

Microteaching Underutilization: A missed Opportunity for Optimizing the Merging of Theory to Practice

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Abstract: Well planned microteaching could be effective in cultivating a competent teacher who has a broad perception and critical thought about teaching and learning. Even though important, microteaching exercise is not compulsively given adequate emphasis as observed by the researcher at three teacher training Regional Campuses in Matabeleland Region all servicing teacher trainees in Bachelor of Education Early Childhood, Diploma in Education Primary and Post-graduate Diploma in Education in one University in Zimbabwe. Through inductive and deductive analysis of gathered published literature complemented by microteaching exercises observations made at three teacher training institutions, the study found out four major challenges which hamper effective microteaching practice: lack of dedication by student teachers and motivation by lecturers in conducting thorough microteaching exercises, inadequate time allocated by institutions for microteaching and limited application of education theories of teaching and learning by student teachers and deficits in revisiting observed challenges during microteaching exercise by all participants. Qualitative research methodologies, mainly the historical-pedagogical-philosophical constant comparison discussion of gathered literature through purposive and snowball selection were used to reach study findings. Reviewed theoretical literature revealed that most trainee teachers who undergo an extensive microteaching exercise are likely to display skilful and effective teaching practices. However, observations made by the researcher during microteaching exercises revealed that, in reality microteaching was underutilised, given limited time and resources, including its mark not contributing to the final teaching practice summative grade. The study concluded that even though underutilized microteaching remains a pivotal strategy for making student teachers appreciate the reciprocal importance between theory and practice. The study recommended unhurried microteaching planning and management.

Keywords: Microteaching underutilization, missed opportunity, merging theory and practice.

INTRODUCTION

Microteaching was born out of the frustration of American Stanford University liberal arts graduates in the 1960s (Allen and Ryan, 1969), who felt they had challenges in merging theories of teaching and learning to practical teaching in the classroom, what I could today term the Allen and Ryan inexperienced teacher teaching syndrome or fear. Students who had never taught before also felt that there was nothing they could possibly learn from theories of education which they perceived too abstract and divorced from practical teaching (Allen, 1980; Brown, 1975). Today the Allen and Ryan syndrome can be observed to still persist in microteaching and peer teaching exercises around the world (Ananthakrishnan, 2018; Abenndroth, Golzy and O'Connor, 2011). Since microteaching is a 1960s theory that was carried out with America student teachers, it becomes unquestionably relevant for this study to inquire its theoretical effects to the current Zimbabwe teacher training. The key question this study seek to ask is, whether student teachers sent for teaching practice without exposure to thorough microteaching exercises can competently teach learners soundly and most significant, do they have the technical capacity to fully utilize diverse theoretical epistemologies like discovery learning, collaborative learning, constructivism, poststructural and modern-digital approaches that see the learner as an active

participant and at the center of learning? Above all can student teachers without microteaching exposure be able to merge teaching and learning theories to practical teaching when they go for teaching practice?

Defining and Contextualizing Microteaching

Microteaching according to some of its co-founders Olivero and Cooper in Allen and Ryan, (1969) "... is a scaled-down sample of actual teaching which generally lasts ten to thirty minutes and involves four to ten students" In other words microteaching session simulates a regular classroom instructional period in every way except that both time and number of learners are reduced. In this study microteaching in addition to the above blueprint will be defined as a pre-practice and refining teaching encounter exercise meant to assist student teachers gain practical teaching knowledge, experience and also know how to apply theories of education and planning for practical teaching before teaching practice. Therefore, the current Zimbabwe teacher education borrowing from the historical implication of microteaching should emphasize the need to create teachers who are not only knowledgeable about theories of teaching and learning but have the ability to transfer their theoretical knowledge into practice. Which could be argued to lack according to the researcher's observations made at three teacher training

Regional Campuses in Matabeleland Province after realizing that most student teachers supervised by the researcher during microteaching and teaching practice struggled to apply theories of teaching and learning into practical teaching.

