a lesson plan consisting of two sections: theoretical and practical components. Detailed information regarding these sections is presented below.

1- Theoretical Section: In the theoretical section, teacher candidates were asked to specify the grade level, learning domain, sub-learning domainand learning outcomes selected from the relevant curriculum. They were also expected to include the instructional principles, theories, strategies, methodsand techniques to be employed in the lesson plan and to explain them in detail by explicitly relating them to the targeted learning outcomes. At this stage, particular emphasis was placed on explaining theories, strategies, methodsand techniques capable of actively engaging teacher candidates throughout the instructional process. In this way, teacher candidates were encouraged to ground their instructional practices within a solid theoretical framework.

2- Practical Section: In the practical section, teacher candidates designed their lessons in three stages: introduction, developmentand conclusion. During the introduction stage, they were required to include activities related to gaining attention, activating prior knowledge, informing teacher candidates about the instructional objectivesand motivating learners. In the development stage, the candidates were asked to prepare original activities aimed at enabling teacher candidates to acquire the targeted learning outcomes. In the conclusion stage, they were expected to include assessment tools and practices designed to evaluate whether the selected learning outcomes had been achieved. Finally, teacher candidates were instructed to incorporate scenarios involving potential undesirable teacher candidates behaviors as well as possible solution strategies within their lesson plans.

- ✓ Implementation, Feedbackand Restructuring: Teacher candidates brought their prepared lesson plans to class on the implementation day in a finalized form. During the implementation process, the mentor instructor provided immediate, explanatoryand developmental feedback to the candidates by considering the consistency between the lesson plan and the instructional practice. Peer evaluation was conducted through rubrics distributed to the teacher candidates. Based on the feedback received, the teacher candidates were expected to revise and redesign their lesson plans accordingly.

Data Analysis

The verbatim transcript of the focus group interview and the 37 reflective journals were analyzed using

thematic analysis. Thematic analysis was selected because it enables the systematic identification, organization, and interpretation of patterns of meaning across qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The analysis involved an iterative process of familiarization with the data, initial coding, the development of candidate themes and subthemes, the review and refinement of these themes in relation to the coded extracts and the entire data set, and the definition and naming of the final themes.

Deductive and inductive orientations were integrated throughout the analysis. The broad topic areas reflected in the research questions and data collection prompts—such as curriculum use, the translation of theoretical knowledge into practice, classroom management, feedback, and classroom interaction—provided an initial conceptual orientation. However, these topic areas were treated as sensitizing concepts rather than fixed analytic themes. The researchers remained open to meanings, relationships, and subthemes that emerged from the participants' accounts and that extended or complicated the initial areas of focus.

In accordance with the interpretive orientation of hermeneutic phenomenology, the analysis involved moving iteratively between individual excerpts, each participant's broader account, and the data set as a whole. Codes with conceptual similarities were grouped, compared, and developed into candidate subthemes and themes. Both researchers participated in the analysis process and collaboratively discussed the codes, candidate themes, and alternative interpretations. Differences in interpretation were examined by returning to the relevant data extracts, and the themes were refined through discussion. The purpose of this collaborative process was not to establish a single objective interpretation or calculate agreement between independent coders, but to develop an interpretively coherent account grounded in the participants' narratives.

The candidate themes were subsequently reviewed to determine whether they represented the meanings expressed across the reflective journals and the focus group transcript while preserving variations among participants' experiences. The final themes and subthemes were illustrated with representative quotations from both data sources to make the connection between the participants' accounts and the researchers' interpretations transparent.

Research Validity and Reliability

In order to enhance the validity and reliability of the study, the strategies of credibility, transferability, dependabilityand confirmability proposed by Yvonna S. Lincoln and Egon G. Guba (1985) were employed. Within the scope of credibility, triangulation and member checking strategies were utilized. By using both focus group interview and reflective journals, a multifaceted perspective on the microteaching process was obtained. During the thematic analysis process, a consensus-oriented approach was adopted among the researchers regarding the identified themes and the resulting themes were additionally examined by an external expert to ensure agreement and consistency. To enhance transferability, the microteaching process, data collection procedures, participant groupand research findings were described in detail. Regarding dependability and confirmability, both the data collection and data analysis processes were conducted systematically and documented comprehensively. Furthermore, consensus among the researchers was established concerning the themes derived from the data analysisand the themes were evaluated by an independent expert to ensure an objective interpretation of the findings.

