

Pre-Service Teachers' Opinions On Microteaching Course Practices

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Abstract

The primary aim of this study is to evaluate the effectiveness of the micro-teaching course, which is included in the teacher education curriculum under pedagogical content knowledge, by examining prospective teachers' perceptions regarding in-class practices. The research employed a case study design, one of the qualitative research methods. The study group of the research consists of fifteen volunteer teacher candidates taking the elective micro teaching course at a state university. The findings indicate that the participants generally perceived the course as effective and productive, reporting significant individually and professional gains. On a individually level, they highlighted increased self-confidence in their capabilities, as well as improvements in communication, self-assessment, and critical thinking skills. On a professional level, they emphasized the development of classroom management, lesson planning, and time management skills, along with an increased awareness of the importance of nonverbal communication such as gestures and facial expressions. Based on the findings, it can be concluded that micro-teaching practices provide pre-service teachers with opportunities to apply theoretical knowledge, engage in self-reflection, and identify areas for improvement prior to entering the profession. Therefore, it is recommended that the micro-teaching course be included as a compulsory component in teacher education programs, with class sizes limited to no more than ten students per group to ensure its effectiveness.

Keywords: Microteaching, teacher education, pre-service teacher

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Introduction

Teacher education is a field that continuously maintains its significance and undergoes updates worldwide. It is teachers who have the knowledge and take the responsibility for keeping this knowledge up-to-date and transferring it, conduct education and teaching, and serve as pioneers of development and change. Therefore, it can be suggested that teacher education is a priority area. However, defining a teacher only as a knowledge transmitter would be an incomplete perspective. Today, the ideal human model to be raised is an individual with a variety of skills rather than a knowledge recipient. An individual's ability to adapt to the social structure in which they live is closely linked to teacher education.

The main objective of a teacher education program is to equip teacher candidates with the ability to demonstrate accurate and effective teaching strategies and experiences (Ismail, 2011). In teacher education programs designed to prepare pre-service teachers for their profession, providing them with opportunities to gain practical experience in their fields is just as important as acquiring theoretical knowledge. Numerous studies in the literature confirm this information (Brent, Wheatley & Thomson, 1996; Dwayne, 1967; Gordan, 1996; Klinzing, 2002; Smylie & Conyers, 1991; Wasserman, 1993).

In teacher education programs, microteaching is a course that aims to equip pre-service teachers with effective teaching skills and experience before they enter the profession. Microteaching practices allow pre-service teachers to put the theoretical knowledge they have acquired into practice. Microteaching practices originated in the early 1960s at Stanford University in the United States as an experimental study with students in an artificial classroom environment (Dwayne, 1967). Initially an experimental study, microteaching practices evolved into scientific content by creating a theoretical background (Murray, 1996). Today, microteaching is utilized to help pre-service teachers develop their teaching skills and gain experience in real classroom environments (Amobi, 2005).

Microteaching is defined in various ways in the literature. For instance, Jerich defines microteaching as a teaching method conducted in simplified teaching environments and supported by effective feedback on the teaching skills of pre-service teachers. Ananthakrishnan (1993) explains microteaching using a different analogy: He likened traditional classroom lecturing to swimming in the deepest part of the pool while comparing microteaching to an opportunity to practice in shallower and less intimidating waters. According to Quinn (2000), microteaching is a small group activity that can be effective for attaining skills. Küçükahmet (2007) calls microteaching a laboratory method that aims to simplify the complexity of teaching and learning processes in a real classroom environment. Further, Görden (2003) explains microteaching as a method that facilitates the acquisition of critical teacher behaviours within a simplified teaching setting. Aydın (2005) describes microteaching as an intensified teaching experience in which student numbers are reduced and the scope of teaching is narrowed. Uzunboylu and Hürsen (2011) define microteaching as a technique that enables pre-service teachers to overcome their concerns, fears, and shortcomings related to the profession. In the light of all these definitions, it can be suggested that microteaching practices help create an environment where pre-service teachers can adapt the theoretical knowledge they have acquired before starting the profession to the actual classroom environment.

