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## Student-Teachers' Experiences of Microteaching on an Economics Methods Course

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### Abstract

Microteaching is a technique used in the training of student teachers worldwide. This study explores student teachers' experiences of microteaching on an Economics methodology course at the School of Education Makerere University in Uganda. The sample included 28 student teachers who had conducted microteaching during the academic years 2015-2016 and 2016-2017. Data were collected using individual interviews, document analysis and focus group discussions; and analyzed using content analysis. The study found microteaching to be valuable to Economics student teachers in improving their skills in lesson planning, communication, content knowledge, use of teaching aids, classroom organization, and management. Microteaching was however not so effective in the area of student assessment.

**Keywords:** *Microteaching, student teachers' experiences, Economics methods*

### Introduction

Microteaching can be defined "as a means of practice that enables students of methodology courses to teach a lesson to other class members so that they can get some experience in lesson planning and putting what is planned into effect" (Bilger, 2017, p. 139). There is agreement among researchers of the effectiveness of microteaching in pre- and in-service teachers' professional development (e.g., Atavet al, 2014; Godek, 2016; Mahmud and Rawshon, 2013). For instance, student teachers can acquire and improve their teaching skills (e.g., Benton-Kupper, 2001; Bilen, 2015). They can learn about their peers' teaching styles (e.g., Godek, 2016; Wilkinson, 1996). They can also learn about their roles as teachers (e.g., Hawkey, 1995; Wilkinson, 1996).

Although studies on microteaching abound in the literature (e.g., Bidyuk, 2017; Bulut, 2016; Majoni, 2017; Ng, 2017; Onwuagbokeet al, 2017; Otsupius, 2014; Shaw, 2017; Tuluce and Cecen, 2018; Unlu, 2018; Yan and He, 2017; Zhouet al, 2017), little is known about student teachers' experiences of microteaching in the Ugandan context. In addition, there is a paucity of data on student teachers' experiences of micro teaching in Economics, though studies in other subjects exist (e.g., Agbayahoun, 2017; Basturk, 2016; Bilen, 2015; Bilger, 2017; Bidyuk, 2017; Godek, 2016; Sen, 2010; Tuluce and Cecen, 2018; Unlu, 2018; Yan and He, 2017; Yangin and Asik, 2015). This study aims to fill this void in the literature by exploring student teachers' experiences of microteaching on an Economics Methods course at the School of Education Makerere University in Uganda. The main

objective is to improve the training of Economics student teachers through their own reflections and experiences of microteaching.

## **Literature Review**

### **1. Lesson planning**

The art of teaching is manifested in microteaching when student teachers constantly practice producing quality lesson plans which guide them to plan and conduct their lessons (Ghanaguru et al, 2013). A study by Femandez (2010) on microteaching among Japanese prospective teachers found that pre-and post-lesson plans showed their knowledge of teaching. Similarly, a study by Basturk (2016) on the effectiveness of microteaching among mathematics pre-service teachers in Turkey found that they exhibited the best performances in preparation for teaching. Another study by Sa'ad et al. (2015) among agricultural education students in Nigeria found that 92% of the respondents admitted that microteaching assisted them in preparing good lesson plans.

### **2. Student teachers' communication**

Studies have shown that microteaching improves student teachers' communication competencies (e.g., Atav et al, 2014; Bakir, 2014; Bilen, 2015). A study by Atav et al. (2014) among biology pre-service teachers at Hacettepe University in Turkey found that microteaching helped trainees to develop non-verbal and verbal communication skills. Similarly, a study by Sen (2010) among pre-service physics teachers at Hacettepe University in Turkey found that microteaching helped in improving their communication. Another study by Bilen (2015) among mathematics teacher candidates on the "Special Methods II" course at the Akdeniz University in Turkey found that microteaching helped teacher candidates to be cautious about their voice tone and sentence structure.

### **3. Content knowledge**

Research has shown that microteaching has an effect on student teachers' subject matter knowledge. A study by Cobilla (2014) at the Southern Leyte state university in the Philippines found that the pre-service teachers who had conducted microteaching had excellent subject matter knowledge. Similarly, a study by Godek (2016) among science teacher trainees in a Turkish state university found that microteaching contributed to their subject matter knowledge since they realized the importance of mastery of subject matter and their own weaknesses in content. Another study by Harte and Reitano (2015) among geography pre-service teachers at a university in southern Queensland Australia found that microteaching had a positive effect on their confidence level in teaching geographical skills.

### **4. Use of teaching aids**

Microteaching helps to improve student teachers' use of teaching aids. A study by Sa'ad et al. (2015) among undergraduate agricultural education students in Azare Nigeria found that 92% of the respondents agreed that microteaching assisted them in selecting and using proper instructional materials. Similarly, a study by Basturk (2016) investigating the effectiveness of microteaching among pre-service mathematics primary teachers at Sinop University in Turkey found that they were prepared to teach well and willing to support their teaching by visual aids and concrete materials. Another study by Kavanoz and Yuksel (2010) investigating the influence of peer teaching on trainee teacher development among pre-service English teachers in Turkey found that they had gained skills in the use of teaching aids.

