

Integrating Microteaching Theory + Practice in Concurrent and Consecutive Teacher Education Programmes: Benefits and Challenges.

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Abstract: Professionalism in teachers will be attained if student-teachers are exposed to best practices in content and process of teacher education curriculum to enable them acquire not only sound content knowledge but also pedagogic –content knowledge to become effective and efficient teachers. Since the acquisition of a repertoire of pedagogic skills is critical for professional standards to be attained, it becomes imperative for micro-teaching practical to be an integral part of teacher production. Unfortunately, the only course that provides these skills in a performance- based approach is lacking in the NUC – teacher education curriculum and the TRCN - PDE curriculum for teacher trainees. Microteaching practical is the only laboratory experienced approach that will provide these skills for both the concurrent and consecutive programmes. The purpose of this study therefore, is to identify the benefits and challenges of microteaching theory and practice in the teacher education programme. It further recommends that: the NUC/TRCN-PDE teacher education curricula should be reviewed in line with current best practices in teacher education.

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Introduction

The term microteaching has been in existence for over half a century and has been used for the training teachers. Microteaching as utilized has contributed towards the professional development of pre-service and in-service teachers. Brown (1978), posits that teaching has repertoire of skills and if these cannot be identified and taught then many teacher educators are guilty of a huge confidence trick. Effectiveness and efficiency in teaching is achieved through application of systematic approach to learning to teach because, teaching is a complex task therefore requires that the first experience be simplified, organized and controlled.

In the same vein, Asiabaka and Emenalo (2011) posit that teacher education institution have no moral justification to send student-teachers to schools for teaching practice when they have not mastered the skills of teaching through learning to teach. This is true because theorizing in teacher education programme is not enough to give answers to “how best” teachers are be prepared for teaching profession which led to the emergence of microteaching in teacher education.

Furthermore, professions like medicine, law, engineering, have their specific skills that are acquired before the students are allowed to practice or else, obvious damage will be done to the profession. Teaching as a profession has specified skills and the

student teachers are expected to acquire these repertoires of teaching skills together with the rules involved in the three constituents of teacher training programmes of Planning, Performance and Perception or else, the churned-out with those critical skills required of teachers; which invariably will affect their classroom practice. Nzewi (1988) postulates that, a teacher education programme that exposes the student to theoretical work only, before taking them to practice teaching outright in the classroom is faulty because, it is a smack of lacks professional incompetence. In other words, laboratory experience is crucial in building the competence of teacher trainees for teaching. Reflecting on the importance building teachers’ competence for effective teaching, Ukeje (2002) admits, that it is upon the teachers’ quality, effectiveness, efficiency and dedication that the quality of the educative process and the educational system depends. This indicates that quality of the teacher education programme determines the quality of learning that goes on in the educational system, since the different levels of education are systemic.

It has also been observed that whereas the number of students admitted for the NCE Programme where microteaching theory and practice are courses taught keeps thinning down, the number of students admitted under the 4year Education/degree and PGDE- NUC programmes and the TRCN PDE

programme continue to increase in spite of their being trained traditionally through teacher observation and school experience approaches that were replaced half a century ago with microteaching. Ifegbo and Emenyonu (2006) identified a gap in the B.Ed degree programme because, the National University Commission Bed degree and PGDE programmes does not provide any fertile ground for effective microteaching practical or any other laboratory experienced programme for the trainee- teachers to integrate theory with practice before the field experience proper. This corroborates with Nzewi (1988) who faulted the absence of microteaching in teacher production because, effective teaching requires effective mastering of teaching act through actual practice of the “specific things” that make for effective teaching in a controlled and observed environment before the actual classroom practice during field experience.

Furthermore, TRCN minimum standard (2012, p.29) captured a glimpse of microteaching in its course PDE 520.3: Instructional Design and Methods thus; microteaching; the concepts and process, elements of microteaching, re-teach, set induction reinforcement non- verbal communication, questioning skills etc strategies. Since the course outline is not comprehensive, it does not provide the student teachers with sound knowledge of the teaching skills expected of teachers and the absence of the laboratory experience that would have enabled them to practice and hone the skills as professional makes it obviously difficult for them to teach effectively. In the light of the above, the question is since teaching skills acquired through laboratory experience are crucial in teacher effectiveness why are they included in the teacher education curriculum of the NUC and the TRCN?