Revealing the relationship between theory and practice, microteaching has gained a prominent place in preparing pre-service teachers for their teaching careers. The primary goal of microteaching practices for the teacher candidate is not to convey a subject to the students but to apply a technique (Madike, 1980). Therefore, microteaching occupies a key place in training for the teaching profession since it provides pre-service teachers with the opportunity to integrate theory and practical knowledge. Studies on this subject highlight this integration (Bell, 2007; Dennick, 1998; Hall & Leveridge, 2006; I'anson, Rodrigues, & Wilson, 2003; Kinchin & Alias, 2005; Mellon & Dence, 1971; Kpanja, 2001; Klinzing, 2002; Metcalf, Hammer, & Kahlich, 1996; Saunders, Gall, Nielson, & Smith, 1975; Simbo, 1989). Through microteaching practices, pre-service teachers can refine their specific teaching skills by delivering short presentations to their peers (Orlich et al., 1990).

In faculties of education, the microteaching course is offered as an elective course for teaching professional knowledge. The purpose of this course is to provide teacher candidates with experience in turning the theoretical knowledge acquired before service into practice. This study aimed to obtain the opinions of teacher candidates enrolled in the microteaching course regarding their in-class practices and explore their views on the benefits of these practical applications.

Purpose of the Study

The study mainly aims to assess the effectiveness of the microteaching course by obtaining the opinions of pre-service teachers who participated in the microteaching course, which is an elective course within the scope of teaching professional knowledge, about in-class practices. To achieve this purpose, the study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What are the opinions of pre-service teachers regarding the concept of microteaching?
2. How do pre-service teachers believe the practices conducted within the scope of the microteaching course may impact their professional lives?
3. What are the suggestions of pre-service teachers about microteaching practices?

Research Methodology

The study was conducted at a state university during the spring semester of the 2023-2024 academic year with students enrolled in the microteaching course, which is an elective course within the scope of teaching professional knowledge. A case study design, which is a qualitative research method, was used for this research. A case study is described as an in-depth study of a specific system, such as an activity, event, process, or individual, based on comprehensive data collection (Creswell, 2008: 476). In this research, the case study method was used to gather the opinions of teacher candidates about the microteaching course, offered as an elective course within the scope of teaching professional knowledge in the undergraduate program of faculties of education.

Participants

The study group comprised fifteen volunteer teacher candidates who took an elective microteaching course at a state university during the spring semester of the 2023-2024 academic year. Four participants from each of the early childhood education, social studies education, and science education departments and three from the psychological counselling and guidance department participated in the study. While five of the participants were male, ten were female. A total of eleven participants were third-year students, whereas four were fourth-year students. Having participants from different departments allowed the subject to be explored from various perspectives. Demographic information about the participants is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic Information about the participants

Participant	Gender	Year	Department
Engin	Male	4	Social Studies Education
Emel	Female	3	Social Studies Education
Derya	Female	3	Social Studies Education
Suna	Female	4	Social Studies Education
Esin	Female	3	Science Education

Gönül	Female	3	Science Education
Ayşe	Female	4	Science Education
Deniz	Male	3	Science Education
Barış	Male	3	Psychological Counselling and Guidance
Bulut	Male	4	Psychological Counselling and Guidance
Onur	Male	3	Psychological Counselling and Guidance
Hande	Female	3	Early Childhood Education
Hediye	Female	3	Early Childhood Education
Gül	Female	3	Early Childhood Education
İrem	Female	3	Early Childhood Education

Data Collection and Analysis

The research data were collected through semi-structured interviews conducted with the participants. After reviewing the literature on microteaching and microteaching practices, the researcher developed the questions for the semi-structured interview form. The interview questions were refined based on the feedback from three experts in educational programs. The experts made no additions or deletions to the research questions; they only offered suggestions regarding the language of expression. The interview questions were finalized after conducting preliminary interviews with two pre-service teachers who were outside the participant group. The interviews took place in the faculty room on the day and time deemed suitable by the participants. Written and verbal consent was obtained from the participants, and they were asked eight questions in the interview. To explore their experiences with the microteaching course in detail, they were asked questions such as the definition of the concept of microteaching, their overall impressions of microteaching, the contributions of microteaching practices to their personal and professional development, the challenges they faced during the course, and their suggestions.

