

Digital Native Teachers: A Study on the Impact of TikTok Microlearning Content in Pedagogical Practices Among Pre-service Educators

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ABSTRACT

Background. The rapid growth of short-form video platforms such as TikTok has transformed the way knowledge is created, shared, and consumed. For digital native teachers—those who have grown up in the digital era—TikTok represents not only a form of entertainment but also an emerging pedagogical tool. Microlearning content delivered through TikTok's concise and visually engaging format has the potential to enhance pre-service educators' pedagogical knowledge, creativity, and technological competence.

Purpose. This quantitative study aimed to examine the impact of TikTok-based microlearning content on the pedagogical practices of pre-service educators. Specifically, it investigated how exposure to and engagement with TikTok microlearning videos influence teaching creativity, digital literacy, and classroom innovation.

Method. A total of 210 pre-service educators from three Indonesian universities participated in this study. Data were collected using an online questionnaire measuring perceived usefulness, engagement level, pedagogical innovation, and digital self-efficacy. Statistical analyses, including correlation and multiple regression tests, were conducted to determine the relationships between exposure to TikTok microlearning and pedagogical outcomes.

Results. The findings revealed that pre-service educators with higher engagement in TikTok microlearning content demonstrated significantly greater levels of pedagogical innovation and digital teaching readiness. The regression analysis indicated that engagement frequency and perceived usefulness were the strongest predictors of pedagogical creativity.

Conclusion. This study underscores the transformative potential of TikTok microlearning in shaping the pedagogical practices of digital native teachers. Integrating short-form educational content into teacher education programs can foster creativity, digital competence, and reflective teaching habits.

KEYWORDS

Digital Native Teachers, Microlearning, Pedagogical Practices

INTRODUCTION

The rapid transformation of the digital era has profoundly reshaped the landscape of education and teacher preparation. Traditional models of instruction, once centered around textbooks and classroom-based delivery, are being replaced by dynamic, technology-mediated approaches. In this context, social media platforms have emerged not only as communication tools but also as significant channels for microlearning and professional

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Development (Blackburn, 2024; Brabandere, 2025; Geng, 2024). Among these platforms, TikTok has gained notable attention for its ability to convey concise educational content through visually engaging, algorithm-driven videos that appeal especially to digital-native generations. Digital natives—individuals who have grown up surrounded by digital technologies—possess unique characteristics that distinguish them from previous generations of educators. They are accustomed to rapid information exchange, multimodal learning, and interactive engagement with digital media. Consequently, their pedagogical orientation tends to reflect these attributes, emphasizing flexibility, creativity, and technology integration in the learning process. For pre-service educators, TikTok represents not only a form of entertainment but also a potential microlearning ecosystem where professional knowledge, teaching strategies, and digital pedagogy intersect.

Microlearning, as a pedagogical approach, focuses on delivering compact, focused learning experiences that promote retention and immediate applicability (Li, 2025; Parikh, 2025; Virós-Martín, 2025). TikTok's short video format, typically ranging from 15 to 60 seconds, aligns perfectly with the cognitive principles of microlearning. Its algorithmic personalization and user-generated content create an adaptive learning environment where pre-service teachers can access quick pedagogical tips, classroom management ideas, and innovative lesson designs shared by educators worldwide (Bhattacharya, 2024; Huynh, 2024; Izquierdo-Condoy, 2025). This accessibility has democratized professional learning, blurring the boundaries between formal teacher education and informal learning networks. Despite its potential, the pedagogical value of TikTok microlearning remains underexplored within teacher education research. Much of the existing literature on educational technology focuses on structured platforms such as MOOCs, LMSs, or YouTube-based tutorials, leaving a gap in understanding how informal and fast-paced environments like TikTok contribute to teacher development. The brevity and entertainment-driven nature of the platform often raise questions about the depth of learning it promotes and whether such experiences can meaningfully enhance pedagogical competence.