The study emphasizes the importance of student teachers to be groomed in the ability of merging theory into practice when teaching, because teaching in agreement to microteaching definition is a historical born philosophy that cumulatively developed from precolonial African philosophies to modern philosophies of Plato, Socrates, Dewey and others (Curzon, 1985; Gutek, 2005; Ornstein, Levine and Gutek, 2011) that emphasize the need for a reflective teacher who is not only theory knowledgeable but possess the ability to transfer pedagogical skills into practice. The above perception about reflective teaching should lead to microteaching approaches that value equally

shared time between theory and practice. Even though foundations of education, lecturers at the three observed teacher training Regional Campuses, as far as microteaching is concerned, know what to teach, how to teach and the importance between theory and practice, what seem to be a challenge in observed campuses, is dedicated planning, management and implication for thorough and rigorous microteaching exercises.

Summarizing the key focus of microteaching being a process of seeking to make student teachers understand and appreciate that effective teaching is the ability to appreciate the intertwined inseparable relationship between theoretical knowledge and its application to practical teaching. Summarized from the definition of microteaching and theories of teaching and learning (Allen and Ryan, 1969; Curzon, 1985; Ornstein, Levine and Gutek, 2011).

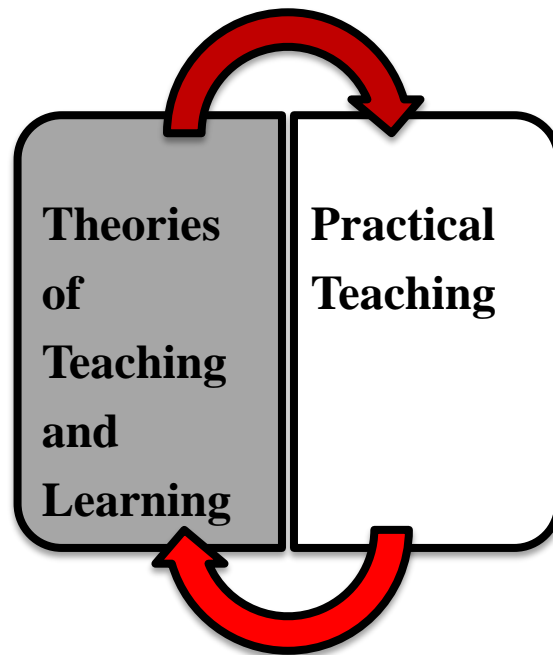


Fig.1: The reciprocal relation between theory and practice

Considering the above perception of what microteaching is, one could add that, microteaching is a way of making student teachers be conscious of their core responsibilities as teachers and at the same time for teacher education to achieve desired teaching practice through rigorous preparation and evaluation of their products. Education history and in the history of teaching and learning (Cross, 1974; Williams, 1982; Murphy, 2006) there has always been a greater demand that teachers be held accountable for the achievement of the learner. Microteaching is one of those ways of evaluating the readiness of

student teachers in being ripe for effective practical teaching.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study will generally be guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the relevance of microteaching today?
2. How is microteaching being underutilized in the three teacher education institutions?
3. What are key challenges hindering the effective utilization of microteaching exercises?
4. How can the observed institutions improve the planning and management of their microteaching?

The Problem

Several teaching practice after supervision feedback discussions held by the researcher with several student teachers (while on teaching practice) from three teacher education Regional Campuses in Matabeleland Province supervised, seeking to find out why they were not applying classical and contemporary theories of education during their teaching? Also seeking to find out how true is the literature generalization by some microteaching researchers (Allen, 1980; Ayers, 2002; Arsal, 2015) who argue that “Student teachers may not generally do well when they go for teaching practice or when they become qualified teachers without sound microteaching experiences” Supervised student teachers by the researcher blamed inadequate microteaching exercises and in some cases lack of any microteaching exposure. Claiming that their pre-service and in-service training had not adequately provided them with the pragmatic skills and experiences necessary for ensuring skillful teaching achievement in the classroom.

