

# Microteaching as a Strategy for Preparing Teacher Trainees in Open and Distance Learning Institutions

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## Abstract

Microteaching has been observed to be one of the key components in shaping the ultimate student and future teacher who can be trusted by the government and later on the citizenry of any country in the global village to effectively manage the educational environment. Even though important, microteaching in most teacher training institutions is likely not being given adequate emphasis that it deserves leading to insufficient innovative and skillful teaching. The research found out three major challenges which hamper effective planning, implementation and management of competent based microteaching. These challenges are exacerbated by lack of dedication and inadequacies of time that is allocated for microteaching and deficits of applying pedagogical knowledge, limited subject content knowledge and application of theoretical concepts in practical teaching. Ghanagaguru [1] actually affirms this when he posits that microteaching is key to professional development and that it is a mechanism for improving teaching. Qualitative research methodologies were used to gather and analyze literature on the subject matter under study and to collect data from 15 participants. Participant population comprised of 37 Post Graduate Diploma in Education students at Zimbabwe Open University Bulawayo Regional Campus and 19 Zimbabwe Open University Bulawayo Regional Campus Teaching Practice Supervisors. Participants were selected through purposive sampling. Reviewed literature analysis revealed that most microteaching researchers argue that those trainee teachers who undergo an extensive microteaching exercise display skillful and effective teaching practices. However, supervisors further revealed that whilst micro-teaching was relevant, it needed adequate preparation and more emphasis needed to be placed on providing a high technological support base for microteaching to be effectively implemented. Despite several challenges, the study concluded that microteaching was a pivotal strategy for developing professional expertise in teacher trainees as it exposed them to direct and practical teaching experiences in the classrooms as opposed to theoretical experiences.

**Keywords:** Microteaching, Teaching practice; Teacher trainees.

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## INTRODUCTION

When the Post Graduate Diploma in education teacher trainees enroll with Zimbabwe Open University 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 pivotal in that they expose the trainee teachers to the rigorous professional development in the understanding of theories of teaching- learning. They 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 [1]. 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 these trainee teachers engage in their teacher development course, they are also exposed to peer teaching and microteaching in which case they practice the fusion of theoretical knowledge with practical knowledge in classroom like replicated environments. In fact, Brown [2] alludes to the fact that teacher education must emphasise 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 move on to being exposed to microteaching while doing teaching practice in the real

schools with real learners under the auspices of their mentors, supervisors and their teacher training colleagues.

Even though 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. This inadequacy in preparing trainee teachers for effective microteaching has probed researchers to enquire on strategies for effective preparing teacher trainees for successful teaching practice and fulltime teaching.

### Statement of the Problem

Researchers observed that in the preparation for Post Graduate students teaching practice there is inadequate planning, implementation and management of microteaching. In open distance teacher pre-service there is inadequate time allocated to preparation, planning, implementation and management of microteaching exercise. Diverse blueprint microteaching strategies have been found to be underutilized and in some cases not fully exploited.

What strategies can, therefore, be applied in planning, implementing and managing of microteaching for postgraduate student trainees?

### RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- How can Open Distance Teacher Education (ODTE) ensure effective planning, implementation and management of microteaching?
- How can ODTE fully utilize diverse blueprint microteaching strategies?
- How can teacher training institutions successfully meet progressive demands of microteaching requirements?

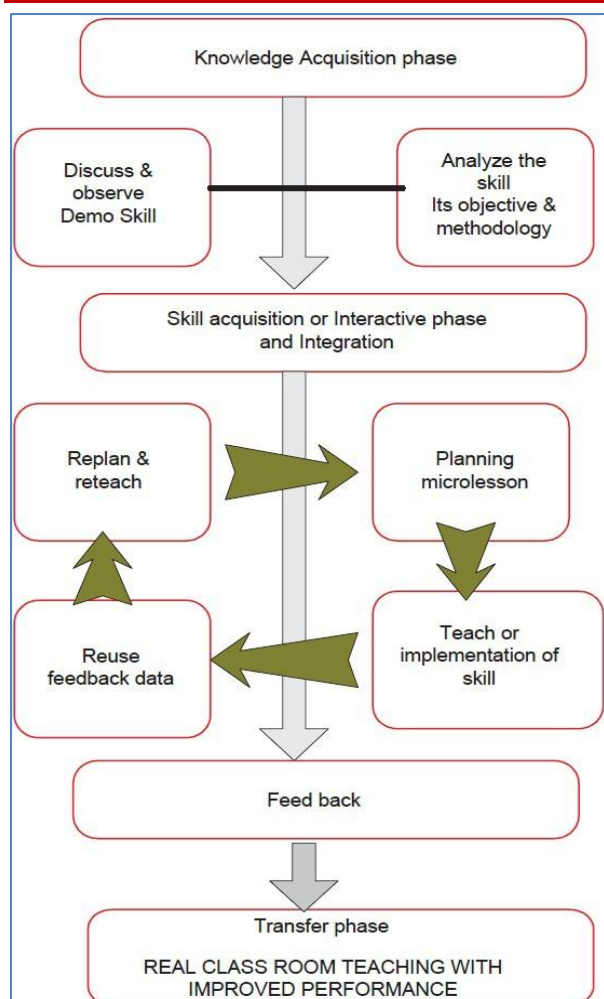
### Theoretical Framework

This study is informed by the General Systems Theory [GST] which forwards the view that every organization depends on the environment, inputs,

processes, outcomes/outputs and feedback which informs outcomes if it is to develop / improve. The theory further states that all systems are generally purposeful and goal directed [3]. The systems are goal seeking and they move in the direction of goal achievement. This is to avoid systems going to unplanned directions. This, therefore, means that all parts of the system have to work together in harmony if objectives are to be achieved. In a similar fashion the micro-teaching process, also known as evidence-based education [4], calls for the existence of inputs, processes, outcomes and or feedback in order for summative procedures to be taken to bring about recommendations for futuristic improvement that are based on tangible outcomes. In reality, effective microteaching is a teacher training and faculty technique whereby the trainee teacher reviews a recording of a teaching session in order to get constructive feedback from peers, supervisor and or students about what has worked and what improvements can be made to their teaching techniques and demands.

