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Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences 199 (2015) 770 – 776

Procedia
Social and Behavioral Sciences

GlobELT: An International Conference on Teaching and Learning English as an Additional Language, Antalya - Turkey

Dismayed or enchanted: ELT students' perceptions towards microteaching

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Abstract

With the improvements and demands in the realm of language teaching and learning there have been numerous studies conducted on the importance and the role of microteaching in ELT for the last decades. The present study was developed in order to investigate the attitudes of the Turkish students at ELT Department in the spring semester of the academic year 2014-2015. The participants in this study were 72 students who studied in the English Language Teaching (ELT) program at Hacettepe University, Turkey. The study has a mixed method, both quantitative and qualitative which will analyze the effects of independent variables such as gender, GPA and grade on students' attitudes towards microteaching. The instrument that was used in this study was developed by Dweikat (2009) with 55-items, which uses five Likert-type responses. The questionnaire was first piloted by the researcher with 30 students then administered to the all participants. For the qualitative part of the data collection, 4 students of who participated the research were interviewed on their attitudes towards microteaching. The findings of the research showed that all the students had a positive perception of microteaching and various variables like gender, GPA and grade of the students did not have a significant effect on their attitudes towards microteaching.

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Peer-review under responsibility of Hacettepe Üniversitesi.

Keywords: Microteaching, English language teaching, teacher candidates.

1. Introduction

Teaching a language is a multifaceted process which requires many qualifications and competencies. Before taking a real part in teaching profession, student teachers are supposed to have these, and microteaching has proved to be one of the ways to enable them to improve their potentiality and strength and weaknesses as future teachers.

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The importance of microteaching has been widely accepted among the researchers and educators (Amobi, 2005; Arsal, 2014; Bell, 2007; Choudhary, Chaudhary & Malik, 2013; Chuanjun & Chunmei, 2011; Fernandez, 2005; Higgins & Nicholl, 2003; Karçkay & Sanli, 2009) in that it enables prospective teachers to manage many things at the same time and directs both the professors and teacher candidates to do what is needed and discover their strengths and improve their weaknesses. In this respect, many studies have been conducted (Buyukkarci, 2014; Crandall, 2000; Dweikat, 2009; Fernandez, 2010; Ismail, 2011; Kilic, 2010; Ogeyik, 2009; Seidman, 1968) to scrutinize the effects, benefits and drawbacks of microteaching among the English language teachers. Researches also have a particular focus on how to improve and enhance the competencies of these teacher candidates before they start their profession.

Studies on microteaching have shed some light on the impact of microteaching and researchers have been coming up with some proposals for how to benefit from it in the course of English language teaching.

2. Literature review

To have a deep and solid look into the teaching profession, “we need to know more about language teachers... what they know about language teaching, how they think about classroom practice, and how that knowledge and those thinking processes are learned through formal teacher education and informal experience on the job” (Freeman, 1996). In this respect, microteaching will play a vital role for us to grasp the competencies and the prospective teachers’ certain status for teaching profession.

Microteaching is a prospective teacher’s teaching practice for a reduced time and class size in front of his/her peers and the mentors, tutors or professors under their supervision. Originally, in the mid-1960s Dr. Dwight Allen at Stanford University came up with this technique to prepare the students for their internships and since then it has met great interest and acclaim in the domain of teacher education. In its very concise expression, microteaching can be defined as “teaching under microscope.” It is the practice teaching and experience of the prospective teachers, a “scaled-down of the real teaching and breaking up the practice into component parts and choosing the most effective method” (Seidman, 1968). In this sense, microteaching is the point where theory meets practice; it helps the candidate teachers “bridge the gap between theory and practice” (Agbama, 2010). In Bell’s (2007) words microteaching is “to teach a lesson to the peers in order to gain experience with lesson planning and delivery.”

Adeson in 1962 a doctoral candidate discovered the use of video tape recorder for teaching in an innovative teacher education programme and since then many teacher education programs have used microteaching in “modifying teacher behavior” (Undiyaundeye, Inakwu A., 2012). It is suggested that microteaching enables the prospective teachers to improve their managerial and preparational skills which provides them with valuable experience for their professional development when their microteaching conduct is videotaped. The videotape has been a good help for the candidate teachers in that the trainee herself can self-assess her practice and then try to improve her weak points.

