MICROTEACHING PRACTICUM IN TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMME: ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

Ahmadu Shehu[1], Lawson Luka[2*], Fadimatu Usman[3] and Bobboi Abubakar[4]

[1]Curriculum and Instructions, Federal College of Education, Yola

[2&3]Educational Foundations, Federal College of Education, Yola

[4]Special Education Department, Federal College of Education, Yola, Nigeria.

***Corresponding author:** Lawson Luka

Curriculum and Instructions, Federal College of Education, Yola

Abstract

The aim of this article is to examine the issues and challenges in Microteaching. The paper is examined: concept and objectives of teacher education, the origin and Concept of Micro-Teaching, the Objectives of Micro Teaching, Characteristic of Microteaching, Importance of Micro-Teaching, Microteaching Practicum Skills, Procedure in Microteaching Practicum, Challenges in Microteaching. Since its evolution in Stanford University, the technique has been adopted with modifications, and practiced in few institutions of higher. The rationale for introducing microteaching practicum as a vital innovative teaching for quality teacher education is to create a laboratory environment free from the unavoidable tense atmosphere of teaching practice. It is aimed at bridging the gap between theory and practice. Microteaching practicum focuses on the acquisition of specific teaching skills. Based on the above conclusion it was recommended that: there is the need for teacher training institutions to have modern microteaching laboratory with closed circuit television system (CCTV) and all student-teachers should be exposed to the practice of microteaching practicum.

KEYWORDS: Microteaching, Teacher Education, Issues and Challenges

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INTRODUCTION

Teaching is a multifaceted endeavor that necessitates the utilization of essential skills for effective and efficient instruction. Engaging in teaching is a serious commitment that individuals must approach with gravity. As a profession, teaching encompasses numerous complexities (Theodoros, 2022). The art and science of teaching extend beyond a mere transfer of knowledge from the teacher to the learner. Rather, it constitutes a sophisticated process that facilitates and shapes the learning experience, necessitating trained and qualified educators. The effectiveness of a teacher is gauged by the extent to which students comprehend the material presented, which requires the mastery of specific skills known as teaching skills.

The training of teachers to develop these skills poses a significant challenge within teacher education programs. The teaching profession is widely regarded as quite intricate (Darling-Hammond, 2006), demanding extensive classroom experiences for aspiring teachers during their initial training. Nevertheless, it is not guaranteed that all student teachers will successfully navigate the practical experiences in the classroom.

According to Foley (1974), as cited in Abil (2012), these skills can be acquired through more structured training methodologies, one of which is micro-teaching theory and practicum. Microteaching has been characterized as an "antechamber" or "parlor" in teacher education. This characterization arises from the fact that microteaching represents the initial exposure that student-teachers encounter prior to engaging in actual teaching experiences with real students. Microteaching is implemented in teacher education programs globally (Bell, 2007).

Since the advent of microteaching approximately five decades ago, the gap in scientifically validated or effective methodologies for teacher training programs has been addressed (Elliot, 1982). It is against this backdrop that the aim of this article is to provide information on the issues and challenges in Microteaching to guide lecturers in mentoring the student-teachers t become effective in the teaching – learning process. The paper is organized under the following sub-headings:

- ❖ Concept and Objectives of Teacher Education
- ❖ The origin and Concept of Micro-Teaching
- ❖ The Objectives of Micro Teaching
- ❖ Characteristic of Microteaching
- ❖ Importance of Micro-Teaching
- ❖ Microteaching Practicum Skills
- ❖ Procedure in Microteaching Practicum
- ❖ Challenges in Microteaching
- ❖ Conclusion and recommendations

Concept and Objectives of Teacher Education

Teacher education involves delivering professional education and specialized training to individuals aspiring to nurture young learners into responsible and functional members of society (Akintade & Eyengbo, 2007 as cited by Lawson, 2022). Teacher education is a program focused on enhancing teacher proficiency and competence, empowering educators to fulfill the demands of their profession and tackle the associated challenges (Kanayo, 2012). UNESCO (2011) defines teacher education as the formal training designed to provide teachers with the necessary knowledge, attitudes, behaviors, and skills for effective teaching at the appropriate educational level. Thus, teacher education represents a form of education specifically designed to prepare and train individuals who will provide professional teaching services across all levels of the educational system.