### **5. Classroom organization and management**

Classroom organization and management is one of the teacher skills student teachers can develop during microteaching sessions. A study by Sa'ad et al. (2015) among undergraduate agricultural education students in Azare Nigeria found that 90% of the respondents acknowledged that

microteaching assisted them in managing their classes well. Similarly, a study by Atav et al. (2014) among pre-service biology students in Turkey found that microteaching contributed to trainee teachers' classroom management skills. Another study by Uzun (2012) among environmental education pre-service teachers at Aksaray University in Turkey found that their worries of not knowing how to respond to a student causing trouble during the lesson and not managing the class decreased greatly after the microteaching technique. In contrast, Basturk's (2016) study among mathematics pre-service primary teachers in Turkey did not find them to be so successful in classroom management.

## 6. Assessment

Some studies have found that microteaching improves student teachers' assessment techniques. For instance, a study by Bakir (2014) found that microteaching had a significant effect on pre-service science teachers' skill in concluding the lesson. In contrast, a study by Basturk (2016) among mathematics pre-service primary teachers in Turkey found that they performed poorly with respect to assessment. Similarly, a study by Basturk and Donmez (2011) in Turkey among secondary school pre-service teachers of mathematics found their knowledge of assessment to be limited, consisting of only traditional assessment methods like oral and written examinations. Other studies among pre-service teachers in Turkey (e.g., Canbazoglu, 2008; Gelbal and Kelecioglu, 2007) also found the same results.

## Methodology

The study employed a qualitative research design. Twenty-eight (28) student-teachers on the Economics Methods course for the academic years 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 participated in the study. All the 28 student-teachers were on the evening program of the Bachelor of Arts with Education degree. Seventeen were male and eleven were female. Each student teacher was required to draw a scheme of work for 12 weeks, and then extract a lesson plan and teach it for 20 minutes. While each student teacher taught, the peers and instructor acted as supervisors and gave feedback after the microteaching session.

### *Data collection methods*

#### 1. Focus group discussions

The study used three focus group discussions: X, Y, and Z to explore student teachers' experiences of microteaching on the Economics Methods course. Data was collected during the last lecture of the course. In the lecture, the student teachers were divided into three groups to form the discussion groups. The discussions were conducted using a focus group discussion guide. The guiding questions probed the effectiveness of microteaching in student teacher's lesson planning, communication, content knowledge, use of teaching aids, classroom organization and management, and assessment. Each group presented to the class at the end of the discussions. The focus group discussions were audio-taped and later transcribed.

#### 2. Individual interviews

Of the 28 student teachers, 6 were selected for the individual interviews. The aim of the interviews was to elicit student teacher's personal reflections and experiences of microteaching. This provided in-depth information about each student teacher's experiences. The information was useful in supplementing the data from the focus group discussions.

#### 3. Document analysis

The student teachers' schemes of work and lesson plans were analyzed. The analysis sought to identify student teachers' skill in lesson preparation and planning, particularly in drawing the lesson plans and the scheme of work.

### *Data analysis*

Data were analyzed using content analysis. Hsieh and Shannon (2005) define content analysis as “a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns” (p. 1278). Emerging themes and patterns were coded from the focus group discussion transcripts. The data from the personal interviews and document analysis was used to augment the data from the focus group discussions.

## **Findings and Discussion**

### *Lesson planning*

Focus group discussion reports for groups X, Y, and Z revealed that microteaching helped student teachers gain and practice skills in drawing a lesson plan and a scheme of work. Document analysis of student teachers’ schemes of work and lesson plans indicated that they had been drawn using the recommended formats. Regarding the contribution of microteaching to student teachers’ skill in lesson planning, one interview participant remarked thus: “*It was my first time to draw a scheme of work and a lesson plan on the topic national income. I had to formulate the objectives, think about the teaching aids and methods ...*” (P2). Another interview participant explained how microteaching had helped him to get ideas from his peers about the teaching aids and methods to use while teaching certain topics in Economics (P5). These findings were in line with earlier studies such as Basturk (2016), Fernandez (2010), Majoni (2017) and Sa’ad et al. (2015), who found that microteaching helped student teachers to gain skill in lesson planning.

### *Student teacher’s communication*

Reports from focus group discussions X, Y, and Z revealed that Economics student teachers gained skill in verbal and non-verbal communication during microteaching sessions. One student teacher who participated in the individual interviews elaborated thus: “*Microteaching improved my communication skills as a teacher. Basing on the comments I received from my peers and the lecturer, I learned to maintain eye contact with the students, stand upright and use body language*” (P1). Another comment related specifically to voice projection: “*Am naturally soft-spoken but I learned to project my voice during microteaching. I would go to a private place and talk to myself loudly and this improved my voice projection*” (P6). One interview participant explained how she had learned to use gestures, raise and lower her voice as the situation warranted (P4). These findings parallel Sen’s (2010) study in Turkey, who found that microteaching improved physics pre-service teachers’ communication skills.