The content analysis method was used to analyse the data obtained from the research. The participants' statements were transcribed, and then the data were coded and organized into sub-themes. Coding is defined as the process of analysing data by breaking it into pieces (Creswell, 2013). To ensure the reliability of the research, the researcher had an independent field expert code the data and compared data to develop sub-themes. The overlap in the codes for the themes was assessed using the formula "Agreement / (Agreement + Disagreement) x 100" (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The average reliability for the themes was found to be 92% (range: 75-100). Further analyses were made until the researcher and expert reached a consensus, which helped ensure consistency in the research.

Findings

As a result of analysing the data collected from interviews with the teacher candidates regarding microteaching course practices, five themes were identified. These themes include Microteaching as a Concept, Our Course: Microteaching, Benefits of the Course, Challenges Faced, and Suggestions.

Microteaching as a concept

Microteaching is defined as a small group activity that can serve as an effective tool for acquiring skills (Quinn, 2000). In this study, teacher candidates who were introduced to the microteaching course were asked to define the concept of microteaching. The teacher candidates defined microteaching as a laboratory method, a mini lesson, and an opportunity to experience teaching skills. The subthemes under this theme are presented in Figure 1.

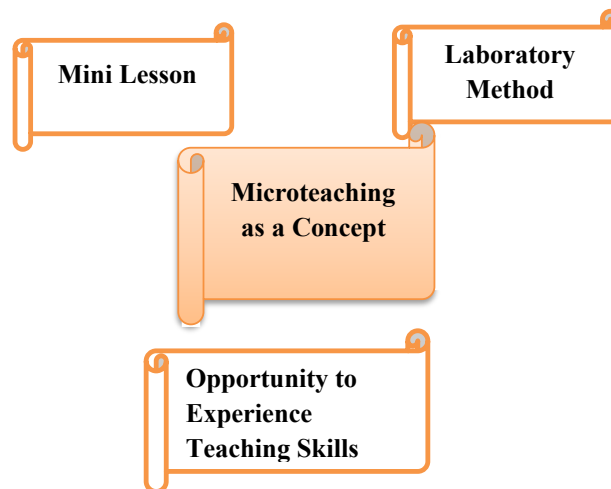


Figure 1. The Theme of Microteaching as a Concept and Its Subthemes

Pre-service teachers described the concept of microteaching as a laboratory method, defining it as mini lessons in which students could practice teaching skills. Their views on this subject are summarized as follows:

Esin explained the concept of microteaching by likening microteaching to a laboratory, saying, *“I think microteaching is a laboratory method. Concrete scientific experiments are conducted in the laboratory, and try-do-learn is hidden in this concept...”* A similar definition was echoed by Hande, explaining, *“...It is a laboratory method that aims to simplify the complexity of teaching methods...”*

Derya defined microteaching as preparing mini lessons in which she gained experience, saying, *“Microteaching involves preparing mini lessons with lesson plans. It provides short-term experiences before real-life teaching applications.”* Bulut had a similar definition: *“I can define it as a minimized version of real teaching.”*

Most of the pre-service teachers recognized microteaching as an opportunity to experience teaching skills. For instance, Emel emphasized this aspect in her definition by saying, *“It is a method used by teachers to gain experience by improving their teaching skills...”* Barış also emphasized the experience of teaching skills, stating, *“Microteaching is a method aimed at enhancing our in-class teaching skills as the pre-service teachers and provide preliminary experience...”*

Our Course: Microteaching

The teacher candidates were asked about their views on the microteaching course practices. Their feedback on the course was categorized into four sub-themes: practical experiences, first rehearsal, effective lesson, and adaptation (Figure 2).

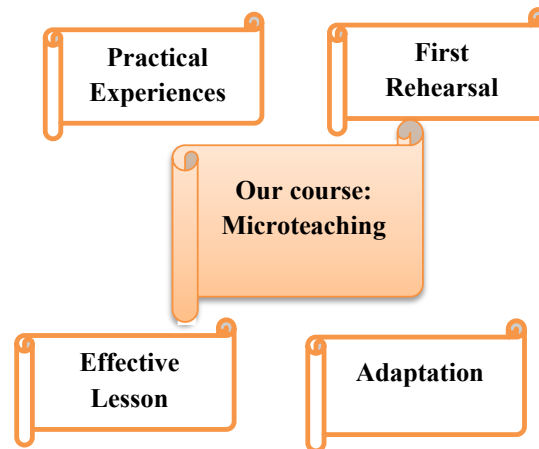


Figure 2. The theme of Our Course: Microteaching and its subthemes

In the theme of Our Course: Microteaching, teacher candidates shared their impressions about the microteaching course. They emphasized that the microteaching course practices were like a rehearsal for their future teaching profession and described the course as productive. They stated that they had their first teaching experience, which helped them adapt to their profession. The views of the teacher candidates on this subject are given below.