The National objectives of teacher education, as outlined in the National Policy on Education (2013), are as follows:

1. To produce highly motivated conscientious and efficient classroom teacher for all levels of our educational system;
2. To encourage further the spirit of enquiry and creativity in teachers;
3. To help teachers to fit into social life of the community and the society at large and enhance to national goals; their commitment d)
4. To provide teachers with the intellectual and professional background adequate for their assignment and make them adaptable to changing situations; and
5. To enhance teachers' commitment to the teaching profession.

Origin and Concept of Micro-Teaching

The microteaching practicum commenced in 1963 in the United States. Prior to this, student-teachers were trained through two conventional methods known as: the school experience approach and the teaching observation approach (Ike and Iwu, 2001). The teaching observation approach, also referred to as the model the master teacher approach, constituted another traditional training method. In this framework, student-teachers were assigned to cooperating schools to observe and emulate a master teacher. Essentially, the student-teacher assumed the role of an apprentice upon being paired with a master teacher. It was anticipated that by the conclusion of the apprenticeship, the student-teacher would have acquired the teaching skills and attitudes exemplified by the master teacher.

The school experience approach involves training institutions, such as colleges of education or universities (specifically faculties of education), sending their student-teachers to cooperating schools for teaching practice following theoretical coursework in education and their area of specialization. During this phase, student-teachers were tasked with instructing students in the classroom. Through this experience, they developed essential skills, styles, and techniques in teaching. However, a significant drawback of this approach was that supervision was frequently too infrequent to provide meaningful support to the trainee teacher in their quest to develop teaching skills. Often, supervision was perceived as intimidating rather than as a source of assistance to facilitate the trainee's growth in acquiring teaching competencies (Ike and Iwu, 2001).

Later, Microteaching, was introduced as the third and innovative approach in training student-teachers, aims to equip them with essential professional teaching skills necessary for effectiveness in the teaching-learning process. It is characterized as a scaled-down teaching encounter, in terms of time, skills, and the number of students, designed to prepare students for actual teaching and skill acquisition or enhancement within a practical and professional context (FRN, 2004; Johnson & Golombek, 2020).

Concept of Micro-teaching and Micro-teaching Practicum
Hasibuan, Ibrahim, and Toemial (2021) describe microteaching as a fundamental teaching performance training method that distinctly isolates the component parts of the teaching process, enabling

teachers or prospective teachers to master basic teaching skills individually in simplified scenarios. Ike (2003) perceives microteaching as a teaching situation that is reduced in terms of time, class size, and teaching complexity, where a student teacher instructs a group for five to ten minutes, utilizing a specific teaching skill.

Iwu, Ajuzie, and Nzeako (2013) assert that the microteaching practicum serves as a mechanism through which the student-teacher acquires a repertoire of teaching skills that will be reinforced during their teaching practice. Microteaching is essentially a simulation that has been demonstrated to enhance student teachers' self-efficacy (Arsal, 2014) and allows for the integration of domain-specific knowledge with pedagogy (Özcan & Gerçek, 2019; van der Westhuizen & Golightly, 2015). According to Ike (2003), this is due to the fact that microteaching provides student-teachers with access to a microteaching laboratory, where they can develop microteaching skills such as set induction, planned repetition, the use of examples and illustrations, stimulus variation, questioning techniques, reinforcement, non-verbal communication, closure, and effective chalkboard usage.