### *Content knowledge*

Analysis of data from all focus group discussions X, Y, and Z revealed that student teachers appreciated the role of microteaching in pointing out the need to have a good command of the subject matter. One student teacher who participated in the interview had this to say: “*During microteaching I taught about price discrimination and I explained only two degrees of price discrimination. But the peers told me about the third degree of price discrimination. This helped me to make more research about the topic*” (P4). Another interview participant also stated that: “*Microteaching taught me to have content so that am not challenged by the students. I had to read more about Economics topics where I felt lacking in content such as market equilibrium, national income, money and banking, international trade*” (P1). One interview participant explained how he had understood the cobweb theorem better during microteaching sessions (P6). These findings were in conformity with other studies such as Godek’s (2016) study in Turkey, who found that microteaching contributed to science teacher-trainees’ knowledge of subject matter.

### *Use of teaching aids*

Focus group discussion reports for groups X, Y, and Z showed that microteaching helped student teachers gain skill in using and making teaching aids. One student teacher who participated in the

interview had this to say: *“I used to wonder how I could use teaching aids in certain Economics topics. I thought some topics don’t have teaching aids. I learned to use real objects from Musasizi’s lesson on price discrimination”* (P3). Another student teacher explained how he learned one maxim pertaining to chalkboard use: *“One thing I will never forget is to start with a clean blackboard and end with a cleaned blackboard”*(P2). These findings concur with those of Sa’ad et al. (2015) and Kavanoz and Yuksel (2010), who also found that student teachers gained skill in selecting and using teaching aids during microteaching.

#### *Classroom organization and management*

Reports from focus group discussions X, Y, and Z showed that student teachers learned about and practiced classroom management, and the techniques they used varied. One interview participants’ remark is worth noting: *“While I was teaching, Kasozi came late and just walked into my class. I had learned that students should not walk in and out of class anyhow. I told him to go back and ask for permission to come in ...”* (P3). Referring specifically to talkative students, one interview participant explained how he handled them thus: *“I caught Kalemba and Mugerwa talking, I told both to stand up for some time. Later I told them to sit down ...”* (P5). These findings resemble those of Atav et al. (2014) and Sa’ad et al. (2015), who found that microteaching improved student teachers’ skills in classroom management.

#### *Assessment*

Analysis of data from the individual interviews and focus group discussions revealed that microteaching was not so effective in improving student teachers’ skills in assessing student learning. Reports from all focus group discussions X, Y, Z, and analysis of students’ lesson plans showed that most student teachers planned to ask oral questions, give exercises and assignments at the end of the microteaching session. However, all groups reported that the time was not enough to assess student learning. Alluding to this, one interview participant had this to say:

I had planned to give an exercise on the solutions to unemployment in Uganda at the end of the lesson but I was caught up by time” (P6). Another interview participant said: *“I managed to give the students an exercise to discuss the disadvantages of international trade but there was no time to mark the exercise (p. 4).*

These findings parallel other researchers such as Basturk (2016), who found that pre-service teachers had problems in assessing student learning during microteaching.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The study found microteaching to be a valuable technique in the training of Economics student teachers. Firstly, microteaching contributed to improving student teachers’ skills in lesson planning. Student teachers practiced drawing a scheme of work and lesson plans according to the recommended formats. Secondly, microteaching improved Economics student teachers’ non-verbal and verbal communication skills. Additionally, microteaching contributed to student teachers’ knowledge of Economics content and the need to master content. Furthermore, microteaching was effective in contributing to student teacher’s skill in using and making teaching aids. Lastly, microteaching contributed to student teachers’ skills in classroom organization and management. However, the study found microteaching to be ineffective in the area of assessing student learning. Most Economics student teachers were not able to ask oral questions, administer the exercises and assignments planned at the end of the microteaching sessions due to limited time.

On the whole, microteaching was found to be an effective teaching technique in the training of

Economics student teachers. Other researchers (e.g., Mahmud and Rawshon, 2013; Musa, 2014; Onwuagboke et al, 2017; Umeh et al, 2015) also concluded that microteaching is useful in teacher education and contributes greatly to the learning process. In light of the study findings, there is need to employ the microteaching technique more effectively and frequently in Economics methodology courses. This would require starting microteaching sessions in the first year of teacher trainees' Bachelor of Arts with Education degree program. Currently, microteaching is used by a few lecturers at the School of Education Makerere University. There is need to consider the use of microteaching in other subjects as well. This would require allocating time for microteaching on the timetable and setting up a microteaching laboratory fitted with video recording so that teacher trainees can watch and reflect upon their teaching.

The study was limited to twenty-eight student teachers on the Economics Methods course at the School of Education Makerere University in Uganda for the academic years 2015-2016 and 2016-2017. Although the sample comprised of all the Economics student teachers on the evening program of the Bachelor of Arts with Education degree, it is still not representative of Economics student teachers at Makerere University, nor of Economics student teachers elsewhere. Furthermore, the microteaching sessions were not video recorded. While videotape recording allows student teachers to get immediate feedback and reflect upon their teaching and develop teaching skills (e.g., Dayu and Haura, 2016; Kpanja, 2012; Savas, 2012; Shanu, 2016; Umeh et al, 2015), it was not employed in this study due to financial constraints. This said the findings support the use of the microteaching technique in pre-service teacher education in Uganda and beyond.

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