



**MICROTEACHING UNDERUTILIZATION:  
A MISSED KALEIDOSCOPIIC OPPORTUNITY FOR OPTIMIZING  
THE MERGING OF THEORETICAL EPISTEMOLOGIES TO  
PRAGMATIC PEDAGOGY IN TEACHER EDUCATION**

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**Abstract:**

Well planned and strategized microteaching could be an effective component in cultivating and grooming a competent, reflective and skilful teacher who has a kaleidoscopic perception and critical thought about pedagogy. Even though important, microteaching blueprint and all its comprehensive components in most microteaching exercises are not compulsively given adequate emphasis and action, leading to insufficient apprehension. Through inductive and deductive analysis of gathered data from published literature complemented by microteaching exercise observations the study found out four major challenges which hamper effective planning, implementation and management of competent based microteaching. These challenges include lack of dedication and inadequacies of time allocated to microteaching and deficits of applying blueprint microteaching pedagogical knowledge, limited subject content knowledge and deliberate application of theoretical concepts in practical teaching. Qualitative research methodologies, mainly the historical-pedagogical-philosophical anthropology criteria of analysing documents content gathered through purposive and snowball selection from internet and libraries, were used to find out microteaching challenges. Reviewed, analysed and synthesized literature revealed that most trainee teachers who undergo an extensive microteaching exercise display skilful and effective teaching practices. However, observations revealed that whilst microteaching was relevant, it was undermined, underutilised, given limited time, resources, inadequately prepared for whilst its mark did not contribute to the final teaching practice summative grade. In some cases it was observed that student teachers are not critically and sequentially exposed to all microteaching blueprint cycles. The study concluded that even though taken for granted microteaching was a pivotal strategy for making student teachers appreciate the historical development of pedagogical theory and practice, criticism, reflection, self-examination, peer-review, the discourse relation

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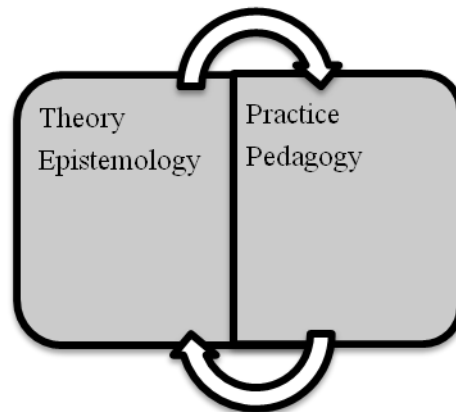
of merging theoretical epistemologies to pragmatic pedagogy and above all to be exposed to classroom realities as well as gain confidence. The study therefore, recommended adherence to microteaching cycles and adequate time allocation for unhurried microteaching practice.

**Keywords:** microteaching, teacher education, kaleidoscopic opportunity, theoretical epistemologies and pragmatic pedagogy

## 1. Introduction

Microteaching was born out of the frustration of the liberal arts graduates who felt they had challenges in merging theoretical epistemologies to pragmatic pedagogy (Allen and Ryan, 1969). 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 (Ananthakrishnan, 2018; Abenndrroth, Golzy and O'Connor, 2011). Teachers sent for teaching practice without temporary teaching and microteaching exposure can be observed failing to competently teach, and formatively help children master reading, writing, mathematics and to teach adequately science and other subjects in alignment to diverse theoretical epistemologies like discovery learning, collaborative learning, constructivism, poststructural and postconconceptual approaches that see the learner as an active participant and at the center of learning. Teaching in agreement to microteaching blueprint in the footsteps of philosophies of education from precolonial African philosophies to modern philosophies of Plato, Socrates to Dewey emphasize the need to create a teacher who is not only theory knowledgeable but has the ability to transfer pedagogical skills into practice. This should lead to various approaches in teacher education courses and the way microteaching exercise is done, equally shared time between theory and practice. Even if what to teach, how to teach is known, current Zimbabwe contemporary teacher education seem to have planning, management and implication challenges in making student teachers become competent teachers as expected by theoretical description of a skillful teacher.

Education history and in the history of teaching and learning there has always been a greater demand that teachers be held accountable for the achievement of their pupils. Several discussions with student teachers on teaching practice indicated that, student teachers, in turn, blamed teacher education, 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.