The greatest challenge of achieving sustainable teaching by three observed teacher training Regional Campuses in Matabeleland Province, is

that student teachers are not thoroughly exposed to practical teaching exercises like microteaching and peer teaching in their pre-service training. Lack of microteaching and understanding of theoretical philosophies of education not being integrated with the practical epistemological experiences led to inadequate preparation of trainee students to be effectively competent teachers while on teaching practice. Research (Carroll and McCulloch, 2014; Jarvis, 2005; Jordan, Charlie and Stack, 2008; Woolfolk, 2013) has proven that the psychology of practical teaching and learning-having the technical knowledge of how to teach and how students learn, is a challenge to most student teachers without teaching practice exposure and experiences. Given such challenges through studies like this one, it becomes unavoidable to question the responsibilities of any teacher education pre-service and in-service, to competently expose student teachers to comprehensive teaching experiences through a holistic microteaching exercise, currently criticized by the researcher using observations from three campuses to be selective, lacking rigor and time dedication.



Fig. 2: Key components/cycles of microteaching: summarized from (Allen and Ryan, 1969; Brown, 1975; Ralph, 2014)

Any effective and adequate microteaching exercise should expose student teachers to be evaluated on how they execute each and every component/cycle of microteaching in practical teaching. The

researcher observed that in most cases microteaching at the observed campuses usually focuses on the first three cycles (planning,

teaching and feedback) and lack time for the other three cycles.

Some scholars (Ghanaguru, Nair and Yong, 2013; Ismail, 2011; Ilhan, 2010; Arsal, 2015) have viewed teacher education in general as failing to make student teachers see microteaching as a beneficial teaching experience, being capable of reducing the gap between theoretical epistemologies and pragmatic pedagogy. In agreement to the above scholars' views the researcher at the three campuses under study observed that, the most challenge in microteaching exercises is too much focus mainly on document preparation, lesson planning and carrying out what is planned in a mock classroom, however, not on the application of diverse theories of teaching and learning to suit individualized learning interests. While supervising microteaching exercises the researcher also observed from students under supervision that there was lack of time allocated by the three campuses for both the supervisor and supervised to go through all microteaching circles/components, leading to the microteaching exercise being rushed through, not holistic and not rigorous. One could argue that in most microteaching exercises if the participants are not given adequate time, the participants may have constraints leading to lack of exposure and experiences on diverse simulations, assessment, diverse teaching and learning theories experiments and practical approaches involved on how children uniquely learn. Student teachers under the researcher's supervision were not given adequate opportunities to experiment on different theories in the microteaching exercises and be in a position to scientifically critic their effectiveness due to limited microteaching time allocation. The inadequacies may lead to failure by those student teachers involved to understand and appreciate the relation between theory and practice and be able in future to make sound and scientific based decisions on which teaching and learning approaches are more or less effective.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study borrows from a wide spectrum of theoretical influences found in the history of education and philosophy of education. For example, it borrows from the relevance of education history supported by Conservatism and Relativism theories that think, "Educational theories today did not spring into existence, fully-armed with principles and axioms" (Curzon, 1985; Gutek, 2005; Murphy, 2006). In other words

microteaching, yes indeed is a 1960s theory, however, still influencing today's teaching. The most relevant argument here is to question, how it has evolved and how it can be contextualized to the current Zimbabwe teacher education to be effective? Today, well-read teachers and theoreticians cannot claim to be inherently superior and wiser than ancient scholars. Today's practice and theories in education cannot be understood fully without reference to ideas rooted in the past (Curzon, 1985:6). In other words one cannot claim the discovery of new knowledge in education or either reject past theories like microteaching and their relevance today.

But of much particular relevance to this study is the Functionalist perception of education. This study agrees with certain Functionalism epistemological ideologies by drawing implications from its opinions of how microteaching or pedagogy in general ought to be perceived, and ought not to be perceived? Functionalism theories of schooling and society origins could be formally traced from the French sociologist Emile Durkheim's (1858-1917) general sociological theory (Durkheim, 1956; Hallinan, 2000; Levinson, Cookson and Sadovnik, 2002). At its center, Durkheim's sociology in a book edition published some years after his death in (1956-original work published 1897) was concerned with the effects of the decline of traditional rituals during the transition from traditional rituals to modern societies. In this study Functionalism's implications are seen to be related in criticizing a historical theory like microteaching challenges in Zimbabwe today. Just like Durkheim questioned during his times, today microteaching relevance as an educational theory invented in the past could be questioned by asking, if and whether contemporary Zimbabwe teacher education should have a clean break away from traditional teaching theories or remain conservative, or formulate hybrid approaches that contextualize historical educational theories? Whitehead (Stumpf and Fieser, 2008:393) answer the previous question, in agreement to Functionalism reacting against the Analytic Monistic type of thought, which assumed that facts exist in isolation from (the past) other facts, could be of additional value. Whitehead's main argument just like in Functionalism was "...connectedness is essence of all things" Both Whitehead's and Durkheim's views are valid to this study that argues for a holistic perception of educational theories and microteaching and also holds the view that, knowledge is cumulative,