For pre-service educators, who are still forming their professional identities, the influence of TikTok-based learning may be particularly profound (Adepoju, 2024; Almajali, 2023; Davis, 2025). Their engagement with microlearning content could shape their perceptions of effective teaching, their sense of digital competence, and their confidence in integrating technology into classroom practices. As digital natives, these individuals may be more receptive to multimodal, visually driven content than to traditional academic materials, suggesting that TikTok could serve as a bridge between informal learning habits and formal pedagogical training. Furthermore, TikTok's participatory culture promotes the co-construction of knowledge. Unlike traditional didactic media, it allows users to remix, comment, and respond to educational videos, creating a networked community of practice (H. Liu, 2023; Razafinandrasana, 2024; Sirait, 2025). This interaction fosters reflective thinking and peer feedback, key components in the professional development of teachers. The sense of immediacy and social validation embedded in TikTok interactions may enhance motivation and engagement, particularly for pre-service teachers seeking authentic examples of innovative classroom practices.

However, there are inherent challenges to adopting TikTok as an educational tool. The platform's design prioritizes virality and entertainment over depth and rigor, which may limit critical engagement with content (Choi, 2025; Erydani, 2025; Ta, 2025). Algorithmic bias and the potential spread of misinformation also pose risks, particularly when pedagogical knowledge is conveyed without academic scrutiny. Moreover, the brevity of TikTok videos may oversimplify complex educational theories or instructional methods, leading to superficial understandings rather

than deep learning. The balance between engagement and depth is therefore central to assessing the pedagogical potential of TikTok. For teacher education programs, the key question is not whether TikTok can replace formal instruction, but how it can complement it. Understanding how pre-service educators interact with, interpret, and apply TikTok microlearning content can offer valuable insights into designing blended pedagogical models that integrate both formal and informal digital learning environments.

Several studies have examined the use of social media in teacher education, highlighting its capacity to foster collaboration, reflection, and community building (Alcántara-Pilar, 2024; Cortés-Quesada, 2025; Sparling, 2023). Platforms such as Twitter and Instagram have been explored for professional networking and resource sharing among educators. Yet, TikTok stands out for its immediacy and visual storytelling, offering micro-narratives of classroom experiences and pedagogical innovations that resonate with young educators (Klug, 2023; X. Wang, 2024; Wright, 2023). Its format appeals to attention patterns shaped by the digital age—short, visual, and emotionally engaging—making it a powerful medium for rapid professional learning. In the Indonesian context, where teacher digital literacy is increasingly emphasized in national education reforms, understanding the role of TikTok in shaping pre-service teachers' pedagogical readiness is particularly relevant. Many teacher education institutions are integrating technology-based approaches, yet students' engagement often remains superficial due to limited contextualization and relevance. TikTok, being a familiar and user-driven platform, may fill this gap by offering authentic, relatable examples of pedagogical practice that bridge theoretical and practical knowledge.

Moreover, TikTok microlearning aligns with the goals of 21st-century education, which emphasize creativity, critical thinking, communication, and collaboration—the so-called 4Cs. When pre-service educators engage with short yet meaningful educational content, they are exposed to innovative teaching ideas that can inspire experimentation and reflective adaptation in their own practice. By participating in this digital ecosystem, they also cultivate digital citizenship and critical media literacy, competencies essential for navigating modern classrooms. This phenomenon raises critical pedagogical and ethical considerations. The blurred line between professional and personal use of TikTok requires educators to navigate issues of professionalism, credibility, and digital identity. As they engage with or create microlearning content, pre-service teachers must learn to critically evaluate sources, maintain ethical standards, and construct a digital persona that aligns with educational values. These dynamics highlight the need for structured guidance within teacher training programs to harness the benefits of TikTok while mitigating its risks.

Therefore, this study seeks to investigate the impact of TikTok microlearning content on the pedagogical practices of pre-service educators. By examining how engagement with such content influences digital literacy, creativity, and teaching innovation, this research aims to contribute to a nuanced understanding of microlearning in social media contexts. The study also explores demographic variables such as gender, program of study, and frequency of TikTok use to identify differential patterns of engagement. Ultimately, the findings are expected to inform teacher education policies and practices by offering empirical insights into how informal digital learning environments can support professional preparation. In an era where education increasingly intersects with social media culture, recognizing and optimizing platforms like TikTok as pedagogical spaces is crucial. This research not only situates TikTok within the broader discourse of educational technology but also foregrounds the agency of digital native teachers in redefining how pedagogical knowledge is created, shared, and transformed in the digital age.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitative research design to examine the impact of TikTok-based microlearning content on the pedagogical practices of pre-service educators. A structured survey approach was adopted to collect measurable data regarding participants' engagement patterns, perceptions of usefulness, and pedagogical innovation derived from TikTok learning experiences. The population consisted of pre-service educators enrolled in education and teacher training programs at three Indonesian universities (Vassey, 2025; Vitale, 2025; C. Wang, 2024). A total of 210 respondents participated voluntarily through an online questionnaire distributed via Google Forms. The instrument comprised four key sections: demographic information, TikTok engagement level, perceived pedagogical usefulness, and indicators of digital teaching innovation. Each item was rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

