Annals of Human and Social Sciences
www.ahss.org.pk

RESEARCH PAPER

Microteaching in Pakistan: Exploring Challenges, Benefits and Recommendations through the Lenses of Microteaching Supervisors

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ABSTRACT

The focus of this study was to explore the challenges and benefits of microteaching through the lenses of microteaching supervisors, and to give recommendations for its improvement. This qualitative study gathered data from eight microteaching supervisors at one public sector university in Pakistan using semi-structured interviews. The main issues reported by the participants were time management, improper lesson planning, and a lack of proper training and protocols for microteaching; while deepening prospective teachers' understanding, improving their behaviors, developing specific skills, getting immediate feedback, and learning from others were its key benefits. The study recommends incorporating microteaching into teaching practice, especially during its initial stages. It also suggests moving toward more technology-infused versions such as microteaching 2.0, developing lesson plans more carefully for microteaching, and providing specific training for the supervisors so that they can utilize it more effectively to prepare prospective teachers for their professional careers.

Keywords: Microteaching, Teacher Education, Teaching Practice, Supervisors, Pakistan

Introduction

Despite all the technological innovations and advancements in education, teachers still play a crucial role in imparting education (Mahini et al., 2012). A self-motivated teacher remains abreast with modern pedagogical approaches, incorporates technology, and can motivate and engage the students to facilitate them in becoming independent learners who can cope with the diverse challenges of this fast-evolving, technology-infused world (Malik et al., 2023; Warner & Malik, 2024).

Although teachers' self-learning and in-service training are also of paramount importance (Louws et al., 2017; Osamwonyi, 2016); pre-service teacher education plays a vital role in preparing them theoretically and practically for the challenges of their professional journeys (Malik et al., 2023). As a result, teacher education programs remain an area of continuous interest, and attention around the globe (Ell et al., 2019; Malik et al., 2022a). Practical and dynamic teacher training programs not only play a crucial role in their selection and retention (Maguire, 2022); but also help prepare classroom-ready graduates who can meet diverse challenges in and out of the classrooms (Ledger & Fischetti, 2020).

Literature Review

Realizing the role and importance of teaching practice, various methods and techniques have been developed and employed over the decades to deliver it for different objectives and contexts. One of them is microteaching: a scaled-down version of teaching practice that usually involves a lesser number of students, and is carried out for a shorter

period (Cooper & Allen, 1970; Malik et al., 2022a). It can be employed in both face-to-face and online contexts.

It was first conceptualized at Stanford University in the early 1960s and continues to be used especially in Initial Teacher Education programs (Allen & Clark, 1967; Holstein et al., 2022). Its epistemological ground can be traced back to the experiential-based-situated learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Many teacher training programs are based on the principles of microteaching and reflections. Some believe that it can also predict a prospective teacher's future classroom performance accurately. (Cooper & Allen,1970).

Microteaching can play an important role in helping prospective teachers in inculcating essential teaching skills (Asregid et al., 2023). Malik et al. (2022a) believe that microteaching "provides the teachers with opportunities to scale up their teaching and pedagogical skills" (p. 73).

Different forms of microteaching have been practiced in teacher training programs. However, their main focus is on developing prospective teachers to practice lesson planning, improving classroom and resource management, and enhancing communication skills (Ledger & Fischetti, 2020; Richard, 2021).

Fischetti et al. (2022) said that the benefits of microteaching are at times overlooked. Heavy teacher education curricula and lack of time lead institutions to abandon microteaching in teacher education programs. He argued that prospective teachers practicing their teaching skills with a small group of students, focusing on specific objectives, and getting real-time feedback on content and pedagogy were invaluable for their professional learning and success. As a result, it helps prospective teachers prepare for future employment and challenges (Maguire, 2022).

Remesh (2013) noted that microteaching strategies can be adopted across different disciplines and contexts to train the graduates for real-life experiences. It is, thus, seen within a role-playing context for prompt reflections of prospective teachers and peers which enriches the insights and skills (Flora, 2023).

