

## ASSESSING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF MICROTEACHING DURING TEACHER PREPARATION

**Cuthbert Majoni**  
Zimbabwe Open University  
Mash Central Regional Campus  
P. Bag 984, Bindura  
ZIMBABWE

### ABSTRACT

The study sought to find out the effectiveness of micro-teaching in primary teachers colleges in Zimbabwe. The multiple case study design was used and the lecturers and the student teachers from a teachers college participated in this study. Purposive sampling technique was used to select the participants. Data were generated through interviews and focus group discussions. Data were analysed using the interpretive study analysis. The study found that the effectiveness of micro-teaching is affected by absence of well researched and lack of adequate planning of the programme. The time allocated to microteaching is very short and student teachers taught a single lesson from all the subjects of the primary school curriculum. The study concluded that micro-teaching was less effective in preparing student teachers for teaching practice. The study recommends designing of a well researched micro-teaching programme that will take into consideration critical aspects to consider ensuring student teachers are adequately prepared for teaching practice.

**Keywords:** Micro-teaching, Teacher Preparation, Effectiveness.

### INTRODUCTION

In Zimbabwe primary school teachers go through a three year training programme. The programme has three phases which include Phase 1 where students are in college where they receive content knowledge, Phase 2 students go for practical teaching and Phase 3 students are resident in college and receive more content. During the phase 1 the student teachers go for microteaching in the nearby schools to introduce practical teaching. Student teachers are equipped with hands-on practical skills for classroom teaching. Micro-teaching is expected to lay a foundation for teaching practice in Phase 2. An effective micro-teaching programme will ensure student teachers are adequately prepared for classroom teaching. An ineffective micro-teaching programme will spell disaster to student teachers who will be standing in front of a class for the first time.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

In Zimbabwe during teacher training, student teachers go for micro-teaching during their first term in college. According to Igwe, et al. (2013) microteaching is an essential part of the teacher education curriculum. Microteaching has its origins at Stanford University in the USA in the early 1960s and the aim was to enhance linking of theory and practice in the training of teachers and develop desirable skills and competencies. As a result micro-teaching is extensively used in teaching practice during initial teacher training in most countries (Igwe et. al 2013).

## Definitions of Microteaching

A number of definitions have been given of what microteaching is. According to Kieviet (1972) micro-teaching is a method of training teachers where explicit use of principles of feedback is used. Ajayi (2006) defines micro-teaching as a system of controlled practices that allows students to concentrate on specific teaching behaviours. A more comprehensive definition was given by Yusuf (2006) who referred to micro-teaching as a training technique which allows the student teachers an opportunity to master the teaching skills in a controlled environment before the actual class teaching. All these definitions have something in common. They refer to micro-teaching as involving student teachers learning or mastering teaching skills and also include preparation before going for teaching practice and it is done on a small scale and there is feedback to the student teachers and to the lecturers.

## Purpose and Nature of Microteaching

Micro-teaching is a technique in teacher education which provides an opportunity to marry theory with practice (Celik 2001). This is an opportunity for trainee teachers to focus on specific teaching behaviour and to practise various teaching skills under controlled conditions (Allen and Eve 1968). Ryan and Deviney (1970) outlined the major purposes of microteaching as to:

- Provide an opportunity for real classroom teaching
- Simplify the complexity of classroom teaching, by reducing time, number of students and amount of content.
- Promote mastering of teaching skills, techniques, methods and syllabus interpretation.
- Developing the skill of student teachers in breaking down content into teachable units.

Agibola (2013) believes that before student teachers are thrown into the normal classroom to do practical teaching, micro-teaching equips them with teaching skills and are introduced to practical teaching.

Allen and Ryan (1969) specified the activities related to micro-teaching. These include, students teaching for period of between 5 – 10 minutes with 10 students and not a large class of over 40 pupils. The teaching time is just a fraction of a lesson as such a few objectives and content should be covered. Ajibola (2013) asserts that there is reduction in length of time, class size, task to be accomplished and the skill to be developed. As a result, a student teacher requires specific teaching skills.

Ajibola (2013) identified three phases of micro-teaching from Saxena and Khajarichee (2012) and Ambili (2013). These are the acquisition phase, skill acquisition and transfer phase. During the acquisition phase student teachers are oriented to the new skills through lectures, discussions, tutorials and demonstrations of the skills by the expert. They learn about the conditions suitable for the use of a certain skill and the main purpose of using that skill. During the acquisition phase the student teacher is involved in the planning of the micro-lesson based on the demonstrations, discussion and tutorials. The student teacher then practises the skills through the micro-teaching cycle until they master the skill. Here video recording takes place and the student teacher gets feedback from lecturers and fellow students as well. The feedback is meant to ensure behavioural change in the desired direction. The last phase is the transfer phase where after the mastery of skills the student teacher is expected to integrate all skills and apply them to actual classroom teaching.

There are various advantages associated with micro-teaching. These include mastery of teaching skills, teaching methods and curriculum selection. Student teachers are able to master one skill at a time. The students are allowed to choose a skill and after mastering it they can go on to try another one until they are able to integrate all the teaching skills (Slabert 2013). According to Achuonge (2007), the student teacher can acquire vital teaching skills in the absence of an examination environment. This allows the student to concentrate on acquiring specific teaching skills. According to Afolabi (2010) teachers identify, select and practise teaching skills in conducive and supportive environment hence expose themselves to an enriching teaching experience. Micro-teaching prepares students for teaching practice and provides them with teaching situations they face during classroom teaching. A well planned and implemented micro-teaching programme will promote professional development of trainee teachers. Adequate time for micro-teaching will ensure high quality teaching practice is experienced by the student teachers.