Emergence of Microteaching in Teacher Education in Nigeria

Ifegbo (2012) affirms that microteaching emerged in the educational scene in the early and mid-1960s when Allen and his colleagues from the Stanford University developed a training programme aimed at improving the effectiveness and efficiency of teachers. Nzewi (1988) adds that the Secondary Teacher Education Programme (STEP) at Stanford University launched a new collaborative experience known as “Demonstration teaching” Allen and his group who spearheaded the laboratory experience used student-teachers who perceived themselves as teachers and observations of their teaching performance. After the recordings were analyzed and discussed those specific skills they exhibited that made for effective teachers were identified and isolated. The student teachers were asked to practice each of the skills one after the other within a period of

time in the presence of supervisors for constructive criticisms followed by a feedback and continuous practicing of a skill until it is mastered. This approach Allen and his group referred to as “microteaching”.

In Nigeria, the history of micro-teaching is traceable to Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education Owerri, now a Federal College of Education. Chimezie (2000) recorded that this programme started in the College around 1974 during the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) report on their visitation to the College in the early 70s. However, Alvan Ikoku College of Education was adopted as an innovative institution in Africa due to its place in the use of Microteaching for training quality teachers.

In 1973, the educational technology/microteaching laboratory was equipped by the UNESCO that also sent their foreign staff to work with some Nigerian staff and in 1976 UNESCO withdrew its staff because the UNDP/UNESCO technical assistance for Eastern Nigeria expired. The microteaching was managed by some lecturers in the institution that were trained in Nigeria and Outside the country.

Ohuche and Izuwah (1985) confirmed that AICE was a Centre of Excellence for teacher education programme in Nigeria and because of the quality of the output of the College, there was a high demand for the graduates of the College then. These practice spread from AICE to other Colleges of Education and Universities in the country. In fact AICE is known in the map of Africa because of this single programme, microteaching and has always been acknowledge as the primus inter pares among other teacher education institutions in this country and in Africa as a whole.

Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education (AIFCE) was taken over by the Federal Government in 2007 and in 2013, the Federal government chose the institutions as among the two institutions in Nigeria where modern microteaching laboratory will be build and the building complex is under construction. Micro-teaching has continued to be recommended and acknowledge in training and programme that is why even in medicine and other professions, it has been found relevant effective. Sujatha (2011), opines that as the conventional approaches to teaching medical teachers to acquire the skills involved in teaching failed, microteaching has been adopted as a suitable technique that has come to replace conventional “trial by error” and learning by observation approaches. Microteaching plays a significant role in teacher education programme, Chatzidimou (2011) believes that the middle aged educational microteaching is still in fashion while Anthakrishnan (2012) adds that

microteaching which was developed by Allen and his group in the late sixties has contributed towards improving and enhancing medical teacher's teaching skills. Adedapo (2013) postulates that several approaches through which pre-service teachers are provided with practical experience during their training notwithstanding, Microteaching seems to have great potentials because it can provide pre-service teachers with opportunity to try their theoretical information in a practical settings, which will enhance their confidence in their ability to teach can increase. Fortunately, National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) minimum standard (2013) adopted microteaching theory as pre-requisite for microteaching practical and as a yardstick for student-teachers participation in teaching practice exercise, which underscores the importance of microteaching experience. Unfortunately, National University Commission (NUC) and Teachers' Registration Council of Nigeria PDE minimum standards does not pay much attention to microteaching theory and practical in spite of the larger populations of student- teachers that are admitted on yearly bases across the institutions where the programmes are run. Obanya (2004), posits that gone is the past when all that was required of a teacher was subject matter knowledge and supporting this Simmons (2010), notes that effective teaching in the 21st century requires more than a basic understanding of educational theory and classroom management.

Microteaching admittedly added to the cognitive and affective skills of teaching and the psychomotor skills of practicing the "specific things" that make for effective teaching that are used to equip the student-teachers professionally, and teachers in general for qualitative and quantitative teaching and learning.

Microteaching theory + practical approaches in teacher education programme cannot be replaced because, since its emergence in teacher education programme, it has been found effective and has equally added new a dimension to the teaching profession. It is believed that microteaching contributes towards teaching as a profession because of the repertoires of teaching skills that are acquired from microteaching theory + practical.

Benefits of Microteaching in Teacher Education Programme

To Teacher Education

The benefits of microteaching in the teacher education programme are numerous. Microteaching has the professional ingredients of teaching because when fully practiced, it is the only course that equips the intent with knowledge and performance-based approaches for acquisition of professional

competencies thus: knowledge, skills and abilities for teacher professionalism Microteaching practical and theory knowledge is very vital in all the teacher training programmes across the universities and colleges where teachers are trained most importantly to the Postgraduate course of the TRCN (Professional Diploma in Education).