The current structure of teaching practice in which prospective teachers are expected to visit schools and practice their teaching skills under the supervision of a seasoned teacher is similar to putting novice teachers in a real setting without proper training and prior experience (Ledger & Fischetti, 2020). This is not ideal for them as it results in intimidation, confusion, and low self-esteem. Additionally, prospective teachers may also discover limited content knowledge proficiency of the subject matter that they will teach in real classrooms (Regan et al., 2019).

Teaching practice has been influenced by technological and pedagogical innovations (Malik et al., 2023). Microteaching has also evolved over the years with innovations such as Microteaching 2.0 (Ledger & Fischetti, 2020) and MTLS- Microteaching Lesson Study (Boz and Belge-Can, 2020). These innovations have kept microteaching abreast of the technology-infused world. Technology is also playing a significant role in this area with the introduction of simulation and online virtual classrooms such as Second Life (Gregory & Masters, 2012), and simSchool (Tyler-Wood et al., 2017). More recently Human In The Loop (HITL) simulated technologies by TeachLivE™ and Mursion™ have furthered these concepts (Dieker et al., 2014; Ledger et al., 2020).

Whereas technology and digitalization have been incorporated into teacher education and training for a long time in developed countries; the same cannot be said about many developing countries (Malik et al., 2023; Nkambule & Mukeredzi, 2017). Pakistan, being a developing country, has a similar history with technology in education lagging behind the developed nations (Malik et al., 2022b). Although microteaching was first

introduced in the 1960s (Cooper & Allen, 1970), it was not until the time of COVID-19 that it started to be commonly used in Pakistan (Malik et al., 2022a). In 2014 Bashir et al. carried out a study about four University of Education campuses in Pakistan. They found that "micro teaching and team teaching were not being used at any campus for the training of prospective teachers" (p. 95). As a result, studies about microteaching in Pakistan are also few and far between.

One of the first studies about microteaching was conducted by Ghafoor et al. in 2012. The study found that the participants considered microteaching an essential tool for improving the quality of teacher education and training in Pakistan. Laghari et al. (2021) conducted a qualitative study about microteaching in Pakistan. The study revealed that teaching outcomes were improved with the use of microteaching. It also suggested incorporating microteaching into the teacher education programs in the country.

Malik et al. (2022a) conducted a quantitative study about microteaching at an online university in Pakistan. Using a self-developed QSPEM questionnaire, the study found that "despite microteaching being an unknown concept for almost half of the participants, they [online university students] found it very helpful and effective in honing their pedagogical and presentation skills". The study recommended continue using microteaching even after COVID-19. Another study by Malik et al. (2023) found microteaching 2.0 as one of the four online teaching practice approaches that Pakistani universities employed during COVID-19.

Although some studies about microteaching in Pakistan have been conducted, many of them are about prospective teachers. Realizing this gap, this qualitative study has been carried out about microteaching supervisors. As a result, it is expected to be a significant addition to the existing literature about microteaching in Pakistan.

Material and Methods

Research Method and Approach

This study uses qualitative research method. Qualitative research method was selected as it helps in gathering in-depth and rich data (Patton, 2002). Also, when the issue is relatively unknown and less explored, qualitative research method is more suitable. Although there have been few studies about microteaching in Pakistan, those focusing on microteaching supervisors are almost quite rare. Based on the aforementioned reasons, qualitative research method was employed. Within the qualitative research method, basic interpretive study approach was selected.

Participants' Characteristics and Sampling Strategy

Although several universities started using microteaching during COVID-19 (Malik et al., 2022a; Malik et al., 2023), many abandoned it after the pandemic. Only a few universities in Pakistan were using microteaching at the time of data collection. Consequently, we decided to focus on one such public-sector university for this study.

Purposive sampling was chosen to select the participants. We decided to add two inclusion criteria for selecting the participants a) they must be teaching in that university for at least one year and b) they must have supervised microteaching for at least one semester.

In qualitative research, sample size is not pre-determined. Instead, it is data saturation that determines the sample size (Patton, 2002). We realized that the data saturation was achieved after the sixth interview; however, we decided to conduct two more interviews to ensure it. As a result, data was gathered from eight participants.