Bariş noted, *“In general, the course allowed us to put the theoretical parts of the educational sciences classes taken throughout the university into practice....”* Ayşe commented, *“...Repeatedly recording and rewatching videos already gave us great experiences. We practiced as if we were practicing sewing; it was a rewarding experience....”* These statements illustrate that the teacher candidates saw the course as an opportunity to gain practical experience.

In addition to viewing the microteaching course as a means to gain practical experience, the pre-service teachers likened the pre-professional experience to a rehearsal before the stage. For instance, Bulut portrayed the lesson process by stating, *“...I can describe it as a good rehearsal for those of us who have not fully gained the experience of teaching yet ...I think we had rehearsal for our profession before going on stage...”* Gül elaborated on this idea by stating, *“We rehearsed lesson planning and implementation processes before the actual teaching; in fact, these are the last rehearsals before going on stage...”*

Pre-service teachers also described the microteaching course as an efficient one, because it allowed them to apply much of the knowledge they had acquired: Damla noted, *“...We evaluated each component of the course separately, such as introduction and exploration phases, and since it emphasized the aspects we needed to pay attention to, I would define it as a useful and productive course.”* In addition, Engin evaluated the effectiveness of the course by saying, *“It was a very productive course in terms of teaching professional knowledge...”*

While some pre-service teachers defined the microteaching course as an effective and efficient course to gain experience, they also asserted that they experienced the process of adaptation to the profession within the scope of the course. For example, Hediye described the course saying, *“...It provided us with the opportunity to learn materials, games, and experiments by doing research and get prepared as if we were appointed and going to school, which I think will allow us to adapt to the profession more easily. I feel like we will not waver anymore...”*

Suna reported, *“I can define the course in one sentence: it is a complete adaptation course. It blanked out the question of how to adjust to the profession, the subject matter, the students, and everything else...”*

Similarly, Gönül noted, “...*The course literally explores what the adaptation process to teaching is like.*”

Benefits of the Course

Pre-service teachers were asked about the contributions of the microteaching course practices and their gains from it. They emphasized that the course contributed not only to their professional development but also to their personal development. Based on their answers, this theme was explored under two sub-themes: personal gains and professional gains (Figure 3). They highlighted the personal gains as enhanced self-confidence in their abilities, improved communication skills, and better self-assessment skills, and critical thinking skills. Professionally, they noted that they acquired classroom management, planning, and time management skills and developed professional awareness, including the importance of using gestures and facial expressions.

For example, Ayşe emphasized that the course was effective in boosting self-confidence in the profession by stating, “...*I gained self-confidence. I was not sure of myself before, but now I say I can do it. I think it is important to be able to say this for every profession...*”. Likewise, as a personal gain, Suna reported that thanks to the course, she could say, “...*I now trust myself...*”

Most pre-service teachers touched on the change in their self-assessment skills as a personal gain. For example, Gönül expressed, “...*It is vital to be able to see yourself. We always used to evaluate others, but now I have seen myself and realized that I always need to see myself to make progress; and I think this is the biggest contribution of the course: self-assessment...*”

The pre-service teachers reported that they recognized they needed to pay attention to their communication skills and learned to approach issues critically. Esin, Barış, and Damla shared their thoughts on this issue: “...*Actually, I learned what aspects I should focus on, but I also learned to think from different perspectives. I learned that even when criticizing my friend, I should create an argument in my mind. I should not just say things as they came to me... Briefly, I developed the ability to approach critically. I always heard the term ‘critical’; but I just understood what it means...*”