Microteaching has contributed in solving the problems encountered with the traditional teacher education training programme that was full of trial and errors and learning on the training that lacked professional competencies.

To Student Teachers:

Microteaching is a clinical approach and through theory and practice, the pre-service teachers acquire repertoire of teaching skills, also, the use of immediate knowledge of feedback (IKOF) that is constructive helps to correct students and allows them to go through the microteaching cycle for perfection since practice makes perfect.

Microteaching exposes student-teachers to acquire the three basic components of teacher education namely cognitive, psychomotor and affective domain (Adedapo, 2013 ; Nzewi, 1988).

It enables the student teacher to practice in a safe environment that is controlled and this helps them to have confidence in their teaching abilities and phobia is eliminated as they simulate with their peers.

With the use of perceptual, audio and symbolic modes of microteaching, student-teachers learning style preference are attended to and every learner benefits as these variables take care of Visual Auditory and kinesthetic (VAK) learners.

To Teacher Educators:

It encourages collaboration among teacher educators and student-teachers as they collaboratively observe and critique constructively, the student-teachers are exposed to best practices.

Teacher educators also exchange ideas as they interact with one another in the microteaching laboratory and it exposes them to acquire more knowledge as how best to develop professionally.

Teacher educator's assessment is dynamics and two way as both the supervisor and supervisees dialogue as they discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the supervisees utilizing the CCTV and the video tapes.

Teacher educators are able to produce functional teachers who teach effectively and efficiently, utilizing the teaching skills during the teaching practice exercise and beyond.

To learners:

Microteaching replaced the traditional approach of teacher observation and school experience that made learners in the classroom to be used in the classroom during teaching practice to

learn how to teach as they try to get the learners learn at the same time.

Learners enjoy student-teachers whose teaching approaches/ acts have been tested and approved other than experiencing student teachers who want to use them to learn how to teach and also teach them to learn.

Challenges:

A lot of challenges face the integration of microteaching in the concurrent and consecutive teacher education programmes among such challenges are:

1. Absence of microteaching as a course in the NUC /PDE minimum standards.
2. Infrastructural problems where the microteaching laboratories are not available and the ones available are not adequate furnished and/or not fully utilized due to lack of expertise
3. The nature of training some teacher educators were exposed to denied them the expertise they need to effectively supervise microteaching.

Strategies for Integrating Microteaching (Theory + Practice) in Concurrent and Consecutive Teacher Education Programmes.

The following strategies should be adopted for effective integration of Microteaching theory and practical in teacher education programmes across the institutions where teachers are trained:

The course outline should distinctly discuss Microteaching theory and practical in details, spelling out the theory and the practical aspects for the student teachers to effectively and efficiently master and practice the teaching skills both theoretically and practically.

The microteaching Laboratories should be fully equipped with the modern technologies that are in use for microteaching so as to provide the student-teachers with the 21st century teaching and learning skills.

The NCCE minimum standard concerning Microteaching should be replicated in the NUC and PDE minimum standard if the recipients should compete favorably with the NCE students in the teaching profession.

Conclusion :

Awotua (2002) citing Clark and Starr (1990) affirms that teaching is an attempt to help people acquire some skills, attitudes, knowledge, ideas and appreciation. In the teacher education context, the student- teacher are taught the art and science of teaching whereby she/he is expected to acquire knowledge of the content, pedagogy but where the content is taught and acquired but the pedagogical

skills are neglected and not taught, effective and efficient lesson delivery will be hampered. It is in the light of this that student –teachers in all educational levels(concurrent and consecution) need to be exposed to microteaching theory and practical to enable them acquire repertoire of teaching skills that will equip and empower them to behave professionally in the classroom.

Recommendation:

Based on the above conclusion, the following recommendations are made

- Teacher educators should be re-tooled and re-trained to enable them supervise effectively, microteaching in the laboratory.
- National University Commission (NUC) and Teachers' Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) should increase the scope of microteaching content in their programmes, in line with best practices in teacher production.
- Microteaching laboratories should be established in all the faculties of education, colleges of education and institutes of education for proper teaching skill acquisition by both concurrent and consecutive student teachers
- The TRCN and other regulatory bodies involved in the production of teachers should ensure that the professional skills of teaching are fully acquired by members of teaching profession.

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