Findings

Under this heading, the subthemes and quotations obtained from the data collection instruments are presented in detail under the seven themes identified through the analysis of data collected from focus group interview and reflective journals in light of the hermeneutic phenomenological approach. Table 1 presents the theme, subthemes and quotations related to perceptions prior to the microteaching process.

As shown in Table 1, the theme of perceptions prior to the microteaching process comprised three subthemes: prejudice, implementation anxiety, and limited professional perception. Because these accounts were collected after the candidates' microteaching practices, they represent the participants' retrospective descriptions of their

Table 1: Findings regarding the theme of perceptions prior to the microteaching process

Perceptions Prior to the Microteaching Process		
Sub-theme	**Focus Group Interview (Verbal Quotations)**	**Reflective Journals (Written Quotations)**
Prejudice	S3: The concept of microteaching seemed a bit abstract and superficial to me. S5: We were giving these presentations verbally. So, the knowledge level was there, but the application wasn't.	S6: I thought the lesson plans I wrote would remain on paper and I wouldn't have the opportunity to implement them. S12: I thought the teaching profession consisted only of lecturing.
Implementation Anxiety	S8: Theoretical knowledge has always seemed easier than practical application. I was very nervous about the practical part. S11: We all had concerns, especially in the context of classroom management.	S24: I was quite excited and nervous before the practical part. It was the first time I would be in the role of a teacher in front of the classand this worried me. S13: I thought the lesson was very difficult and that I wouldn't be able to do it.
Limited Professional Perception	S7: I hadn't realized that the profession required planning, patienceand communication.	S19: I thought of teaching as simply lecturing and imparting knowledge to students. S1: I thought the job was just about transferring information.

initial perceptions rather than data collected before the process began.

The quotations related to prejudice suggest that some teacher candidates initially expected microteaching to remain abstract, theoretical, or disconnected from actual instructional practice. Their accounts indicate that previous experiences had largely involved discussing or preparing lesson plans without opportunities to implement them. Implementation anxiety was particularly associated with translating theoretical knowledge into practice, assuming the role of a teacher in front of peers, and managing the classroom. These concerns show that the transition from knowing about teaching to enacting it was initially perceived as challenging.

The subtheme of limited professional perception reflects an initial understanding of teaching primarily as lecturing or transmitting knowledge. The participants' retrospective accounts suggest that they had given less consideration to the planning, patience, communication, and classroom-management responsibilities involved in teaching. Taken together, the three subthemes indicate that the candidates entered the process with uncertainty about implementation and with comparatively limited expectations regarding the multidimensional nature of the teaching profession. Table 2 presents the theme of curriculum utilization, its subthemes, and the related quotations.

As presented in Table 2, the theme of utilizing the curriculum comprised three subthemes: developing knowledge of the curriculum, connection with personal ınterests, and **ıdentification of learning outcomes**.

The quotations related to developing knowledge of the curriculum indicate that the teacher candidates regarded examining the curriculum as an opportunity to become familiar with its learning areas, units, learning outcomes, and related instructional components before entering the profession. Their accounts also show that curriculum review informed the preparation of their lesson plans and prompted them to consider relationships among learning outcomes, theories, strategies, methods, and techniques.

The subtheme of connection with personal ınterests reflects how the candidates related curriculum content to their own interests and learning needs. One candidate deliberately selected a content area toward which they had previously held a prejudice, viewing the lesson-planning process as an opportunity for personal learning and improvement. Another candidate reported that reviewing the curriculum helped the group

Table 2: Findings regarding the theme of utilizing the curriculum

Utilizing the Curriculum		
Sub-theme	**Focus Group Interview (Verbal Quotations)**	**Reflective Journals (Written Quotations)**
Developing Knowledge of the Curriculum	S12: In terms of curriculum review, we had the opportunity to review the curriculum before starting our teaching career. S3: I found it beneficial to have knowledge about the learning areas before starting my profession.	S18: We reviewed the curriculum and thought about how we could do itand then our plan emerged. S23: We examined the curriculum in detail to select elements such as learning outcomes, techniques, methods, strategiesand theoriesand to learn how each topic is covered in each unit.
Connection with Personal Interests	S4: For example, I chose the poetry unit because I had a prejudice against it in high school. I want to both improve myself and learn how to do it.	S14: We did a program review, which allowed us to choose a goal that suited us.
Identification of Learning Outcomes	S10: The learning outcomes are very broad. Therefore, I found it challenging because it's truly comprehensive and organizing activities is very difficult.	S25: I researched which learning outcomes are relevant to which areas and what kinds of activities could support them. I can say that the curriculum helped me with this.