therefore contemporary education cannot be separable from the history of education or past education theories. In context to this study 'holistic perception of things' means appreciating and engaging in all cycles of microteaching for an effective microteaching exercise.

Of much more significance about Functionalism in this study is the bigger picture of Functionalism. Functionalism begins with a picture of society that stresses the interdependence of social system, it examines how parts of any structure are integrated to work for and with each other. Functionalism view society as a kind of a machine, in which one part articulates with another to produce the dynamic energy required to make society thrive. Teaching methods, theories and strategies used today are not to be used as an end to themselves and in singular utility or in isolation, but should be used in complementarity to other teaching and learning theories. There are many theories of teaching and learning, there are also many microteaching components (preplanning, teaching, and feedback, re-planning, re-evaluating, use of audio-visual aids, silence and nonverbal cues, questioning, stimulus variation, behaviour study of learners, assessment, criticism, and self-evaluation). The student teacher should be equally and rigorously exposed to each and every component/cycle, all are there to guide and paint a true picture of the diverse but coherent nature of pedagogy. The implications of Functionalism encourages teachers to see components of microteaching and theories of teaching and learning eclectically, just like in Functionalism perception of society-without under estimating the significance of the other, all components as relatively important and vital. The challenge in most microteaching exercises observed by the researcher has been the focus on one or two components of microteaching practice instead of a holistic approach, as a result reducing the professional growth of the student teacher and producing a teacher who does not fully know, understand, appreciate and exposed to what competent teaching is all about.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study followed the qualitative research design paradigm sometimes referred to as Positivist, Naturalist or Interpretivist research (Denzin and Lincoln, 2006; Silverman, 2016; Flick, 2014; Merriam and Tisdell, 2016). The major general methodical principle to analyse purposively sampled documents from libraries and internet,

was the historical-pedagogical philosophical anthropology criteria (Venter and Verster, 1990). Read data was open coded by noticing relevant phenomena, collecting examples of read phenomena and analysing read phenomena in order to note commonalities, differences, patterns and structures. In this study the historical-pedagogical approach was used to understand how microteaching has evolved from its past not only confining to its original state but to also go beyond its historical educational phenomenon by criticising its implications today through thematic, observations and content analysis comparison (Hennink, 2011; Lapan, Quartaroli and Riemer, 2012; Maxwell, 2013). The aim was not to understand past microteaching education phenomenological dialogue alone, but to also understand its complexity today from the perspective of contemporary Zimbabwe education orientation and how contemporary teachers dialogue about it today. However, the equational process of understanding microteaching today not only involves critical observations but also requires a solid historical literacy background. Reviewed literature through the snowball selection process (Woods, 2006; Goddard and Melville, 2004) was organized thematically according to the main debates-underutilization of microteaching and how it can be made effective?-within the study at hand by open coding note writing. The researcher as the sole data collector instrument grouped themes according to headings and subheadings thought relevant and answering the research questions at hand. Content analysis of primary and secondary sources were complemented and questioned using researcher microteaching observations conducted at three teacher education Regional Campuses in Matabeleland Province, in order to formulate unbiased sound theoretical views based on findings. Using both external and internal criticism where the researcher read and implicately reasoned about the issues being researched lead the researcher to inductively reach findings, conclusions and recommendations of the research.