Tool Development and Data Collection

Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data from the participants. Unlike structured interviews, they help collect in-depth data and provide space for further probing (Patton, 2002). Based on the research objectives, an interview guide was developed with five main questions. That interview guide with the research objectives was sent to three experts in the field of teacher education for content analysis. Some changes in the interview guide were made as per their responses. Supplementary questions were asked when and where needed.

Based on the convenience and choice of the participants, both face-to-face and online interviewing techniques were employed. This process took almost one month.

Data Analysis Techniques

First, all the interviews were transcribed. We used an online tool for data transcription. Then each transcription was verified by two of us to ensure accuracy and validity. Miles and Huberman's (2004) framework for qualitative data analysis was used for it. It involves reading the data repeatedly for a clear idea, arranging and grouping the data, data reduction, coding, and categorization.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are of paramount importance in research, especially when the human population is involved. Based on the standard research protocols, we ensured four principles of research ethics i.e. anonymity, confidentiality, voluntary participation, and non-maleficence.

Results and Discussion

Participants' Information

All eight participants were females and had been teaching at the university for at least one year. They had been supervising microteaching for at least six months. Four of them were PhDs while the rest were M.Phil degree holders. Further details can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1
Participants' Information

Pseudonym	Gender	Designation	Highest Qualification	Experience in the University	Experience as Microteaching Supervisor
Kanwal	Female	Lecturer	M.Phil.	2 years	1 year
Sanam	Female	Lecturer	M.Phil.	5 years	1.5 years
Huma	Female	Lecturer	Ph.D.	1.5 years	6 months
Saba	Female	Lecturer	Ph.D.	2 years	1 year
Samar	Female	Assistant professor	Ph.D.	1 year	6 months
Sibra	Female	Lecturer	M.Phil.	2 years	1 year
Nain	Female	Lecturer	M.Phil.	1 year	6 years
Saima	Female	Lecturer	Ph.D.	1 year	6 months

Differences between Conventional Teaching Practice and Microteaching

First of all, the participants were asked to describe the differences between conventional teaching practice and microteaching. The participants said that conventional teaching practice was more "hectic" and also "wasted a lot of time" (Nain). They also said that in microteaching, they could focus on specific objectives with specific activities, giving

immediate and specific feedback; while in the conventional teaching practice method, it was more general with delayed feedback. Literature also points out focusing on specific activities, objectives, and immediate feedback as the core qualities and strengths of microteaching (Cooper & Allen, 1970; Maguire, 2022). However, some of them pointed out that due to "its lack of holistic approach" (Samar), it was not suitable to use microteaching alone for teaching practice.

Many participants said that the best strategy would be to combine microteaching with conventional teaching practice, rather than a separate element. Multiple studies have also suggested blending microteaching with conventional teaching practice to maximize the effectiveness of the two (Laghari et al., 2021; Malik et al., 2022a). They suggested that blending the two would produce the best results. Kanwal also suggested the same, saying that microteaching should be utilized during the initial stages of teaching practice.

"It is not separate. I mean, alone [microteaching is] not effective. I think universities should combine them. Initially, microteaching for specific tasks and objectives, then conventional teaching practice for a holistic approach. In this way, first students learn those specific skills and then use them in an overall, comprehensive classroom setting."

Their suggestion that microteaching be used for the initial teaching practice components also aligns with the literature. Microteaching is considered an important element of the initial teacher training program (Holstein et al., 2022), further reinforcing the argument.

Issues and Challenges with Microteaching

The participants were then asked about the issues and challenges that they faced as microteaching supervisors. The main issues and challenges were time management, lesson planning, and proper training and protocols for microteaching.

The first issue mentioned by the participants was about time management. Sibra said that with a large number of students, microteaching was hard to manage. The fact that microteaching was supposed to be carried out in small groups (Cooper & Allen, 1970; Maguire, 2022) made it difficult when the number of students was large. The participants said that the number put them in a dilemma. If the group size was large, it would be difficult to manage; but if they reduce the group size, there would be too many groups to manage. They also reported issues with lesson plan preparations in microteaching. In a study by Malik et al. (2022a), prospective teachers also said the lesson plans in microteaching consumed too much time.