Microteaching has four basic phases: at the first step, the trainee studies a specific teaching skill, then she conducts it in a small portion of a lesson; the next step is when the trainee receives feedback about the quality of her performance from the supervisor and the last one takes place when she receives feedback from the classmates and supervisory from the professors (Dweikat, 2009). Microteaching also has these stages: The briefing, The teach, The critique, The reteach and Teach-conference-reteach cycle (Seidman, 1968) which basically share the same steps as in Dweikat’s classification. Supervisory conference is also vital in that the student teacher gets the core points from the mentor or the professor in this phase. It is the stage that she sees what is lacking in her practice, and decided what to be done to improve it. Yusuf (2006) is right in regarding microteaching as an “effective tool to fine tune teaching skills” as anyone will have the chance to observe herself in this very course of microteaching and thus, can take a step to enhance her professional teaching competencies. In this regard, Choudhary *et. al.* (2013) emphasize the number of skills to be practiced, duration of lesson, portion of content are important. Microteaching also helps them acquire essential instructional knowledge and enhance effective teaching technique (Undiyaundeye, Inakwu A., 2012).

Choudhary *et. al.* (2013) present a well-detailed research on the studies on microteaching, suggesting that microteaching is helpful for the increase of competence and preservice teachers’ instructional experiences in their

profession and they list many highlighted researches on microteaching application. Seidman (1968) supports this stating that microteaching is an “effective training device as rather than telling what to do, it shows.” Noting that being a “technical redoing,” microteaching embodies “frames which are co-constructed through interaction,” Bell (2007) emphasizes the importance of the relation built between theory and practice and how teacher nominees can benefit from their educational experience before they conduct it in their real-life profession. Ismail (2011) also pinpoints the importance of microteaching in that it “provides the teacher trainees with additional practical experience before they start their clinical practice in real classes.”

For some, microteaching is referred to as fake teaching as the class size, lesson time, subject of the lesson are all reduced so as to have an idea about the very practice of the preservice teacher rather than the subject itself.

2.1. Recent studies on microteaching

Ogeyik (2009) in her invaluable study on ELT students’ perceptions of microteaching, she had 57 fourth year students at Trakya University. Although students were of different age groups and linguistic levels, she found that they had a quite positive attitude towards microteaching in relation to its developing their teaching competencies and qualifications.

Fernandez (2010) makes a distinctive research on 18 candidate teachers finding that making use of certain techniques such as videotaped lessons, transcripts of group discussions, written reflective reports and feedback surveys proved to have contributed immensely to the professional development of the preservice teachers.

Kilic (2010) conducted a well-developed research on the effect of microteaching on developing the teaching competencies of the student teachers. What he found was important in that microteaching helped the teacher candidates improve their planning, classroom management, teaching process, communication and evaluation. It is also worth noting that it even improved their subject area knowledge.

Ismail (2011) laid the importance of microteaching in his study conducted with 61 female student teachers at the department of ELT, in United Arab Emirates University. In the study, which made use of both a qualitative and quantitative method, the participants were found to be in favour of microteaching and they were highly aware of its benefits in their future profession.

Dewikat (2013) investigated the attitudes of 96 students towards microteaching from three different places of the Palestine. The findings showed that while age seems to be an insignificant variable for their attitudes, all the students had a positive attitude towards microteaching.

Buyukkarcı (2014) presented a meticulous study on the application and the assessment of the microteaching suggesting that in the course of training of 21 student teachers at ELT department, at a state university in Turkey, a formative assessment of microteaching will endow them with substantial help for the release of their anxiety and professional development.

3. Methodology

The purpose of this study is to investigate the attitudes of ELT students towards microteaching and finding out the effect of gender, GPA and grade on the participants’ attitudes.

The present study seeks answers to the following 3 research questions:

- 1) Is there a statistically significant difference across the gender in terms of perceptions of the ELT students towards microteaching?
- 2) Is there a statistically significant difference across the GPA in terms of perceptions of the ELT students towards microteaching?
- 3) Is there a statistically significant difference across the grade in terms of perceptions of the ELT students towards microteaching?

3.1. Study group

A total of 72 undergraduate students enrolled in the division of English Language Teaching at Hacettepe University, Turkey constituted the study group of the study. In below Table 1, some characteristics of mentioned study group were tabularized.

Table 1. Characteristics of the study group

Variables	Levels of variables	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	<i>Male</i>	14	19.4
	<i>Female</i>	58	80.6
GPA*	<i>Low</i>	13	18.1
	<i>Medium</i>	52	72.2
	<i>High</i>	7	9.7
Grade**	<i>2nd</i>	31	43.1
	<i>4th</i>	41	56.9
Total	<i>NA</i>	70	100

**Low = 2.51-3.00, Medium = 3.01-3.50, High = 3.51-4.00*

** *There were six 3rd grade students, yet being irregular ones they were considered to be 4th grade.*

As seen in above Table 1, in the study group females were in overwhelming majority and just a couple of students had a high GPA. Regarding grade, students were almost equally distributed across 2nd and 4th grades.

3.2. Data collection tool

A measurement tool named perceptions of the ELT students towards microteaching developed by Dweikat (2009) used after obtaining permission from the author of the article. The scale consisted of 55 items and its reliability was .95. It was a Likert-type scale with alternatives ranging from strongly agree (1) to strongly disagree (5). Last 3 items (52, 53 and 54) were reversed ones. As for the qualitative data collection an interview with four students among the participants was conducted.