The Relevance and Utility of Theory

The relevance of theory to teaching practice is sometimes taken for granted (Williams, 1982; Ornstein, Levine and Gutek, 2011). Some people may even question whether practical people, such as teachers need theory? (Cruickshank, *et al.*, 1996). Michelet 1846 in Curzon, (1985) answered this question by arguing that, "He who would confine his thought to present time will not

understand present reality” Fundamental to this study is the belief that both theory and teaching ought to be given same value based consciously on the argument that one cannot be efficient and adequate without the other. From analysis of informal conversations and during lecture dialogues most student teachers seem to think and see theory as ‘mere theory’ and not connected to classroom realities and often unable to link the reality of the classroom with theories learnt in Psychology, Sociology and Philosophy of Education. Underestimating the relativity of theory to practice could also be argued to exist not only in microteaching exercises, but also with some teachers who completed teacher training, who are mostly geared to drill children to pass summative assessment, may feel and conceive theory as time wasting and not capable of contributing to students performing well in examinations. Student teachers and practicing teachers need to appreciate that all professions cannot do without specialized body of knowledge and all its technical terminology or ‘jargon’ as some in general may say. Of much relevance, teachers should also appreciate that theory of education as we know it today did not spring into existence from oblivion, but come from centuries and centuries of observed experiences often interwoven with detailed and critical thought patterns rooted in human past experiences and world view (Ozmon and Craver, 1989). Microteaching if effectively conducted is just but one of the many ways that could be used as a platform to cultivate the teaching professional mentality described above.

When teacher trainees enroll in any teacher education programme they are taught some teaching theories and basic educational foundation courses that include Sociology of Education, Philosophy of Education and Psychology of Education. These pedagogical foundations are assumed pivotal and thought to expose the trainee teachers to the rigorous art and science of teaching and learning (Zeichner and Liston, 1996). Trainee teachers are exposed to and expected to appreciate the pedagogical knowledge strategies of teaching-learning, content knowledge of the subject matter and understanding the individual learners to be taught. In addition to pedagogical appreciation, the student teacher is also expected to understand different perspectives upon which society thrives as well as the research ethics that empower them to conduct community impacting/improving researches.

As trainee teachers engage in their teacher development course, they could also be exposed to peer teaching and microteaching in which case they are expected to practice the fusion of theoretical knowledge with practical knowledge in classroom like replicated environments. In fact, Brown, (1975) alludes to the fact that teacher education must emphasize the need to create teachers who are not only knowledgeable but those that have the ability to transfer their pedagogical skills into real practice. It is with this in mind then that the trainee teacher is expected to be exposed to microteaching before going for teaching practice. Although what is stated above should be followed, in reality there are challenges that affect effective execution of applying theory into practice and adequate microteaching planning, implementation and management. Inadequacies in preparing trainee teachers for effective microteaching has probed researchers (Benton-Kupper, 2001; Abenndroth, Golzy and O’ Conner, 2011; Bronfenbrinner, 2006; Cruickshank et al., 1996) to enquire on strategies for effective preparing teacher trainees for successful teaching practice and fulltime teaching. One of the most important ways of trying to make student teachers see and understand the unequivocal relation between theory and practice is microteaching practice. Even though microteaching is a solution of merging theory to practice the challenge is on how to exactly and effectively expose the student teachers to the process?

Importance of Microteaching and its Challenges

Recent development in teacher education emphasizes the need to create teachers who are not only knowledgeable about what they ought to teach but have the ability to transfer theoretical epistemologies into pragmatic pedagogical skills in the classroom (Liston, Whitcomb and Borko, 2006; Bhargava, 2009; Rata, 2012) in cognizance of diverse student and national needs like learning challenges, promotion of critical skills, know to teach for what ends and above all also appreciate the socio-politics associated with contemporary African education orientation for sustainability and development. Not only is microteaching a platform to polish good teaching experience, lesson planning and carrying out what is planned for, a process to make student teachers appreciate the relation between theory and pragmatic pedagogy, but there is more to it. It is an exercise for aligning student teachers to a certain perceptible pedigree of professional thinking and reasoning, because the

way teachers teach, think and reason can improve the quality of education and the products produced by an education system (Zeichner, 1993; Slattery, 2006). One could also add that, through the microteaching exercise it is of paramount importance to train teachers who can compete with the rapidly changing socio-economic challenges currently envisaged in Zimbabwe.