Another issue that was pointed out by the participants was the lack of specific training and procedures for microteaching. Whereas there are specific training and workshops for pedagogy and research, such training and workshops are not very common for teaching practice supervisors (Malik et al., 2023; Sethusha, 2014). For microteaching which is even more specific and unique, the need for such training is even increased; however, the participants did not report any formal training for supervising microteaching.

Benefits and Advantages of Microteaching

The next question was about the benefits and advantages of microteaching that the participants observed as microteaching supervisors. Deepening prospective teachers' understanding, modifying their behaviors, giving immediate and more specific feedback, learning from others' experiences, and developing specific skills were key benefits and advantages reported by them.

The participants believed that microteaching deepened the prospective teachers' understanding and expertise about different aspects of the teaching-learning process. Saima said that as microteaching focused on some specific skill(s), it was better suited to enrich that ability or skill. Preparing prospective teachers for specific skills has been one of the key qualities of microteaching (Cooper & Allen, 1970). It also helps in getting more specific and immediate feedback (Maguire, 2022; Malik et al., 2022a). Those two qualities help prospective teachers in getting ready for their professional life.

Working in small groups with frequent interactions and feedback (not only from the microteaching supervisors, but also from other fellow prospective teachers), not only helps the prospective teachers in learning from each other, but also in improving their human behavior and interpersonal skills (Ralph, 2014). The participants also pointed it out, saying it also helped improve teamwork and interpersonal understanding among the prospective teachers.

Ways to improve Microteaching

Finally, the participants were asked to give recommendations to improve microteaching. They recommended providing training to microteaching supervisors, incorporating new technologies, and designing microteaching lessons systematically.

One suggestion that was given by all the participants was to provide proper training for microteaching supervisors. They emphasized the fact that microteaching was very unique, and came with specific challenges and issues. Normal training or even teaching practice workshops were inadequate to meet them. The literature also says that frequent and specific training workshops for microteaching supervisors were essential for effective microteaching (Malik et al., 2022a).

The second suggestion was about incorporating new technologies and using more advanced microteaching approaches such as microteaching 2.0 and Human In the Loop. Microteaching 2.0 and Human In the Loop are already being employed for teaching practice and teachers' training (Dieker et al., 2014; Ledger & Fischetti, 2020), and the participants suggested incorporating them for this technology-infused era.

The last suggestion was about more systematic lesson planning for microteaching. The participants said that microteaching should move from single-objective to multiple-objective ones (preferably two to three). In this way, prospective teachers would first carry out single-objective microteaching, and then move on to more complex multi-objectives ones. They also suggested making microteaching an initial component of teaching practice so that prospective teachers can move from simple, more focused activities to more complex and holistic ones. Blending microteaching with conventional teaching practice has also been recommended in the literature (Laghari et al., 2021; Malik et al., 2022a).

Conclusion

Microteaching is a very effective for developing and refining pedagogical skills among prospective teachers. In many developed countries, it has been used effectively for over fifty years. However, it is a pity that whereas many universities in Pakistan opted for it during Covid-19, most of them shunned it altogether after it.

In conclusion, this study highlights the role and importance of microteaching in preparing prospective teachers for their future professional challenges, the challenges that microteaching supervisors face in its effective implementations, and the benefits that it brings with it. Microteaching should be effectively integrated into the conventional teaching practice program to improve its effectiveness. In this way, teaching practice can flow from smaller, more simplistic, and focused activities (based on microteaching) to larger, more

complex, and holistic ones (based on conventional teaching practice); thus improving the quality of teaching practice, teacher education and the teachers in Pakistan.

Recommendations

This study strongly recommends blending microteaching into the existing teaching practice modules especially during the initial stages. In this way, prospective teachers can learn and progress more effectively. Keeping in mind the fast infusion of technology in the teaching-learning process and the emerging challenges of the current era, it is also suggested to move toward more technology-based approaches such as microteaching 2.0 and HITL. Moreover, lesson plans should be designed more carefully, understanding the unique nature of microteaching, and specialized trainings be provided to microteaching supervisors so that they can perform their duties more effectively.

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