

Chapter 53

Microteaching in Teacher Education through the Students' Perspective

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ABSTRACT

The present contribution examines microteaching as an instructional method and focuses on it as a vehicle of teacher training at the Department of Primary Education of the Democritus University of Thrace (Greece). In particular, 107 students of the department were asked to freely and anonymously submit their views on microteaching in a written text, after having been trained in this method for one semester. The content analysis of the produced texts indicated students' approbation towards the procedure in question, verifying the findings of other similar studies. Their remarks regarding microteaching strengthen the plea for its incorporation in the curricula of university departments that train prospective teachers.

INTRODUCTION

In the year 2013, exactly half a century will have passed since the first implementation of microteaching in teacher education. As is known, the attempt was pioneered by Stanford University in the early '60s and was later disseminated and implemented in several countries and continents (Gall, 2007, p. 244). In Greece, the first school that included microteaching in its curriculum was the nowadays called School of Pedagogical and Technological Education (ASPETE) in the early '70s (Chatzidimou, 2003, p. 47). Microteaching

continued being applied at various university-level teacher education departments. One of the departments in which microteaching has been continuously applied for nearly twenty years now, after the initiative of Prof. Dr. Eleni Taratori, is the Department of Primary Education of the Democritus University of Thrace (DUTH). In this department, microteaching is a compulsory course for the students.

Microteaching in the department follows the model established by Prof. Dr. D. Chatzidimou at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (AUTH): Students are first informed of the aims of microteaching

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aching and are initiated in specific teaching skills, which they afterwards apply and exercise, as each student teaches in front of his or her fellow students a short instructional unit. Each microteaching lesson performed by the students is followed by a detailed analysis made by their fellow students, the supervisor and the trainee student himself or herself. This way, students are trained in specific pedagogical and teaching skills as: time management, lesson planning, selecting and formulating the objectives of the lesson, using various teaching media, learning how to start and end a lesson etc. At the end of the semester the overall course of microteaching is being discussed and evaluated (Chatzidimou, 2011, p. 307) (Table 1).

In particular, during the first 6 teaching hours of the microteaching course (Stage 1) the students are informed about microteaching and a general discussion is conducted about lesson planning, specific teaching skills, behaviours, forms and aids. In addition, a videotaped microteaching lesson from a previous year is watched and analyzed. This way, students are (theoretically) initiated in what they will have to do in practice during the semester. The next stage (Stage 2) comprises of the actual teaching performed by the trainees. Each student performs a microteaching lesson, namely a lesson which is limited in terms of content, audience and duration. A small subject matter is being taught to the co-students of the group lasting approximately fifteen minutes, having one or two instructional objectives. The teaching takes place in the fully equipped laboratory of the Department; thus it is videotaped and

then watched on TV (unfortunately, only partly because there is no time to watch every lesson in full length). What follows are features of microteaching greatly stressed in the relevant literature: feedback, (self-)criticism, tips and suggestions, self-reflection (Mergler & Tangen, 2010: 200), and engaging in the use of technology. The focus of the feedback is on certain behaviours and teaching skills employed by the trainee. On one hand, suggestions are given on the points the student who taught could improve; on the other hand, effective didactic implementations and strategies are praised. Finally, during the last stage (Stage 3) of the implementation the trainees and the supervisor discuss and evaluate the microteaching course and express their views on its pros and cons and its usefulness.

The general aim of this research was to form an image of microteaching as applied in the above Department through the views of students that acted both as teachers and learners.

The specific objectives of the research were to investigate whether and how the implementation of microteaching was accepted by training students, since it is included in the curriculum of their department; whether it had a positive impact on their pedagogical and didactic training; which of the skills were being exercised and acquired by which students and whether they had any suggestions in order to improve its implementation.

The survey was conducted in the first fortnight of May 2010 and the sample consisted of 107 students who attended the 4th semester of the Department of Primary Education of the DUTH and had

Table 1. Structure of the microteaching course at the Department of Primary Education of the Democritus University of Thrace

Stage	Content	Duration	Main Role
1	Initiation in the concept of microteaching and in specific teaching skills	6 teaching hours	Supervisor
2	Microteaching lessons by the students, analysis and feedback of every lesson	24-27 teaching hours	Mostly students
3	Evaluation of the overall course	3 teaching hours	Both, mainly students

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