Microteaching is a system of controlled practice that makes it possible to concentrate on specific teaching behavior and to practice teaching under controlled conditions (Hattie, 2009; Ayers, 2002; Bronfenbrenner, 2006). The trainee is given specific time, identified skills to exhibit and a specific environment within which to operate. Hence, (Zeichner and Liston, 1996; Sadker and Sadker, 1972; Allen and Ryan, 1969; Meier, 1968) propounded that micro-teaching is scaled down in terms of time and numbers to allow the trainee teacher to concentrate on specific aspects of lesson delivery. Microteaching therefore, involves skill definition, demonstration by the expert, lesson planning by the trainee teacher with the help of the supervisor then conducting of the lesson by the trainee teacher, then re-planning, re-teaching, re-discussing. If the technique of 'planning, teaching, observing, re-planning, re-teaching and re-observing is observed and followed microteaching could be an effective method for improving trainee teacher's outcomes and prepare them for skillful, innovative and creative teaching. However, in some circumstances there are shortcuts to this long-term process.

Even though microteaching demands that there be human, technological, capital and information inputs in order to ensure effective transformation of teacher development processes into tangible outputs/outcomes in the schools, teacher development at the three observed teacher education Regional Campuses in Matabeleland Province were noticed lacking the above microteaching determinants. Microteaching in theory goes with the fine tuning of the methods of delivering taught content by trainee teachers who should adhere to the norms and principles that are enumerated from theories of learning as they should apply to teaching. True though this may be, practical microteaching can never get to its best without effective and deliberate follow-up on implementation of microteaching. Besides theoretical shortfalls, trainee teachers also need to hearken to the unbending need to acquire the practical skills that are required in the execution of their duties and microteaching accords them such

an opportunity since through it students are supposed to be exposed to complex processes which are not just limited to the transfer of knowledge from one to another but also to the artistic and scientific mastery of the technicalities of teaching as a profession.

Microteaching cannot be substituted for anything in teacher development as it yields behavior modification in the positive direction for trainee teachers, bears timeous and intent oriented feedback by the supervisors, peers and trainee teachers themselves which is even more enlightening since weaknesses and strengths can be recognized and acted upon for positive future action while comments from the observers also go a long way in making trainee teachers reflective (Popkewitz, 2007; Ralph, 2014). Scholars such as (Arsal, 2015; Hattie, 2009) stress the relativity of microteaching as a yield of innovativeness, critical thought and creative teaching. Even though microteaching is an opportune endeavor to merge theoretical concepts into real practice it is important to note, that, in most observed cases microteaching exercises are not given adequate preparatory, implementation and managerial attention. It is worth noting that in as much as trainee teachers stand to benefit from the scholarly critiquing of their lessons, they might hardly been afforded adequate time and critical assessment and evaluation to review microteaching performance. Yet, effective microteaching process itself is meant to be an eye-opener and brain evoker to all involved through a critical, analytic, collaborative and constructive communication system.

RESULTS

Through the analysis and synthesis of gathered literature (Liston, Whitcomb and Borko, 2006; Ilhan, 2010; Ismail, 2011; Ralph, 2014) in complementarity with observations made at three teacher training Regional Campuses in Matabeleland Province and informal dialogical discourses held by the researcher during several microteaching exercises with other microteaching supervisors the study came up with the following findings:

Although microteaching in theory is a very valid component in teacher development and the intensification of its implementation goes a long way in producing relevant and progressive 21st Century teachers (Ralph, 2014; Ananthakrishnan, 2018). However, in reality, there is limited time allocated to the exercise, lack of dedication for assessing and evaluating the exercise to develop

and sustain competent microteaching skills and eliminating errors.

From analysis of microteaching definition and cycles plan (Allen and Ryan, 1969; Meir, 1968; Sadker and Sadker, 1972) in comparison to microteaching observations the researcher noticed that in most cases current microteaching exercises at the three teacher education institutions are under resourced to support and accommodate effective microteaching implementation. More so, most microteaching supervisors given limited time allocated for microteaching do not focus on diverse microteaching cycles but focus on one, two or three microteaching components mainly document preparation and teaching what was planned for.

In all the three teacher training campuses observed microteaching in terms of time allocation and time spent on the exercise, it is not treated equally to time allocated and spent on theories of education.

Some students did not get the opportunity to directly benefit or be observed, supervised and evaluated for microteaching. In addition, some teacher trainees were found to be engaged in diverse responsibilities that hindered them from participating in the whole microteaching cycle in its entirety.