Although micro-teaching has its merits it has its own demerits. Deviney (1970) identified a number of limitations associated with micro-teaching. Videotaping equipment is expensive and time consuming. The hardware and the software include as digital cameras and video recorder, closed circulation television (CCTV) are expensive to purchase and maintain (Ajibola 2013). Teachers' Colleges do not have resources to acquire these. The controlled environment is like a laboratory with recording equipment operating. This creates an artificial environment and the student teacher can be affected by the presence of the gadgets (Kumar 2008). Students might pretend and at the same time they can exhibit false behaviours not related to how they behave in a real life situation. Student teachers and lecturers do not pay much attention to micro-teaching. Some lecturers observe a few students teach and the teaching period can be very short as little as one week. They also might teach large groups of students and as such render micro-teaching ineffective.

### **Research Questions**

- To what extent is micro-teaching effective in preparing student teachers for teaching practice?
- What are the challenges faced by Teachers' Colleges in the implementation of microteaching programme?
- What are the challenges faced by Teachers' College lecturers in supervising students during micro-teaching?
- How can micro-teaching be improved to promote professional development of student teachers?

### **METHODOLOGY**

This was a qualitative research. Qualitative research involves the researcher studying the participant in their natural setting (Cresswell, 2007). Qualitative research was preferred because it allowed the researcher to conduct the research in a natural setting in this case these were the Teachers' Colleges. The researcher visited the Teachers' Colleges and interacted with both the student teachers and lecturers during data generation.

### **Research Design**

A multiple case study design was used in this study to focus on micro teaching by student teachers in the various Teachers' Colleges. The case study design was preferred because it

allowed the research to focus on key players and situations affecting teacher preparation. The researcher wanted to get a better understanding of the micro-teaching programme in Teachers' Colleges.

### Sampling Procedure

A multiple case study design was used in this study. The focus was on student teachers on teaching practice in 5 teachers' colleges. The purposive sampling technique was used to select the participants. The participants were student teachers on microteaching and their lecturers.

### Data Generation and Analysis

To generate data interviews and focus group discussions were used with both lecturers and student teachers. The researcher was able to clarify complex questions and follow up on the responses made by the participants. To generate data lecturers were interviewed and student teachers were also interviewed and they filled in open-ended questionnaires.

### Data Analysis

The interpretative study analysis was used to analyse the data. During data analysis the following steps were followed, that is, coding, and categorising. The researcher had to structure the categories of data so that they would be meaningful. Analysis also involved selecting the categories and relating them to other categories. The researcher had the task of integrating the categories to generate meaning and understanding.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Students who were involved in micro-teaching during teacher preparation responded to the open-ended questionnaire. All student teachers had experiences they went through during micro-teaching. The student teachers were supervised by at least four lectures and fifteen peers in a micro teaching group. The student teachers indicated they had benefited enormously from participating in micro-teaching.

The student teachers highlighted the following benefits derived from involvement in microteaching. They gained confidence, improvement in scheming and planning. Microteaching removed fear since the student teachers indicated that they were able to stand in front of the class without fear. It prepared one for teaching practice. A student teacher had this to say during interviews:

*As it was my first the experience of formal teaching, the team of lecturers who assisted gave me relevant guidelines to prepare schemes of work, detailed lesson plan and media which assisted me during lesson presentation*

However, the student teachers identified the following challenges related to micro teaching:

- They were unfamiliar with the pupils they were teaching as a result this made it difficult to manage the class.
- The time for micro-teaching was inadequate to ensure practice in teaching most of the subjects of the primary school curriculum.

- Lack of teaching media because of unavailability of stationery to buy materials to prepare teaching aids.
- Pupils were not used to being taught by new teachers apart from their class teacher

Student teachers suggested how the quality micro-teaching could be improved. They suggested that teachers Colleges could provide more time for micro-teaching and the topics to be taught should be given during preparation for micro-teaching, hence provide adequate time for preparation.

Student teachers indicated that they needed to be taught and guided on syllabus interpretation and should be involved in peer teaching before going out for micro teaching. The students should be given opportunities to teach all the subjects of the primary school curriculum rather than teach one subject during microteaching.

Students were not well groomed in the area of scheming are planning as well as preparation of teaching media. Adequate consultations and preparation should be done before students go out micro-teaching to specific schools. This includes familiarisation of student teachers with the classes they will teach. Ensuring planning meetings are held with the mentoring teachers to which student teachers will be attached. Student teachers prepared their lessons without a syllabus to guide them while some school teachers were planning using the textbook and this affected the effectiveness of micro-teaching. Teachers' Colleges should provide samples of well taught lessons to student teachers to learn from. Student teachers should consult with classroom teachers to ensure they will teach topics being covered by the class at that time to ensure continuity and linkage with previous lesson.

## CONCLUSIONS

The study concluded that microteaching was less effective in preparing student teachers for teaching practice. The quality of teaching practice was negatively compromised because of the ineffectiveness of microteaching

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The following possible recommendations are made in this study:

- “The period of microteaching should be extended to that students teachers will be able to have adequate time to teach all the subjects and familiarise themselves with the class”
- Home teaching should be done prior to microteaching to ensure students are not students in front of a class for the first time.
- The students also suggested that one or two lecturers should observe the student teacher teach, to create a conducive environment for the developing teacher.
- The size of the class should be reduced to manageable levels.
- A well researched micro-teaching design and policy should be put in place to improve the quality of teacher preparation.

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