Similarly, Barış stated, “*Thanks to this practice, I improved my communication, critical thinking, and self-assessment skills, which contributed to my overall personal development.*” Likewise, Damla mentioned, “...*I was able to evaluate myself objectively, which is particularly important to overcome my shortcomings. I believe we developed a critical perspective by assessing ourselves from different angles. People used to talk about the importance of two-way communication in classroom management, but I figured out the significance of communication in this course. Even my interactions with my classmates increased, and I was surprised by my own progress.*”

The pre-service teachers stressed that the greatest gain of the course was its professional impact. First of all, they emphasized that the course fostered professional awareness and underscored its effectiveness in helping them gain practical experience in classroom management, time management, and planning. They also learned the importance of using gestures, facial expressions, and tone of voice. Below are the views of the pre-service teachers.

Hediye reported, “...*I clearly understood why it was a problem to teach with my back to the students on the board. I learned how to divide 40 minutes; I now know how much time I should allocate to different stages of the lesson. And, of course, the tone of voice is very important. At first, even I almost did not hear my voice, and adjusting your tone of voice requires practice...*”

Derya explained, “...*I definitely learned lesson planning and how to utilize every minute of the lesson. In other words, I improved my skills in classroom management, planning, and time management. I realized what it means to be a teacher. I recognized how even our facial expressions can affect students. In this respect, the contribution of the course is great.*”

Onur indicated, “*The course greatly contributed to my experience in classroom management, teaching strategies, and communication with students.*” Deniz explained, “*Actually, we gained a*

complete professional awareness. I learned how to communicate with students and how to use my hands and arms. I never thought that teaching with your hands in your pockets would have negative impacts. I mean, even those are important. I can even say that I realized that the most important aspect is planning and time management..."

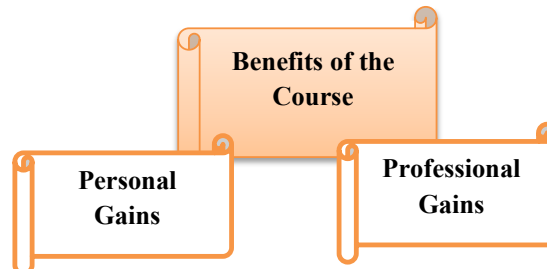


Figure 3. The Theme of Benefits of the Course and Its Subthemes

Challenges Faced

The pre-service teachers reported having the most difficulty during the video recording of their microteaching practices. They mentioned that they got excited and felt anxious because of the video shooting and feared receiving negative criticism. Based on these findings, the subthemes “video shooting anxiety” and “fear of feedback” were developed under the broader theme of challenges faced (Figure 4).

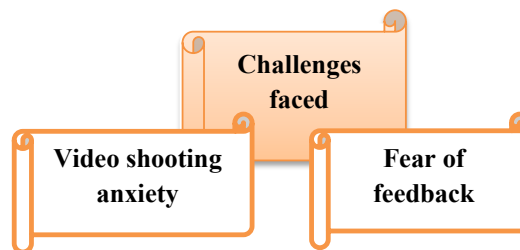


Figure 4. The Theme of Challenges Faced and Its Subthemes

The pre-service teachers expressed that they were anxious and nervous due to being in front of the camera. They added that they could not act very comfortably and even had difficulty in implementing their plans. Gönül, Emel, Gül, and İrem made shared their experiences regarding this issue:

Gönül said, “...I mean, I was very nervous, especially during the first video shoot. I was in a lather, which, of course, affected my use of appropriate gestures and expressions. Even my voice trembled, but I can say that it was a little better in the subsequent shoots.”

Emel commented, “I was nervous, especially during the first shoot; I had certain tension and difficulty because of the camera. I can say that at first, I focused on the camera and not the class. I do not know if it would have been better if it had been a secret video recording...”

Gül mentioned, “...I was nervous while being recorded, which I believe was a challenge, because the things I had envisaged in the lesson plan sometimes took on different phrases and expressions in the videos due to nervousness...”

İrem specified, “Oh teacher, I literally experienced video shooting anxiety at first, then it decreased. During the first shoot, my hands trembled because of nervousness, and I forgot what I was going to say, which made me even more nervous. I thought very seriously about it, but I’m actually not like that...”