### Conceptual Framework

Micro-teaching is a system of controlled practice that makes it possible to concentrate on specific teaching behavior and to practice teaching under controlled conditions Chouhan [5]. The trainee is given specific time, identified skills to exhibit and a specific environment within which to operate. Hence, Cohen [6] observes 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. Micro teaching 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, conclusion then re-planning, re-teaching, re-discussion [7]. The same process or procedure is at times referred to as the Stanford technique of 'plan, teach, observe, re-plan, re-teach and re-observe [8]. In other words, micro teaching has been found to be an effective method for improving trainee teacher's outcomes and prepare them for skillful, innovative and creative teaching.



**Fig-1: Various phases involved in a microteaching activity (Remesh, 2013)**

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 in Zimbabwe is observed to lack in 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 [9]. 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 exposed to complex processes which are not just limited to the transfer of knowledge from one to another but also to the artistic mastery of the technicalities of teaching as a profession [7].

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. Ghanaguru *et al.* [1] stress that Micro teaching yields innovative, critically thinking and creative teachers. Even though microteaching is an opportune endeavour of putting theoretical concepts into real practice and this is key in pedagogy. Important to note, however is the fact that in most cases microteaching exercises are not given adequate preparatory, implementation and managerial attention [3]. It is worth noting that in as much as trainee teachers stand to benefit from the scholarly critiquing of their lessons, they might hardly have adequate time to review microteaching performance. The effective microteaching process itself is meant to be an eye-opener and brain evoker to all involved through a collaborative and constructive communication system [10].

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopted the qualitative research design. The qualitative research design was informed by phenomenological philosophy. In the context of this research the design involved researchers reviewing and gathering literature related to the research questions. reviewed literature was complimented by document analysis and observations of planning, implementation and management strategies of microteaching. This research design was preferred since it studies participants in their social settings thus enabling the researchers to obtain thick and detailed descriptions of the natural settings. The philosophy behind this methodology is phenomenology. This is a philosophy that makes it easy to understand subjects of research in their social contexts and in this case understanding the role played by all involved in the microteaching process. 37 intakes 18 Post Graduate Diploma students from Zimbabwe Open University Bulawayo Regional Campus were part of the sample, 19 Teaching Practice Supervisors and mentors all constituted the population of this study. Purposive sampling was used to identify the actual participants from the entire population. The criteria for selection was the proximity and subject representation [sciences, humanities, arts and commercials] These were opted for as they allowed the researchers to get answers to the research questions in order to meet the research objectives [11]. Purposive sampling was used to divide the population into discrete groups and in this case to divide the Post Graduate Diploma in Education into their respective areas of specialization. Furthermore, Interviews were also used to collect information from supervisors on the use of micro-teaching as a strategy for preparing teacher trainees. Focus group discussions on the other hand

were arranged for 10 Post Graduate Diploma in Education students from Bulawayo Regional Campus.

## FINDINGS

The study came up with the following findings:

- Although microteaching is a very valid component in Teacher development and the intensification of its implementation goes a long way in producing relevant and progressive 21<sup>st</sup> Century teachers that fit anywhere in the global village there is however, logistical challenges to access infrastructure within the province on sharpening and developing specific microteaching skills and eliminating errors.
- From the interview analysis it was found out that most schools were under resourced to support and accommodate effective microteaching implementation. More so, in cases where resources were available, donating the facilities would mean either the school or the school facility user would incur costs.
- The Teaching Practice calendar at Zimbabwe Open University for Post Graduate Diploma in Education was found to be restrictive and limiting as to how much could be done both by the trainee teacher and the supervisors to realise the potential gains of the microteaching component in Teacher Development within a semester whilst working within a secondary school term.
- Students not employed were observed to be struggling to mobilise resources to prepare for fully researched and equipped lessons. In addition, teacher trainees doing Post Graduate Diploma in Education were found to be engaged in diverse responsibilities that hindered them from participating in the whole microteaching cycle in its entirety
- Microteaching was seen as a fundamental component that enhance reflective teaching which teacher trainees needed to embrace if they were to become competent and progressive.

## CONCLUSIONS

- Teaching Practice duration restricts the endorsement of effective micro-teaching in PGDE students in the Schools-Trainee teachers to be accorded the opportunity to work on identified weaknesses and strengths from one supervision slot to the next.
- Most schools are ill equipped for effective micro-teaching

- Teacher training institutions must have a fully equipped techno oriented teaching resource base so as to expose trainee teachers to microteaching cycles and the use of technology before they go on teaching practice in the process inculcating a positive attitude towards microteaching
- Teacher training institutions need to establish specific time slots for microteaching in line with the university semesters.

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