**Figure 1:** Describing the Reciprocal Relation between Theory and Practice

## 2. The Problem

The greatest challenge of achieving sustainable teaching is that student teachers are not thoroughly exposed to practical teaching exercises like microteaching and peer teaching in their pre-service training. Leading to theoretical philosophies of education not being integrated with the practical epistemological experiences, hence inadequate preparation of trainee students to be effective competent teachers. Concurrently, research (Carroll and McCulloch, 2014; Jarvis, 2005; Jordan, Charlie and Stack, 2008; Woolfolk, 2013) has proven that the psychology of practical teaching and learning is a challenge to most students without teaching practice experiences. Given such challenges through studies like this one, it becomes relevant to question the responsibilities of teacher education pre-service and in-service, to competently expose student teachers to comprehensive teaching experiences through a holistic microteaching exercise, currently criticized to be selective, lacking rigor and time dedication.



**Figure 2:** Key Components of Microteaching

Some scholars (Ghanaguru, Nair and Yong, 2013; Ismail, 2011; Ilhan, 2010; Ralph, 2014; Arsal, 2015) have viewed teacher education 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. However, the noted challenge has been that most microteaching exercises have been observed to be focusing mainly on document preparation, lesson planning and carrying out what is planned in a mock classroom. There is a challenge of microteaching exercises focusing on limited and selected microteaching circles, components, failing to be holistic and functional. One could argue that in most microteaching exercises there is lack of exposure to student teachers for diverse teaching and learning theories and practical approaches involved on how children uniquely learn. Student teachers are not given adequate opportunities to experiment on different theories in the microteaching exercise and be in a position to scientifically criticize their effectiveness. The inadequacies could lead to failure by most student teachers 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.

### 3. Theoretical Framework

This study borrows from a wide spectrum of theoretical influences found in the history of education and philosophy of education. But of much particular relevance to this study is the Functionalist perception of education. This study agrees to certain functionalist 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. Functionalist 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 (1947, 1954) was concerned with the effects of the decline of traditional rituals and community during the transition from traditional rituals to modern societies. In this study functionalism's implications are seen to be related in criticizing microteaching challenges in Zimbabwe today as a decline from its blueprint origins (an exercise emphasizing selected chosen few microteaching components instead of all components), not embracing both perennial traditions and also adopting to contemporary innovative critical pedagogies. Whitehead (Stumpf and Fieser, 2008:393) in agreement to Functionalism reacting against the analytic monistic type of thought, which assumed that facts exist in isolation from other facts, could be of additional value. His main theme 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 existence, microteaching and pedagogy.

Of much more significance about functionalism in this study is the bigger picture of Functionalism. Functionalism begin with a picture of society that stresses the interdependence of social system, it examines how well parts are integrated 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. So is the relevance and utility of theory to teaching practice, even though not immediately apparent to many people. 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 all, 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 the Functionalist perception of society-without under estimating the significance of the other, all components as relatively important and vital. The challenge in most microteaching exercises currently observed 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.

#### **4. 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 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 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 question at hand. Content analysis of primary and secondary sources was complemented and questioned using researcher microteaching observations 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.

## 5. Discussion

### 5.1 The Relevance and Utility of Theory

The relevance of theory to teaching practice is sometimes taken for granted. Some question whether practical people, such as teachers need theory? 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. Most student teachers 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. Experienced teacher geared to drill children to pass summative assessment, may feel he has no time for theory conceived as time wasting and non-examination oriented. Teachers need to appreciate that all professions cannot do without specialized body of knowledge and all its technical terminology or jargon as some 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.

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). 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. 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 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. This inadequacy 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.

## **5.2 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 developmental. 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. Therefore, through the microteaching exercise it is of paramount importance to train teachers who can compete with the rapidly changing socio-economic challenges.

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 (Hattie, 2009; Ayers, 2002; Bronfenbrinner, 2006; Zeichner, 1993; Slattery, 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, conclusion 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 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. 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. Scholars such as (Popkewitz, 2007; Ralph, 2014; 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 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.

## 6. Findings

Through the analysis of gathered literature in complementarity with observations and peer dialogical discourse 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. There is however, 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 blueprint plan in comparison to microteaching observations the researcher observed that in most cases current microteaching exercises are under resourced to support and accommodate effective microteaching implementation. More so, most microteaching supervisors do not focus on diverse microteaching cycles but focus on one or two microteaching components mainly document preparation and teaching what was planned for.
- In most cases 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 do 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 “college calendar and more important” activities and in some cases felt that microteaching was an additional burden on their part.
- 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**

| <b>Microteaching Benefits</b>          | <b>Microteaching Challenges</b>               |
|--|---|
| 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                    |

## 7. Conclusion

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 believe it enables student teachers to improve pedagogical skills in presentation and participation or to increase the range of teaching behaviors. Others 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 blueprint is always followed diligently. This study noted that even

though microteaching cycles and components are known, there are however, not always followed in some cases. Supervisors sometimes choose 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 exercised 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. 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 theories of education discipline, 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.

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