select a learning outcome that was appropriate for them. These accounts suggest that curriculum use involved not only selecting instructional content but also establishing a personal connection with that content.

The subtheme of identification of learning outcomes highlights both the guidance provided by the curriculum and the difficulties involved in interpreting broad learning outcomes. While one candidate described the breadth of the learning outcomes as making activity design challenging, another explained that examining the curriculum helped establish connections among learning outcomes, learning areas, and appropriate activities. Thus, the candidates' accounts portray curriculum use as an interpretive process requiring them to examine learning outcomes and consider how these outcomes could be translated into instructional activities. Table 3 presents the theme of the selection of theories, strategies, methods and techniques, along with its subthemes and related quotations.

As shown in Table 3, the theme of selection of theory, strategy, method and technique comprised three subthemes: developing conceptual clarity, selection criteria, and difficulty in transferring theory into practice.

The quotations related to developing conceptual clarity indicate that the teacher candidates initially had difficulty distinguishing among theories, strategies, methods, and techniques. Their accounts suggest that engaging with these concepts during lesson planning and practice helped make the distinctions and relationships among them more understandable. Some candidates also perceived the knowledge acquired through application as more meaningful and memorable than knowledge considered only at a theoretical level.

The subtheme of selection criteria reflects the considerations the candidates reported using when making instructional decisions. Their accounts referred to collaboration, theoretical orientations such as multiple intelligences theory, alignment with learning outcomes, the flow and purpose of the activity, and suitability for learners. These statements suggest that the selection of theories, strategies, methods, and techniques involved considering their relationship with the curriculum and the intended instructional process rather than merely naming pedagogical concepts.

The subtheme of difficulty in transferring theory into practice highlights the uncertainty involved in translating pedagogical knowledge into instructional

Table 3: Findings regarding the theme of theory, strategy, method and technique selection

Selection of Theory, Strategy, Method and Technique		
Sub-theme	**Focus Group Interview (Verbal Quotations)**	**Reflective Journals (Written Quotations)**
Developing Conceptual Clarity	S4: Previously, I couldn't clearly distinguish between technical methods and strategies. S7: It was beneficial to learn which strategy should be applied with which technique and which activity with which technique.	S26: My knowledge of theory, strategyand techniques was zero; I truly had no knowledge. Now I have information about all of them that I will never forget. S6: I can say that the concepts have fallen into place thanks to the application.
Selection Criteria	S8: We preferred to proceed more collaboratively in our classrooms. S13: When preparing our plans, especially when choosing methods and techniques, we made sure to use the theory of multiple intelligences as much as possible.	S12: When selecting the learning outcomes that were appropriate for the activity and the flow of the lesson, I examined the curriculum. I looked at whether it was suitable for the student and whether it covered the purpose of the activity.
Difficulty in Transferring Theory into Practice	S12: Actually, we didn't have much difficulty applying it, but choosing the right method was much harder. S3: Thinking about which technique to apply to which method was very tiring.	S20: I had theoretical knowledge, but I wasn't very clear about putting that knowledge into practice. S5: Questions like which technique is used whereand when should I choose which method, were confusing me.

decisions. One candidate distinguished between implementing a selected approach and deciding which method to select, describing the selection itself as more difficult. Other candidates reported difficulty determining which techniques should be associated with particular methods and how their theoretical knowledge could be enacted in practice. Thus, the accounts reflect a tension between possessing theoretical knowledge and being able to use that knowledge when making contextually appropriate instructional choices. Table 4 presents the theme of classroom management, its subthemes, and the related quotations.

As presented in Table 4, the theme of classroom management comprised three subthemes: classroom management competency, professional role and sense of authority, and developing awareness and transformation.