The Objectives of Micro Teaching and Micro Teaching Practicum

The objectives of microteaching and Micro-teaching programmes as given by Ike and Iwu (2001) include:

1. Microteaching and Micro-teaching assist the student-teacher in recognizing the specific skills utilized in daily teaching practices.
2. Microteaching and Micro-teaching offer the trainee a chance to analyze, individually, the diverse teaching skills based on theoretical knowledge and research findings, as well as the goals for practicing and mastering each skill;
3. Microteaching and Micro-teaching allow the trainee to practice teaching skills within a supportive environment provided by their supervisor and peers, while simplifying the complexities of teaching;
4. Microteaching and Micro-teaching help the trainee to develop confidence as an educator prior to commencing teaching in a school setting;
5. Microteaching and Micro-teaching enable trainees to receive training in teaching skills that is analogous to the moot court experiences of law students and the clinical training of medical students;
6. Microteaching and Micro-teaching allow the trainee to practice teaching through clearly defined, observable, measurable, and manageable teaching skills.
7. Microteaching and Micro-teaching encourage the trainee to view the supervisor as a supportive figure invested in their professional development as a teacher, and
8. Microteaching and Micro-teaching promote an analytical and objective perspective in the trainee when evaluating their own teaching performance.

Characteristic of Microteaching Practicum

According to Aggarwal (2014), microteaching occurs in its authentic form; it is simply conducted in a smaller scale with the following characteristics:

1. The number of students participating in microteaching sessions typically ranges from 5 to 10 peers.

2. In the context of microteaching, the instructor serves as an observer.
3. The suggested duration for teaching during the microteaching practicum is approximately 10 to 15 minutes in front of the class.
4. The focus of training in the microteaching practicum is on fundamental teaching skills, ensuring that the time allocated is not excessively long.
5. The microteaching practicum represents genuine teaching. Therefore, the practitioner is required to develop a learning plan, execute the instruction in alignment with the established plan, and effectively manage the classroom.

Importance of Micro-Teaching Practicum

The Micro Teaching practicum encompasses the comprehensive process that facilitates the connection between theoretical knowledge and practical teaching applications (So, 2009). Microteaching serves as a concentrated and focused method of peer feedback and discussion, which can enhance teaching methodologies. Research indicates that microteaching significantly contributes to forming a tangible link between theoretical concepts and actual classroom practices (Bell, 2007; Kpanja, 2002). This linkage enables student teachers to apply their theoretical knowledge in practice and equips them with vital teaching competencies. Additional areas where microteaching practice proves beneficial include:

1. Microteaching practicum aids in the development of time management and lesson planning skills (Bell, 2007),
2. Microteaching practicum enhances classroom management, addresses the diverse needs of students, and differentiates among various student perspectives (Busher et al., 2014),
3. Microteaching practicum fosters the development of questioning techniques utilizing differentiated content and physical presentation (Saban & Çoklar, 2013),
4. Microteaching practicum contributes to the enhancement of decision-making abilities (Lewis et al., 2006),
5. Microteaching practicum promotes the development of communication and public speaking skills (Özcan & Gerçek, 2019).
6. Microteaching practicum has been shown to effectively support the reflective practices of student teachers (Amobi, 2005; Kpanja, 2002).
7. Microteaching practicum aids in building self-confidence among student teachers (Ralph, 2014)
8. Microteaching practicum assists in cultivating self-efficacy beliefs (Arsal, 2014).

Microteaching Practicum Skills

There are various skills that should be practiced and mastered through micro-lessons. The student-teacher must learn, practice, and master these skills before their practice teaching period; this is essential because mastering these skills will enhance proficiency in performing the desired tasks (Ike2003). Below are the microteaching skills applicable at various teaching levels and across different subjects:

1. Closure skill: Just as set induction marks the beginning of a lesson, closure signifies its end. Closure can serve as a means of focusing attention on the completion of a specific learning sequence or task. It is utilized to foster

a sense of achievement and mastery in learners regarding what they have learned.

2. Skills of Non-verbal Communication: Non-verbal communication encompasses the signals conveyed through our bodies. This includes hand and head movements, eye movements, and facial expressions, which the student-teacher uses to communicate feelings and expressions in the classroom. Gestures enhance the effectiveness of verbal communication when used in conjunction. They express emotions and are used to emphasize, add meaning, and direct words.