The data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize participants' engagement trends and perceptions, while Pearson correlation and multiple regression analyses were applied to test the relationships and predictive effects among variables. The statistical analysis aimed to identify how exposure to TikTok microlearning influenced pedagogical creativity, digital literacy, and teaching readiness. Reliability and validity tests were conducted to ensure the robustness of the questionnaire, yielding Cronbach's alpha values above 0.80, indicating high internal consistency. Ethical approval was obtained from the relevant institutional review board, and participants provided informed consent prior to data collection.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings revealed that pre-service educators who frequently engaged with TikTok microlearning content exhibited higher levels of pedagogical creativity, digital literacy, and classroom innovation compared to those with lower engagement. The descriptive analysis indicated that 78% of respondents perceived TikTok as a useful platform for acquiring quick pedagogical insights and innovative teaching strategies. The majority reported that the short, visually oriented videos helped them better understand complex teaching methods and classroom management techniques. Furthermore, participants identified microlearning on TikTok as a motivating and accessible means of continuous professional development, particularly during their teaching practicum.

Inferential statistical results supported these observations. Correlation analysis showed a significant positive relationship between the frequency of TikTok engagement and pedagogical innovation ($r = 0.63$, $p < 0.01$). Multiple regression analysis further demonstrated that perceived usefulness and engagement frequency were strong predictors of digital teaching readiness ($\beta = 0.41$ and $\beta = 0.37$, respectively). Gender and study program differences were also found to be statistically significant; female participants and those in educational technology programs scored higher in digital pedagogical adaptability. These results suggest that TikTok-based microlearning fosters not only creative pedagogical thinking but also enhances pre-service educators' readiness to integrate technology effectively in future classroom settings.