The quotations related to classroom management competency indicate that the teacher candidates viewed microteaching as an opportunity to apply their previously acquired classroom-management knowledge and reflect on their current competencies. Their accounts included learning to approach classroom situations proactively, taking precautions against possible negative behaviors, and recognizing areas in which they still needed improvement. One candidate also associated maintaining the attention of the class with increased self-confidence. Collectively, these accounts reflect both perceived gains and continuing needs for development rather than uniform mastery of classroom management.

The subtheme of professional role and sense of authority reflects the candidates' experiences of assuming responsibility for instruction and experiencing the authority associated with the teacher's role. The opportunity to manage the instructional process was described as encouraging and as contributing to a sense of being part of the teaching profession. These accounts suggest that assuming responsibility within the microteaching setting made the professional role more tangible for the candidates.

The subtheme of developing awareness and transformation reflects perceived changes in how the candidates understood both classroom management and the broader responsibilities of teaching. The participants' accounts emphasized patience and tolerance and portrayed teaching as extending

Table 4: Findings regarding the theme of classroom management

Classroom management		
Sub-theme	**Focus Group Interview (Verbal Quotations)**	**Reflective Journals (Written Quotations)**
Classroom Management Competency	S1: Teacher, we had the opportunity to apply the knowledge we gained in the classroom management course this semester in microteaching. S5: We learned that we should approach things proactively, not reactively.	S14: I think I need to improve myself in classroom management and control. S3: Seeing the class focused on me boosted my self-confidence. S33: I learned how to take precautions against negative behavior while I'm teaching.
Professional Role and Sense of Authority	S8: Teacher, your authority in the class made us feel good. Because all the responsibility was ours.	S24: I felt exactly like a teacher. S12: It was nice and encouraging to feel like I was in the profession.
Developing Awareness and Transformation	S7: I believe I've learned to be a little more tolerant and a little more patient.	S14: I realized that teaching isn't just about lecturing, but also about using many skills simultaneously, such as listening, observingand finding immediate solutions.

beyond lecturing to include listening, observing, and responding immediately to classroom situations. The transformation represented in this subtheme should therefore be understood as a perceived change in professional awareness within the microteaching experience rather than as evidence of a completed or lasting professional transformation. Table 5 presents the theme of feedback process, its subthemes, and the related quotations.

As shown in Table 5, the theme of feedback process comprised three subthemes: deficiencies revealed and guidance, the ınstructive role of feedback, and openness to and reflection on criticism.

The quotations related to deficiencies revealed and guidance indicate that feedback helped the teacher candidates notice aspects of their practices that they had previously overlooked. The participants described feedback as providing an external perspective on their performance, making their shortcomings more visible, and offering guidance on how they could proceed. Their accounts therefore portrayed feedback not only as an evaluation of performance but also as a source of direction for subsequent instructional decisions.

The subtheme of the ınstructive role of feedback reflects the candidates' perceptions of the professional, critical, and encouraging qualities of the course instructor's feedback. The instructor's feedback was described as scientific and guiding and was associated with increased professional awareness and preparedness. Although both instructor and peer feedback were included in the microteaching process, one participant explicitly considered the instructor's feedback more guiding than the feedback provided by classmates. This distinction suggests that the candidates did not necessarily attribute the same instructional value to feedback from the two sources.

The subtheme of openness to and reflection on criticism indicates that the candidates associated the feedback process with changes in how they responded to criticism. Their accounts described paying closer attention to feedback in subsequent activities, listening before reacting, considering the valid and invalid aspects of criticism, and becoming more respectful of different perspectives. These statements reflect a more deliberate and reflective engagement with criticism. However, they represent the candidates' perceived changes within the microteaching process rather than an independently measured development in reflective-thinking skills. Table 6 presents the theme of classroom dynamics, its subthemes, and the related quotations.

As presented in Table 6, the theme of classroom dynamics comprised three subthemes: strengthening social bonds, collaboration and shared goals, and self-awareness and skill discovery.