Most pre-service teachers feared receiving negative feedback and criticism, in addition to the anxiety of being recorded. For instance, Suna noted her fear of receiving negative feedback, saying, *“The purpose is to recognize our shortcomings, but I was worried that I would receive harsh criticism. It was actually good in a way, I mean, to do better, but I did not want to be criticized.”* Similarly, Esin expressed her concerns in this regard, stating, *“It is very valuable to be evaluated by our teacher and classmates after the recording for our development. However, of course, I had concerns like what if something negative was said, what if I made a mistake, or what if I embarrassed myself.”*

The pre-service teachers were asked about their suggestions for microteaching course practices. Overall, they emphasized that the course was very productive and should be offered as a compulsory course since it helped them gain awareness about the profession while underlining the necessity of much smaller class sizes. Based on the feedback from the pre-service teachers, the sub-themes "Compulsory Course" and "Class Size" were developed under the broader theme of suggestions (Figure 5).

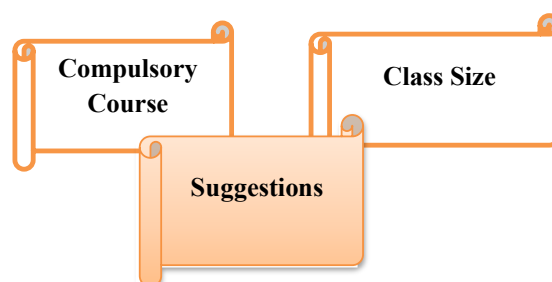


Figure 5. The Theme of Suggestions and Its Subthemes

The microteaching course is offered as an elective professional knowledge course in faculties of education. However, the pre-service teachers from various departments who have taken the course stated that the course was a productive and high-quality experience that should be taken before starting their careers and that every pre-service teacher should have this experience. They added that they wanted it to be offered as a compulsory course. Ayşe, Engin, and İrem shared their thoughts on this matter as follows:

Ayşe mentioned, *“This course has greatly contributed to us; we learned how and when to use many of the theories we had been taught. We even learned that we needed to adjust the tone of voice. I wish all students in the education faculty would take the course and it would be mandatory.”*

Engin expressed, *“Actually, I took this course without realizing it, but I am glad I did, because I think it was a course that should be compulsory. This can be my suggestion: this course should be compulsory...”*

İrem expressed, *“It should be compulsory, not elective. I informed my classmates about what we did in this course, and they all regretted not taking it this semester.”*

A total of twenty-one pre-service teachers from various disciplines attended the microteaching course. Class size may be considered adequate or even small for many courses at the university. However, it can be stated that small class size is an important variable in applied courses in order to allocate enough time to each student and conduct in-depth examinations within the limited class time. Since the pre-service teachers faced this problem during the course, they suggested that the class size should be reduced by half. For example, Deniz and Engin expressed their concerns about this matter.

Deniz reported, *“I wish we could divide the class into 5 or a maximum of 10 students. You had to cut a lot of time, and we had to shorten many topics due to time constraints. We added some of the things, thinking that we could pretend to do them, but we weren’t able to implement them. If the class size had been smaller, we would have had enough time, and it would have been more productive...”*

Engin also highlighted the significance of small class sizes by stating, *“If there had been 10 students in the class, we would have had the chance to shoot more videos and evaluate them. Thus, my suggestion is to limit the class size.”*

Conclusion And Discussion

Microteaching is an empirically tested technique that closely examines the teaching process as a scaled-down teaching sample (Orlich et al., 1990). Included as an elective professional knowledge course in the faculties of education in Turkey, microteaching is of great importance in terms of developing the professional skills of pre-service teachers before they start their careers. It allows pre-service teachers to acquire basic skills such as course presentation, classroom management, and communication skills before being in a real classroom environment. Enabling pre-service teachers to put the theoretical knowledge they have acquired at the faculty into practice, the microteaching course prepares them for professional life.