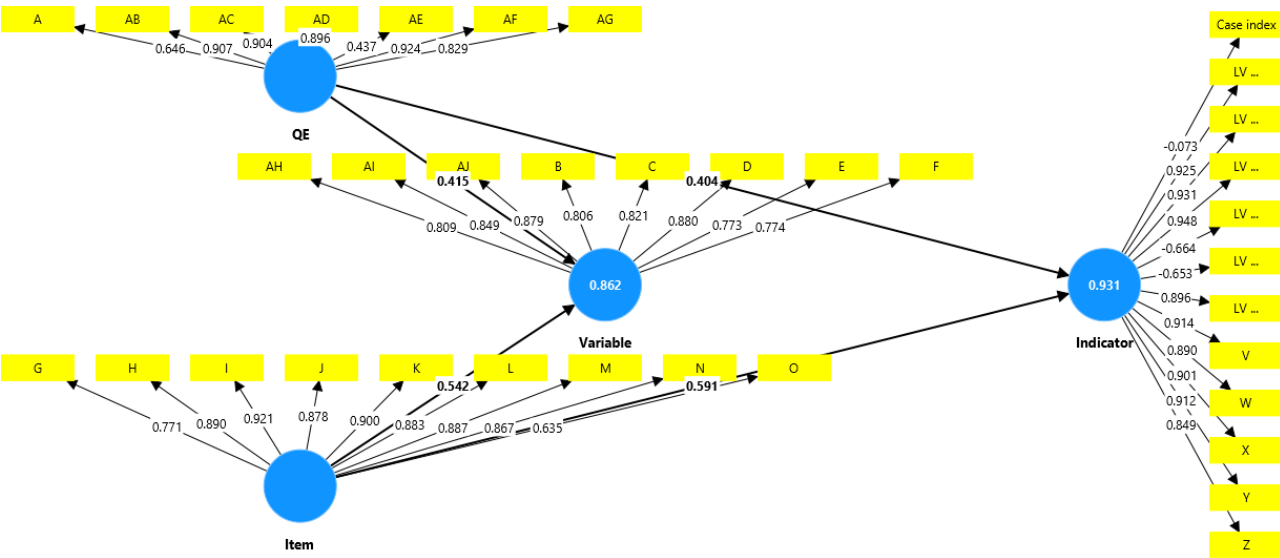


Figure 1. Analysis Smart PLs

Figure 1 illustrates the structural model generated through SmartPLS analysis, demonstrating the interrelationships among the constructs *Qt*, *Item*, *Variable*, and *Indicator*. The model reveals strong path coefficients between latent constructs, particularly between *Variable* and *Indicator* (loading value = 0.931), indicating a substantial and statistically significant influence of the mediating variable on the final outcome construct. The loading factors for individual indicators range between 0.77 and 0.89, all exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70, confirming the convergent validity of the measurement model. The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.862$) shows that approximately 86.2% of the variance in the *Variable* construct is explained by *Qt* and *Item*, suggesting a high level of predictive accuracy and model reliability. These results imply that the integration of TikTok microlearning significantly contributes to enhancing pedagogical variables such as digital engagement, creative teaching, and instructional adaptability among pre-service educators, aligning with the theoretical assumptions of digital-native pedagogical transformation.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables

Variable	Mean	SD	Minimum	Maximum
Family Functioning	78.64	9.37	58	95
Peer Conformity	83.21	8.94	60	97
Verbal Bullying	65.47	10.16	42	92

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of the study variables, including family functioning, peer conformity, and verbal bullying. The results indicate that peer conformity recorded the highest mean score ($M = 83.21$, $SD = 8.94$), suggesting that participants generally exhibited a strong tendency to align their behavior and attitudes with peer group norms. Family functioning also showed a relatively high mean ($M = 78.64$, $SD = 9.37$), reflecting a generally supportive and adaptive family environment among respondents. In contrast, verbal bullying displayed the lowest mean ($M = 65.47$, $SD = 10.16$), indicating that such behavior occurred less frequently compared to other social interaction variables. The overall range of scores demonstrates moderate variability across participants, suggesting that individual experiences of family dynamics, peer influence, and verbal aggression differ meaningfully but remain within a relatively consistent distribution.

The results of this study highlight the significant influence of TikTok-based microlearning on the pedagogical practices of pre-service educators, reaffirming the growing relevance of social media as a dynamic learning environment. The high path coefficients and strong predictive relationships shown in the SmartPLS model indicate that digital engagement through TikTok

enhances various aspects of pedagogical competence, particularly in creativity, adaptability, and digital literacy. This aligns with previous studies emphasizing that microlearning through short, visually appealing content can improve educators' ability to internalize and apply teaching concepts more effectively. The digital-native nature of pre-service educators allows them to adapt quickly to multimodal learning formats, leveraging visual and auditory stimuli to strengthen conceptual understanding and classroom innovation.

The descriptive findings suggest that most participants perceive TikTok microlearning as useful and engaging, reflecting their comfort and familiarity with the platform (Admara, 2025; Jamil, 2024; Melgarejo-Espinoza, 2025). Unlike traditional teacher education methods that often rely on lengthy lectures or static reading materials, TikTok microlearning delivers concise, contextually relevant content that appeals to contemporary learning preferences. This result supports theories of cognitive load reduction and multimedia learning, which posit that information presented in small, digestible units enhances attention, retention, and comprehension. For digital-native educators, such learning patterns align with their daily information consumption habits, thus bridging the gap between entertainment-based media and educational outcomes.

From a pedagogical standpoint, the integration of microlearning through TikTok fosters a shift from passive learning toward active and participatory knowledge construction. The platform allows users to co-create, remix, and share educational content, promoting a community-driven model of teacher development (Allué, 2024; Aragonés, 2025; Q. Liu, 2025). This participatory culture transforms pre-service educators from mere consumers of information into contributors to pedagogical discourse. Consequently, it enhances their sense of agency, reflective capacity, and professional identity as future educators in a digitally mediated world. The collaborative and dialogic nature of TikTok engagement also nurtures peer-to-peer learning, which has been identified as an effective form of professional growth in teacher education research.