Table 5: Findings regarding the feedback process theme

Feedback Process		
Sub-theme	**Focus Group Interview (Verbal Quotations)**	**Reflective Journals (Written Quotations)**
Deficiencies Revealed and Guidance	S10: There were points we overlooked in these activities. Your feedback also highlighted important details we had missed. Receiving feedback gave us different perspectives.	S5: The feedback clearly showed my shortcomings and how I should proceed. S17: Learning about details that are not visible to the eye but are noticeable from the outside was very beneficial for me.
The Instructive Role of Feedback	S12: Your criticisms were very scientific. S7: Our professor's feedback was more guiding than that given to our classmates.	S8: Our professor's approach, both critical and encouraging, contributed to increasing my professional awareness. S34: Being evaluated by a professional eye better prepared me for the future.
Openness to and Reflection on Criticism	S5: We paid more attention to feedback and were more mindful in subsequent activities. S8: For example, we didn't initially understand how to react to unwanted behaviors, but we understood it better during the process.	S17: I became more open to criticism. Instead of getting angry when faced with criticism, I learned to listen and discuss its valid and invalid aspects. S28: I learned to be more respectful of different opinionsand openly receiving criticism helped me become more open to it.

Table 6. Findings regarding the theme of classroom dynamics

Classroom dynamics		
Sub-theme	**Focus Group Interview (Verbal Quotations)**	**Reflective Journals (Written Quotations)**
Strengthening Social Bonds	S9: Our classroom communication has strengthened. S12: There were also friends here that we rarely talked to. We had the opportunity to chat and socialize more with them.	S26: It was a lesson that brought our class closer together. Because we shared things with each other. We interacted. S19: I entered into communication with friends I had never spoken to or met before; my prejudices were broken down.
Collaboration and Shared Goals	S2: We saw how proficient our friends were in various areasand I think it was good in terms of complementing each other. S11: We assigned everyone a role in the activities we did together. This made our friends more confident.	S22: Our collaboration and team spirit improved. My sense of responsibility increased. S15: I think effective communication emerged because everyone supported each other very well during the implementation process.
Self-Awareness and Skill Discovery	S1: We learned who is more talented in which area. S8: People may have discovered their talents. So, it was a chance to get to know yourself a little better.	S7: I found myself suited to the teaching profession. S21: I started to enjoy giving presentations because I started to get to know myself better and overcame my nervousness when lecturing.

The quotations related to strengthening social bonds indicate that the teacher candidates associated the microteaching process with increased communication and interaction within the class.

The participants described having opportunities to communicate and socialize with peers with whom they had previously had limited contact. One participant also reported that interacting with previously unfamiliar classmates helped challenge their existing prejudices. These accounts suggest that the shared microteaching experience created opportunities for the candidates to establish closer interpersonal relationships.

The subtheme of collaboration and shared goals reflects the candidates' experiences of working together, distributing responsibilities, and supporting one another during the implementation process. Their accounts indicate that collaborative work allowed them to recognize and complement one another's abilities. They also associated this process with increased team spirit, responsibility, confidence, and effective communication. Thus, working toward a shared instructional goal appeared to make both individual contributions and mutual support more visible to the candidates.

The subtheme of self-awareness and skill discovery indicates that the candidates associated working with and observing their peers with a greater awareness of their own abilities. The participants described recognizing their talents, considering their suitability for the teaching profession, becoming more comfortable with giving presentations, and overcoming some of their nervousness. These accounts reflect the candidates' self-perceptions and personal evaluations within the microteaching process rather than independently assessed changes in their abilities. Table 7 presents the theme of evaluation of the microteaching process, its subthemes, and the related quotations.

As shown in Table 7, the theme of evaluation of the microteaching process comprised four subthemes: learning to function, competence and self-confidence development, experiential learning and awareness, and alternative methods awareness.

The quotations related to learning to function indicate that the teacher candidates associated

Table 7: Findings regarding the theme of evaluating the microteaching process.