3.3. Data collection procedure

After examining the instrument with an expert in the field, the researcher firstly administered the questionnaire to 72 students at the Department of English Language Teaching, Hacettepe University in the spring semester of the academic year 2014-2015. The instrument was distributed and conducted to the students by the researcher.

To collect the qualitative data, four students were interviewed in the course of data collection process.

3.4. Analysis

Frequencies, percentage and means ranks were used with the purpose of describing data. The data were found out to distort uniform normal distribution and the number of observations in the levels of variables was not close to one another; therefore, non-parametric test were employed so as to detect the difference across levels of variables. Specifically, the tests of Mann-Whitney U and Kruskal Wallis were employed. Level of significant was determined as .05.

4. Findings

Three research questions were answered in this research. First the research question regarding gender was answered. Related findings were given in Table 2 below.

Table 2. The results of the Mann-Whitney U test regarding gender

Gender	Mean Rank	Z	p
Male	39.11	-.52	.60
Female	35.17		

As it can be seen above Table 2, mean ranks were nearly equal. Also it was found out that there was no statistically significant difference in perceptions of the ELT students towards microteaching in terms of gender ($p = .60$; $Z = -.52$). After analyzing the difference regarding gender, the one regarding GPA was also analyzed in below Table 3.

Table 3. The results of the Kruskal-Wallis test regarding GPA

GPA	Mean Rank	χ^2	p
Low	31.55	.96	.62
Medium	37.68		
High	37.29		

As seen in above Table 3, mean rank of low GPA was a little lower than that of medium and high. As for difference, it was revealed that perceptions of the ELT students towards microteaching did not differ in terms of GPA ($p = .62$; $\chi^2 = .96$). Lastly, the findings regarding grade difference were analyzed in below Table 4.

Table 4. The results of the Mann-Whitney U Test regarding grade

Grade	Mean Rank	Z	p
2 nd	39.39	-1.02	.31
4 th	34.32		

As provided in above Table 4, mean ranks were roughly equal. As far as difference regarding grade is concerned, no statistically significant findings were attained ($p = .31$; $Z = -1.02$).

5. Discussion

There are a number of studies in the literature (Amobi, 2005; Arsal, 2014; Bell, 2007; Buyukkarci, 2014; Choudhary, Chaudhary & Malik, 2013; Crandall, 2000; Chuanjun & Chunmei, 2011; Dweikat, 2009; Fernandez, 2005; Fernandez, 2010; Higgins & Nicholl, 2003; Ismail, 2011; Karçkay & Sanli, 2009; Kilic, 2010; Ogeyik, 2009) similar to current one. Likewise this study, Dweikat (2009) came to the conclusion that gender had no statistically significant impact on learners' attitudes towards microteaching. Besides, given that age is more or less in line with grade, Dweikat (2009) also found out that age had no statistically significant impact on the aforementioned concept. The findings of this study showed that student teachers shared similar attitudes for microteaching and their gender, GPA or grade did not seem to be a factor in changing their attitudes.

6. Conclusion

The results of the study showed that in general students have a positive attitude towards microteaching. In this regard, one of the students interviewed stated *"I learn different teaching styles from my friends, and I try the one*

which are suitable for me. When there is some subject we do not understand, microteaching may be helpful. For instance, I could not understand Silent Way, but after my friend covered it in her microteaching, I learned it.”

Another student, on microteaching, pinpoints “We should study theory in its practise form as well.” This shows us that students are in favour of conducting microteaching at school during their classes. Another interviewed student emphasized the importance of videotaping during microteaching, because in her words: “It enables us to watch ourselves after the class and self-assess our own performance and then cure the ineffective points in our practice and competencies.” All these show us that students, regardless of their gender, they all believe that through microteaching they can benefit immensely from the application and practice itself.

Similarly, GPA and grade do not seem to have a significant effect on the ELT students’ perceptions towards microteaching. This can be interpreted as regardless of the difference in their GPA levels or grades students have a positive attitude towards microteaching. Two students interviewed complained that microteaching could be more helpful if they were allowed to make use of it during the classes for their profession.

7. Recommendations

We should employ microteaching more as students have the chance to improve their teaching skills as they feel more relaxed and confident in their real professional teaching life. Assessment and feedback of microteaching should be given by the lecturer and the classmates. This will also help the students get a more serious stand and role in their own profession. Video tape is highly advisable to be used in order to enable the preservice teacher to watch herself afterwards and self-assess and improve her performance.

8. Limitations

This study has some limitations in that it is not generalizable as it is a small scale study. Also an interview with all the students would have immensely contributed to the study and inclusion of the supervisors to the interview would have given more sound results.

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