In this study, which aimed to gather the opinions of students who had taken the microteaching course as an elective professional knowledge course offered in programs in the faculty of education regarding the in-class practices and effectiveness of the course, pre-service teachers defined the concept of microteaching as a laboratory method, mini lesson, and an opportunity to experience teaching skills. Similar descriptions are used for microteaching practices in the literature as well. For example, Allen and Ryan (1969) described microteaching as an educational approach that can be applied for the professional development of teachers before service (as cited in Benton-Kupper, 2001) and added that it is experiencing the teaching process before service. Similarly, in their definition, Cruickshank and Metcalf (1993:87) defined microteaching as mini-lesson practices by describing it as a minimized teaching that is made in a short time to a group of 3-5 individuals, highlighting that it enables pre-service teachers to perform their teaching skills. Küçükahmet (2007) compared microteaching to a laboratory designed to simplify the complexity of typical learning and teaching processes, stressing that pre-service teachers can gain experience. Based on these definitions, it can be asserted that pre-service teachers made correct inferences about the concept of microteaching.

While pre-service teachers defined the concept of microteaching as a laboratory method, mini lesson, and experience, they described the microteaching course as a productive lesson in which they gained practical experiences as the first rehearsal for adaptation to teaching. This perspective aligns with findings from various studies in the literature (Akalın, 2005; Amaobi, 2005; Benton&Kupper, 2001; Ceyhun & Karagölge, 2005; Erökten & Durkan, 2009; Ismail, 2011). Regarding the objectives of the microteaching course, it has been stated that pre-service teachers can attain teaching skills in appropriate learning environments in which they can have teaching experience before service (Allen&Ryan, 1969). Fernandez (2005) also highlighted that microteaching practices help pre-service teachers increase their in-class experiences during the teaching process. The pre-service teachers in the present study also defined the microteaching course as a productive course in which they gained practical experience. In another study, as emphasized by Ismail (2011), one of the objectives of an effective teacher education program is to ensure that pre-service teachers demonstrate effective teaching strategies and gain valuable experiences. In this respect, it can be suggested that the course achieved its intended goal.

The pre-service teachers stated that they made positive personal and professional gains thanks to the microteaching course practices. Regarding personal gains, they highlighted improvements in their self-confidence, communication skills, self-assessment skills, and critical thinking skills. For professional gains, they noted that they acquired classroom management, planning, and time management skills and developed professional awareness of the importance of using gestures and facial expressions. The characteristics stated by the pre-service teachers as personal and professional gains in the study align with the objectives of the microteaching course specified in the literature (Allen & Ryan, 1969; Brent & Thomson, 1996; Cruickshank & Metcalf, 1993; Fernandez, 2005; Kpanja, 2001). The pre-service teachers declared they gained self-confidence that they could become successful in the profession thanks to the practices in the course. Self-confidence, as defined by Akın (2007), refers to people’s belief that they will successfully perform a certain activity and their trust in

their own judgment, ability, power, and decisions. The first condition for an individual to accomplish something is to believe in their own capabilities; in other words, success relies on self-confidence. It can be argued that pre-service teachers met the first condition for succeeding in their profession thanks to microteaching course practices. Likewise, the findings of the studies on microteaching practices in the literature indicated that in-class practices increase pre-service teachers' self-confidence (Amobi, 2005; Görgen, 2003; Ismail, 2011; Küçüköğlu et al., 2012; Kpanja, 2001; Şen, 2010).

Communication, the main function of which is to share feelings, thoughts, knowledge, and skills (Yalın, 2003), is undoubtedly one of the essential skills for a teacher. Teachers with effective communication skills can enhance their teacher characteristics by establishing positive relationships with students throughout the teaching process (Tümekaya, 2011). In this study, the pre-service teachers stated that they learned how to form bonds with students and what aspects to focus on, thanks to the microteaching course practices.

Self-assessment can be defined as the process of making a judgment about oneself. By asking a student who has performed a task to evaluate his/her own performance, the goal is to increase his/her awareness of the work done and share the responsibility of his/her own learning with the teacher. In this way, those who can self-assess their own performance acquire critical thinking skills by both criticizing their own performance and being criticized by others (Kösterilioğlu & Çelen, 2016). The basic premise of the microteaching course practices is that individuals evaluate their teaching skills by watching recordings of themselves. Those who can effectively evaluate and criticize themselves are likely to have gained self-assessment and critical thinking skills that are professionally required. In this sense, microteaching course practices can be claimed to have achieved their purpose. The literature also indicates a positive relationship between microteaching practices and pre-service teachers' self-assessment and critical thinking skills (Bilen, 2014; Schmitz & Schwarzer, 2000; Subramaniam, 2006; Üredi & Üredi, 2005; Yılmaz et al., 2004).