Evaluation of the Microteaching Process		
Sub-theme	**Focus Group Interview (Verbal Quotations)**	**Reflective Journals (Written Quotations)**
Learning to Function	S7: Of course, they had theoretical knowledge related to the lessons. We didn't know how to apply itand they were more focused on that application aspect.	S5: The knowledge I learned through the micro-teaching course gained functionality. S35: We directly experienced how theoretical knowledge works in a real teaching environment.
Competence and Self-Confidence Development	S6: I think it greatly improved us in terms of application. S8: It helped us reduce our anxiety and increase our self-confidence. S1: I think this was a good pre-internship experience for us.	S15: My opinion changed after doing the application. This experience created confidence and hope in me regarding teaching. S21: I experienced my first step on the path to becoming a teacher.
Experiential Learning and Awareness	S9: I think we learned how to cope with the challenges we faced during this process. S10: I can say that this course was more or less a preparatory process in classroom management.	S18: I realized that teaching is not just about transferring information; it also requires using many skills simultaneously, such as listening, observingand producing immediate solutions.
Alternative Methods Awareness	S7: We taught the lesson entirely with digital technologiesand I realized that it was actually boring at times. Incorporating traditional materials could add a different atmosphere to the classroom.	S16: My friends and I did the most unique and attention-grabbing thing we could do regarding the topic we chose.

the microteaching experience with making their theoretical knowledge more applicable. The participants described having acquired theoretical knowledge in previous courses but having had limited opportunities to experience how that knowledge could inform instructional practice. Although one participant described microteaching as a "real teaching environment," this statement reflects the participant's perception of the setting rather than indicating that microteaching was equivalent to teaching in an actual school classroom.

The subtheme of competence and self-confidence development reflects the candidates' perceptions of improvement in their ability to apply what they had learned. Their accounts also associated the experience with reduced anxiety, increased self-confidence, greater hope regarding teaching, and a sense of taking an initial step toward the profession. The candidates further described microteaching as a preparatory experience before their teaching practicum. These findings represent participants' perceived development rather than an independently measured increase in professional competence or self-confidence.

The subtheme of experiential learning and awareness indicates that the candidates regarded direct engagement with instructional challenges as an important part of their learning. Their accounts emphasized coping with difficulties, preparing for classroom management, and recognizing that teaching requires the simultaneous use of multiple skills, including listening, observing, and responding to emerging situations. In this respect, the candidates' evaluations extended beyond the application of theoretical knowledge to include a broader awareness of the multidimensional nature of teaching.

Finally, the subtheme of alternative methods awareness reflects the candidates' consideration of different instructional materials and approaches. One participant's experience of conducting a lesson entirely through digital technologies led to the recognition that relying exclusively on digital tools could sometimes make instruction less engaging and that traditional materials might provide a useful alternative. Another participant emphasized attempting to design an original and attention-grabbing instructional experience. Together, these accounts suggest an emerging awareness that instructional decisions should involve selecting and combining methods and materials in relation to the topic and the intended learning experience.

Results and Discussion

This study examines the transformative role of the microteaching course process within teacher education programs from a hermeneutic phenomenological perspective, focusing on teacher candidates' perceptions of the teaching profession, professional awarenessand the development of their professional skills. The study specifically explores how teacher candidates' perceptions, awarenessand professional competencies evolve throughout the microteaching process. From this perspective, the findings demonstrate that microteaching constitutes not merely a course but a multidimensional developmental process through which the theoretical knowledge acquired during preservice education is transformed into practice. Throughout this process, teacher candidates' perceptions of the teaching profession were reconstructed through the development of skills such as instructional planning, instructional implementationand classroom management. In addition, positive changes emerged in classroom dynamics, while the feedback received during the process generated significant personal and professional awareness.

In their retrospective accounts, the teacher candidates described holding prejudices toward microteaching practices, experiencing concerns about implementation, and having limited perceptions of the multidimensional nature of teaching. Their accounts indicate that they initially had doubts about the realism and usefulness of microteaching and perceived the course as challenging because it required them to translate the theoretical knowledge acquired during preservice education into practice. This situation may be explained by teacher candidates' predominant exposure to theoretical coursework during the early stages of their professional development, with limited opportunities to enact this knowledge in practice. Similarly, the literature suggests that when teacher candidates' professional perceptions

are shaped primarily through theoretical course-work, they may perceive practice-based courses and the teaching profession itself as abstract and anxiety-provoking (Alkan, 2017; Darling-Hammond, 2012; Korthagen, 2010). Flores and Day (2006) argue that perceptions of the teaching profession may initially be formed through limited and incomplete perspectives before and during the early stages of entering the profession and may gradually be reconstructed through relevant experiences over time. The difficulty of translating theoretical knowledge acquired during preservice education into practice resembles the theory–practice tension discussed in the literature in relation to "practice shock." Consistent with the present findings, this tension may be associated with anxiety among teacher candidates (Jeon, 2025; Korthagen, 2010; Stokking et al., 2003; Theelen et al., 2022; Voss & Kunter, 2019).