3. Skills of Planned Repetition: This is one of the techniques that the student-teacher can utilize to assist students in retaining important ideas or concepts from the lesson. According to Ike (2003, p.73), some methods a teacher can use to reiterate key ideas or concepts include:
    a. "Simple repetition,
    b. spaced repetition,
    c. cumulative repetition
    d. massed repetition".

4. Questioning Skills: These skills are employed by classroom teachers to elicit ideas from students and encourage critical thinking. They also serve to alleviate the monotony of traditional lectures, keeping the lesson engaging and dynamic. Questioning skills can be classified into four categories: probing questions, lower-order cognitive questions, higher-order cognitive questions, and diversionary questions.

5. Skills of Reinforcement: This skill aims to enhance learner participation in the teaching process. Utilizing positive verbal and non-verbal cues is a crucial aspect of this skill. Teachers can verbally commend students by saying phrases like 'that's excellent', 'very good', 'fantastic', or 'well done'. Non-verbal praise may include a smile, a nod, friendly eye contact, or extra-verbal sounds such as 'mmm' or 'Aaah'. Reinforcement serves to provide learners with information or feedback regarding their actions, acting as corrective measures for their behavior.

6. Skills of Set Induction: Set induction is a vital initial step in any practice lesson. It is used to stimulate students' curiosity and interest, capture their attention, prepare their minds, and motivate them to absorb the new knowledge being presented. This involves activities that the teacher conducts to ready learners for the upcoming topic or lesson.

7. Stimulus Variation Skill: Capturing and maintaining learners' attention is essential for effective teaching. Key elements of this skill include gestures, variations in speech patterns, and changes in interaction styles. It is crucial for teachers to secure and sustain students' attention throughout the teaching-learning process. Prolonged use of a single stimulus or activity can lead to inattention, dullness, and monotony.

8. Skill of examples: The skill of examples involves describing an idea, concept or principle by using various types of examples. In using examples as a skill one should ensure to:
    a. Start with simple examples and walk to complex ones
    b. Choose examples which the students are familiar with
    c. Be sure to relate examples to the idea yourself or ask the students to do so.

Procedure in Microteaching Practicum

The following steps according to Singh, Sharma and Upadhya (2008) can be used in developing teaching skills:

a. Skill Modeling: This involves guiding teacher trainees in the teaching skill they are set to practice. This can be achieved by explaining the rationale behind the skill and demonstrating it accordingly.

b. Micro-lesson Planning: Suitable content must be chosen. A brief lesson, typically lasting between 5 to 10 minutes, is then organized in collaboration with the supervisor. This phase prepares the ground for safe practice teaching.

c. Teaching Session: The lesson is delivered in front of the supervisor and fellow trainees. The micro teacher's performance is monitored concerning the skill being developed and documented. Evaluation tools such as evaluation sheets, tape recorders, videos, and monitors are utilized.

d. Critique Session: The supervisor and peer trainees engage in a discussion regarding the micro teacher's performance, providing targeted feedback aimed at specific areas for improvement. The evaluation tools allow the micro teacher to assess their performance objectively, which is a significant advantage of microteaching techniques.

e. Re-planning: At this stage, the student-teacher makes necessary corrections and re-plans the lesson. The student-teacher selects a segment from a new topic and creates a new micro-lesson, taking into account the corrections made in the previous micro-lesson while practicing the same skill (Ike, 2003).

f. Re-teach Lesson: Following the re-planning session, the re-teaching session occurs, lasting between 5 to 10 minutes. The same unit is taught to a different group of 5-10 students. The supervisor and peer trainees observe and assess the micro teacher's performance using the evaluation tools.

g. Re-critique Session: The micro teacher receives feedback once more, gaining insight into the extent of their improvement. The critiquing process follows the same procedure as outlined in the critique session. This step has the potential to encourage the micro teacher to enhance their performance.