Pre-service teachers emphasized that the most significant benefit of the microteaching course was professional. For one thing, they stressed that the course enhanced their professional awareness and helped them gain practical experience in classroom management, time management, and planning. They also learned the importance of using gestures, facial expressions, and tone of voice while teaching. The classroom is the area where teachers interact with students. It can be asserted that spending quality time in the classroom depends on the skills of the teacher. As declared by Saritaş (2003), a teacher must be both an instructor and an effective manager within the classroom. A teacher's responsibilities in the classroom include organizing and managing the learning environment and experiences; that is why, the teacher must know the principles and methods of classroom management (Aydın, 2007). Putting theoretical knowledge into practice or turning it into a skill requires time and experience. The teaching profession is also a profession of experience in this sense. Especially during the initial years of teaching, classroom management takes up teachers' time. Many young and inexperienced teachers may encounter various disciplinary problems in the classroom (Gordon, 1996). However, this research has shown that microteaching practices have provided pre-service teachers with the opportunity to experience the aspects they need to focus on for effective classroom management. Improved classroom management, in turn, brings about time management. Planning by foreseeing all kinds of positive and negative conditions that may arise in the classroom and achieving the course outcomes require careful planning and time management. In this respect, through the microteaching course, the pre-service teachers have realized the critical aspects they need to pay attention to in time management through the planning process.

The pre-service teachers were also asked about the challenges they faced during their microteaching course practices, and they stated that they had the most difficulty during the video recording. They mentioned that they felt anxious and nervous because of being recorded. Apart from the video recording, they also feared receiving negative feedback. One of the key components of microteaching practices is to record the candidate on video while they are teaching. However, not having encountered such a practice, the pre-service teachers got anxious. This situation also brings with it the need for stress management skills. They must cope with the challenges of standing in front of students in an actual classroom setting. Therefore, microteaching practices can be claimed to

prepare the pre-service teachers for this situation, too. As noted by Görkem (2003), the microteaching practice offers valuable experiences to pre-service teachers through a systematic approach and enables pre-service teachers to gain teaching skills in a low-risk environment by giving them the opportunity to manage their behaviours. In the literature, similar to the results of this research, problems such as the excitement of teaching in front of an audience and lack of experience are among the difficulties experienced in the classroom (Bilen & Görgen, 2003; Karadağ & Akkaya, 2013; Kılıç, 2010; Kuran, 2009; Küçükoğlu et al., 2012; Özdemir, 2016).

In addition, the pre-service teachers were asked for their suggestions to increase the efficiency of the microteaching course practices. While they generally emphasized that the course was very productive and should be made compulsory since it helped them develop awareness about the profession, they noted that the class size should be much smaller. A class size of more than fifteen students causes the video recording and evaluation processes to become rushed. More time or fewer students are required to make detailed comments and give constructive criticisms. Under normal conditions, microteaching practices are conducted in small groups of 4 to 10 people (Remesh, 2013). However, the course is an elective course in faculties of education, and a minimum of fifteen students is required to open the course.

In conclusion, applied courses are an important opportunity for pre-service teachers to gain the ability to apply the theoretical courses they have taken in the faculties over four years. Microteaching practices have been used since 1960 to help pre-service teachers transfer the theoretical knowledge they have acquired into skills (Higgins & Nicholl, 2003). Microteaching is an empirically tested process and a technique that allows teachers to closely examine many aspects of the teaching process (Çoban, 2015). Microteaching course practices in education faculties are also included in education programs for this purpose. In this study, it can be stated that thanks to the microteaching course practices, the pre-service teachers had the opportunity to get preliminary experience in teaching professional knowledge thanks to the practices they carried out in a simplified environment.

Recommendations

Enabling teachers to apply their knowledge before they enter the profession and giving them a chance to assess themselves and identify their weaknesses, microteaching practices allow pre-service teachers to address their deficiencies before starting their careers. Therefore, the microteaching course can be offered as a compulsory course in programs of the education faculties. To increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the microteaching course, class sizes can be arranged in groups of 10 students.

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