The participants' accounts suggest that the microteaching process provided opportunities for teacher candidates to read, understand, and interpret the curriculum and translate it into instructional practice. One of the significant findings of the study is that, rather than engaging only superficially with the curriculum, the candidates described developing an understanding of the relationships among its core components during the microteaching process. In connection with this finding, the candidates reported relating the theories, strategies, methods, and techniques selected on pedagogical grounds in their lesson plans to the targeted learning outcomes. From this perspective, their accounts point to the perceived development of curriculum literacy and pedagogical reasoning as they addressed the challenges involved in translating theory into practice. Similarly, Sudrajat et al. (2024), in their study with teacher candidates, reported that microteaching practices contributed to the development of candidates' understanding of instructional methods, enabled them to select appropriate instructional strategies, and consequently enhanced their pedagogical skills. Likewise, O'Flaherty et al. (2023) emphasized that addressing theory and practice from a holistic perspective in teacher education supports teacher candidates in conceptually making sense of their experiences related to observation, planning, reflection, and evaluation.

The participants' accounts also suggest perceived changes in teacher candidates' awareness and competencies related to classroom management throughout the microteaching process. In their retrospective descriptions, some candidates associated classroom management primarily with maintaining authority and control in the classroom. However, their subsequent accounts reflected a broader perspective that included proactive planning, patience, observation, and responding to emerging classroom situations. This perceived transformation suggests that the candidates began to interpret classroom management not merely as establishing control but as a dynamic process involving pedagogical decision-making. Consistent with this finding, previous studies have similarly demonstrated that teacher candidates' classroom-management skills can improve through microteaching experiences (Bakir, 2014; Kılıç, 2010; Kimaro et al., 2021; Mergler & Tangen, 2010; Nasution et al., 2023; Padilah et al., 2025). Eisenman et al. (2015), who emphasize the challenges teacher candidates face in acquiring classroom-management skills, further argue that shifting the focus of classroom management from controlling learner behavior toward improving the learning process constitutes one of the fundamental goals of teacher education.

The participants' accounts indicate that feedback received from peers and the course instructor during the microteaching process was perceived as an important resource for professional learning. The feedback process was described as playing a guiding and instructional role by helping teacher candidates recognize aspects of their practices that required improvement and consider how they could address them. However, the candidates did not necessarily attribute the same instructional value to both sources, as one participant described the course instructor's feedback as more guiding than the feedback provided by peers. Similarly, Chawla and Thukral (2011) reported that feedback received during microteaching was effective in improving overall teaching competence; Ostrosky et al. (2013) emphasized that feedback encouraged candidates to reflect on the instructional process; and Asregid et al. (2023) highlighted feedback as a pedagogical

tool that enhances teacher candidates' capacity for reflection. The participants' accounts further suggest that the feedback process was associated with perceived changes in their openness to criticism and their reflective engagement with feedback. They described moving from initially defensive reactions toward more constructive approaches and paying closer attention to feedback in their subsequent instructional activities. Consistent with this finding, Yiğitoğlu-Aptoula (2021) reported that although teacher candidates initially reacted defensively to feedback, they gradually adopted a more proactive attitude and came to perceive it as beneficial and enriching.

From the perspective of classroom dynamics, the participants' evaluations of the microteaching process were largely positive. They associated the process with stronger interaction and communication among teacher candidates and with the development of a collaborative learning environment organized around shared goals. In addition, the candidates reported having opportunities to get to know one another more closely, becoming more open to different perspectives, and developing greater awareness of both their own strengths and those of their peers. Similarly, Sudrajat et al. (2024) emphasized that microteaching processes structured around peer interaction not only support individual development but also create a collaborative learning environment. Likewise, Murphy Odo (2023) reported that peer feedback helped teacher candidates become aware of their own and their peers' strengths and weaknesses. Furthermore, Stevani et al. (2026) stated that the microteaching process increased candidates' sensitivity to classroom interaction, emotional climate, and sociocultural dynamics, thereby contributing to the establishment of a positive learning environment.