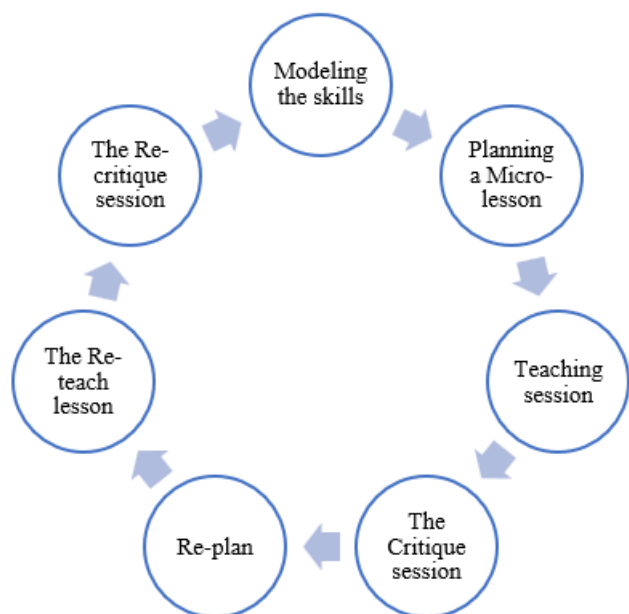The diagram below shows the micro teaching cycle

Figure 1: micro teaching cycle,

Source: Adapted from Singh, Y.K. Sharma, T.K. and Upadiya, B. (2008 Educational Technology: Teaching Learning p.308

Challenges in Microteaching

According to Bello and Ayelaagbe (2015), despite the above relevance of microteaching in teacher education, its challenges have a long way to do with the trainee of quality teachers in Nigeria. Some of these challenges include:

a. Limited practice scope. Microteaching sessions generally involve instructing a small group of students (usually 5-7) for a brief period (5-10 minutes). Although this format allows for concentrated practice on particular skills, it may not adequately equip pre-service teachers for the challenges of managing a full-sized classroom with a diverse range of learners over an extended time.

b. Potential artificiality. The controlled environment of microteaching may not truly represent the realities of an actual classroom. The participants in the microteaching session are often peers, which can change the dynamics and interactions compared to teaching real students. This discrepancy can create a gap between the microteaching experience and actual teaching practice.

c. The quality and implementation of feedback also present considerable challenges. The success of microteaching largely depends on the quality of feedback given to pre-service teachers. If the feedback lacks constructiveness, specificity, and actionability, it may not result in significant improvement. Additionally, even with high-quality feedback, pre-service teachers might find it difficult to apply the suggestions in future microteaching sessions or in their real teaching practice.

d. Time constraints can also pose a problem. Microteaching necessitates careful planning, execution, observation, feedback, and replanning. This process can be quite time-intensive.

e. . Resource limitations can further act as a barrier. Effective microteaching often requires access to video recording equipment, playback facilities, and trained supervisors or mentors to provide feedback. Colleges of Education with limited resources may struggle to offer these essential tools and support.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Since its development at Stanford University, this technique has been modified and implemented in a limited number of higher education institutions. The purpose of incorporating microteaching practicum as a crucial innovative approach for enhancing teacher education quality is to establish a laboratory setting that alleviates the inherent stress associated with traditional teaching practice. This method aims to bridge the divide between theoretical knowledge and practical application. Microteaching practicum emphasizes the development of specific teaching skills. Based on their findings, the researchers proposed the following recommendations:

1. A modern microteaching laboratory equipped with a closed-circuit television system (CCTV)
2. Student teachers should engage in the practice of microteaching practicum skills using appropriate hardware.
3. Student-teachers who did not pass Edu 214 and 224 should not be assigned to teaching practice.
4. Each student-teacher must successfully complete the microteaching practicum examination before advancing to teaching practice in a conventional classroom setting.
5. All teacher education institutions should hire sufficient microteaching specialists and technical staff to ensure effective and efficient training for our student-teachers.
6. Teacher education institutions lacking a standard microteaching laboratory should not be permitted to produce teachers.

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