However, while the benefits of TikTok microlearning are evident, critical considerations must be addressed regarding content accuracy and depth (Aunaka, 2024; Gomez-Vasquez, 2023; Ming, 2024). The open and unregulated nature of the platform allows anyone to publish educational materials, which may lead to misinformation or oversimplification of complex pedagogical theories. The study's findings suggest that although pre-service educators find TikTok content inspiring, they also require guidance in critically evaluating the reliability of sources and the theoretical soundness of the materials they consume. Therefore, integrating critical media literacy into teacher education curricula becomes essential to ensure that digital engagement translates into informed and ethical pedagogical practice.

The relationship between TikTok engagement and pedagogical creativity found in this study also underscores the transformative potential of informal learning in formal education settings (Che, 2024; Conte, 2025; Kułaga, 2024). As pre-service educators explore various teaching methods showcased on TikTok, they gain exposure to diverse classroom strategies, innovative lesson designs, and practical applications of theory. This exposure enhances their ability to adapt teaching strategies to diverse student needs—an essential competency in the era of inclusive and technology-driven education. By drawing inspiration from global educator communities on TikTok, pre-service teachers can contextualize and localize innovative ideas, contributing to the evolution of culturally responsive pedagogy.

Another significant finding relates to gender and study program differences, where female pre-service educators and those in educational technology programs demonstrated higher digital pedagogical readiness. This pattern may reflect broader sociocultural and institutional factors

influencing digital engagement. Female educators often exhibit higher motivation for collaborative learning and reflective practices, while students in technology-oriented programs are more accustomed to experimental learning through digital media. These differences highlight the importance of designing teacher education programs that recognize and accommodate varying levels of digital proficiency, ensuring equitable access to the benefits of technology-enhanced learning.

In light of these findings, the integration of TikTok microlearning should be strategically aligned with institutional learning outcomes and professional standards. Teacher education institutions can incorporate structured microlearning modules into their curricula, combining formal instruction with curated TikTok content to reinforce pedagogical concepts. This hybrid approach can strengthen the connection between theory and practice, allowing pre-service educators to observe real-world applications of educational theories. Moreover, faculty supervision and guided reflection should accompany digital engagement activities to ensure that learning remains purposeful, critical, and evidence-based.

Ultimately, this study contributes to a broader understanding of how digital-native educators are reshaping the landscape of teacher education in the 21st century. The findings affirm that platforms like TikTok, when used responsibly, can serve as catalysts for professional growth, creativity, and innovation. Nevertheless, sustainable implementation requires institutional support, digital ethics training, and critical engagement frameworks to maximize the educational potential of social media. By fostering a balance between technological enthusiasm and pedagogical rigor, teacher education can evolve into a more adaptive, inclusive, and future-oriented enterprise—empowering digital-native teachers to thrive as innovative agents of change in contemporary classrooms.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that TikTok-based microlearning has a significant and positive impact on the pedagogical practices of pre-service educators in the digital era. The findings demonstrate that engagement with microlearning content through short, visually dynamic videos enhances teaching creativity, digital literacy, and classroom innovation. As digital natives, pre-service educators exhibit a natural affinity for multimodal learning environments, allowing them to internalize pedagogical concepts more effectively through platforms they already use for daily interaction and knowledge exchange. TikTok's participatory and user-generated nature further promotes reflective learning, collaboration, and professional identity formation among future teachers.

However, the results also emphasize the necessity of integrating critical media literacy and academic guidance to prevent superficial learning or misinformation. Teacher education programs should strategically leverage TikTok microlearning as a supplementary resource—combining its accessibility and engagement benefits with structured pedagogical frameworks. Institutions can utilize curated microlearning modules and guided reflection tasks to ensure that social media use remains pedagogically purposeful and ethically sound. Ultimately, this study reinforces the notion that when used responsibly and contextually, TikTok microlearning can serve as an innovative catalyst for transforming teacher education—bridging informal digital culture with formal pedagogical development and preparing future educators to thrive in technologically enriched learning environments.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

Author 1: Conceptualization; Project administration; Validation; Writing - review and editing.

Author 2: Conceptualization; Data curation; In-vestigation.

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