Finally, the microteaching process was generally perceived by the teacher candidates as a functional and multilayered learning experience. In this respect, the participants described how practical application made their theoretical knowledge more functional. Their accounts also suggest perceived improvements in professional competence and self-confidence, together with greater awareness of the multidimensional nature of teaching and the knowledge and skills it requires. In addition, the candidates had opportunities to experiment with various instructional methods, techniques, and materials, which they associated with increased awareness of alternative approaches to teaching. In this context, it can be argued that the teacher candidates perceived the microteaching process as having a transformative role in their professional learning. These findings are consistent with Jeon (2025), who reported that microteaching enhances preservice teachers' instructional self-confidence, lesson-planning skills, and awareness of professional responsibilities through authentic teaching experiences. Likewise, Yangın Ekşi and Aşık (2016) found that repeated microteaching practices supported by systematic feedback improved teacher candidates' instructional skills and promoted professional learning. Similarly, Aslan and Taş (2024) demonstrated that the reflective examination of teaching experiences enables preservice teachers to reconstruct their perceptions of teaching and deepen their professional learning. Extending these findings, the present study suggests that the value of microteaching lies not only in supporting perceived development in instructional practice but also in promoting curriculum literacy, pedagogically reasoned instructional decision-making, and a more comprehensive understanding of the multidimensional nature of teaching.

Implication

The findings of this study provide important and multidimensional implications for teacher education. They point to the importance of structuring teacher education programs in ways that reduce the gap between theory and practice. In this regard, increasing opportunities for practice-based learning within teacher education programs may help reduce teacher candidates' prejudices and anxieties toward applied experiences such as microteaching. The participants' accounts suggest that the experiences gained throughout the microteaching process supported a shift from limited perceptions of teaching toward a more multidimensional understanding of the profession. Providing teacher candidates with opportunities to apply their theoretical knowledge in practice-oriented or near-authentic settings may therefore support the development of more realistic perceptions of teaching.

The findings further suggest a dynamic relationship between curriculum literacy and the pedagogical decision-making involved in selecting theories, strategies, methods, and techniques when designing instruction. Teacher education programs should therefore provide experiences in which candidates apply theoretical knowledge and justify their instructional decisions through pedagogical reasoning. For example, candidates may be asked to explain the alignment among learning outcomes, theories, instructional methods, learning activities, and assessment while preparing their lesson plans.

Moreover, the candidates' accounts reflected a perceived shift from a control-oriented understanding of classroom management toward a more pedagogical and preventive perspective. This finding suggests that classroom-management education should be addressed from a learning-centered perspective and should include opportunities to consider possible classroom-management challenges and develop preventive or responsive strategies. The study also highlights the role of feedback processes structured to support learning and reflection. Providing specific peer and instructor feedback followed by opportunities to revise lesson plans may support candidates' self-awareness and reflective engagement with their instructional practices. Finally, incorporating collaborative learning environments centered on interaction and shared goals into teacher education programs may support a positive learning climate and increased social interaction among teacher candidates.

Limitations and Directions Future Studies

This study should be considered within the context of several limitations. First, the research was conducted with teacher candidates enrolled at a single university, which may limit the transferability of the findings to different contexts. In this regard, conducting similar studies with teacher candidates from different universities may enhance the transferability of the results. Second, the data were collected through a focus group interview and reflective journals and were therefore based on the participants' experiences and perspectives. Although these data collection tools provided in-depth insights, future studies may benefit from incorporating classroom observations, video recordings, and performance-based assessment tools to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. Finally, the present study did not include long-term follow-up. Therefore, longitudinal studies examining the long-term experiences and perceived changes associated with the microteaching process are recommended.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Ethics Statement

This study was approved by the Atatürk University Educational Sciences Ethics Committee (Approval No: E-37897322090-2600171992). All procedures performed in this study were in accordance with institutional ethical standards. Informed consent was obtained from all participants.

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Use of Generative AI in Writing

The authors used ChatGPT (OpenAI, GPT-5.5) and DeepL Write during the preparation of this manuscript for language editing, improving readability, and refining academic phrasing. The authors reviewed and edited the output critically and take full responsibility for the content of the publication.

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