Some supervisors communicated that microteaching interrupted with “the university calendar and more important” activities and in some cases felt that microteaching was an additional burden on their part.

From analysis of gathered literature (Abenndroth, 2011; Ananthakrishnan, 2018) microteaching was seen as a fundamental component that can be capable of enhancing reflective teaching which teacher trainees need to embrace if they were to become competent and progressive.

Table 1: Summarizing Findings: Microteaching Relevance and Challenges

Microteaching Benefits	Microteaching Challenges
Platform to polish teaching experience	Limited Time Allocation
Exercise to Set Professional standards	Limited Expose to all components/cycles
Cultivate Confidence	Not all students rigorously/actively involved
Merge Theory with Practice	An underestimated exercise

DISCUSSION

There are various views on the purpose of conducting and how to conduct microteaching. In its various forms there are certain foundational commonalities that researchers agree on about the benefits of microteaching. Some researchers (Abenndroth et al., 2011; Arsal, 2015; Benton-Kupper, 2001) believe it enables student teachers to improve pedagogical skills in presentation and participation or to increase the range of teaching behaviors. Others (Brown, 1975; Hattie, 2009; Jarvis, 2005; Jordan, Carlile and Sack, 2008) claim microteaching can create awareness among student teachers of the values, assumptions and attitudes that inform skillful practice. This study does agree with the general theoretical perception of microteaching as a tool for merging theory into practice, however, through analysis of gathered literature, observations and general peer discussions one cannot fully agree with the above generalization. The generalization seems to be assuming that microteaching cycles and its original proposals are always followed diligently.

This study noted at the three Regional Campuses in Matabeleland Province studied, even though microteaching cycles and components were

known, there were however, not always followed in some cases. Supervisors sometimes chose to focus on planning and lesson delivery turning a blind eye on other relevant microteaching components like re-planning, re-teaching, re-discussing and re-evaluating observed lessons. Even faced by many planning, implementing and managing challenges, if effectively planned for and managed microteaching can be considered as one of the most effective tools in bridging the gap between theory and practice found to be a critical challenge to most student teachers during Allen and Ryan’s times and also in the current Zimbabwe teacher education.

Microteaching can also be an effective way to engage student teachers in understanding the intertwined relation between theoretical epistemologies and pragmatic pedagogy. Not only will student teachers have the opportunity to apply theories they learnt from foundations of education, but they should also be given time to experiment and find out which theories are more effective, contextual and applicable to local environments and learners. Microteaching exercise can also cultivate in the student teacher’s mind the appreciation of historical development of diverse

pedagogical theories and practices and their progression including didactic teacher-centered to learner-centered pedagogies, innovative and critical pedagogics.

CONCLUSIONS

Even though microteaching is generally underutilized in three teacher education capmuses observed, it still remains one of the many strategies that can be used by teacher training institutions to expose student teachers to an evaluative process that can make them appreciate the relevance of theory in practical teaching and also adequately prepare for teaching practice and above all gain teaching confidence and knowledge. The observed challenges can be solved if the responsible institutions form microteaching committees and microteaching coordinators dialogue to come up with better plans to effectively manage microteaching. Of much importance is a need by all the capmuses observed to allocate adequate time to allow microteaching supervisors and their microteaching groups to go through all microteaching cycles and have review sessions where all participants can critic and come up with ways of improving where there are challenges. Even though some challenges can be addressed at institutional level some challenges may require national mitigation. For example, lecturers or microteaching supervisors maybe aware of microteaching cycles and requirements but through informal dialogues one could deduce motivational challenges. Most supervisors lack motivation to conduct a thorough microteaching exercise. Above all the study emphasized that microteaching is important as a process of allowing student teachers to experiment with diverse teaching theories in order to test their applicability in practical teaching and reach scientific conclusions on which approaches work better and for what reasons.

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Source of support: Nil; **Conflict of interest:** Nil.

Cite this article as:

Hadebe, L.B. "Microteaching Underutilization: A missed Opportunity for Optimizing the Merging of Theory to Practice." *Sarcouncil Journal of Education and Sociology* 2.1 (2023): pp 8-17.