



Microteaching as an Effective Tool In Faculty Development Programmes

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Abstract:

Microteaching is a proven training method designed to help teachers acquire the required techniques and skills to make their classroom teaching better. Mentoring, coaching and model teaching from veteran colleagues or outsourced mentors / teaching consultants is critical to the successful development of new recruits and young teachers. When Faculty Development Programmes create opportunities for in service candidates, both young and old, to learn from best practices, Microteaching creates a platform to analyze and reflect on their teaching.

Key Words/Phrases: Microteaching Cycle, Faculty Development Programme (FDP), Teaching Strategies, Knowledge Acquisition, Skill Acquisition, Skill / Knowledge Transfer,

Introduction

It is a known fact that high quality output requires equally rigorous quality inputs. The quality of students coming out of the portals of professional institutions is a true reflection of the quality of teachers in these universities and colleges. Teachers are the pillars of any educational system. Other components like infrastructure, facilities, labs etc. are incidental or secondary. So, it is necessary to fortify this basic edifice because teachers make or mar the lives of millions of young minds on a day-to-day basis. Unfortunately, many things are taken for granted. The proliferation of professional colleges and universities has resulted in many untrained teachers being inducted and entrusted with the task of imparting knowledge and transferring skills. They go into the class without fully understanding the importance of their roles and responsibilities. It is in this context of empowering and conscientizing teachers at the tertiary level, Faculty Development Programmes are conducted.





What is Microteaching?

Microteaching is organized practice teaching in a simulated environment. It aims at giving young teachers the much needed confidence, support, and feedback by letting them try out a slice of what they plan to do with their students in the presence of experienced teaching consultants, mentors, language experts, soft skills trainers, and peers. “Microteaching as a professional development tool in teacher training programs provides student teachers with opportunities to explore and reflect on their own and others’ teaching styles and to acquire new teaching techniques and strategies. Microteaching was developed in the early and mid-1960’s by Dwight Allen and his colleagues at the Stanford Teacher Education Program” (Muhlise Cosgun Ogeyik, 2009). Microteaching is a proven training method designed to help teachers acquire the required techniques and skills to make their classroom teaching better. Mentoring and coaching from veteran colleagues is critical to the successful development of new recruits and young teachers. When Faculty Development Programmes create opportunities for in service candidates, both young and old, to learn from best practices, Microteaching creates a platform to analyze and reflect on their teaching.

A novice’s teaching under the microscope

Microteaching is taking up a micro aspect of pedagogical skill so as to whet and hone it with the help of professional trainers. It is also akin to putting the teacher under a microscope and hence it nothing short of biopsy. “Microteaching is so called since it is analogous to putting the teacher under a microscope so to say while he is teaching so that all faults in teaching methodology are brought into perspective for the observers to give a constructive feedback. It eliminates some of the complexities of learning to teach in the classroom situation such as the pressure of length of the lecture, the scope and content of the matter to be conveyed, the need to teach for a relatively long duration of time (usually an hour) and the need to face large numbers of students, some of whom are hostile temperamentally” (Ananthakrishnan,1993).



Microteaching - How is it designed?

Serial No.	Stage	Activity
1	Participants are assembled in the training hall	Introduction to the agenda and tips on Microteaching given
2	Input sessions on various aspects of the profession given	Learning Styles and Teaching Strategies, Intervention Styles, ICT Enhanced Instruction, Technology Enabled Learning, Teaching Tools etc.
3	Model Lectures	PPTs and white-board presentations by veterans on specific subject areas given
4	Microteaching Phase I	Participants make their presentation before peers and mentors
5	Feedback by peers and mentors	Participants are ready to receive comments, suggestions and constructive criticism from peers and mentors
6	Playback	The participants, peers and mentors view the playback of the presentation
7	Microteaching Phase II	The second round of presentations starts and the cycle is repeated without model lectures or the input sessions from experts
8	Microteaching Phase III Better equipped to face students	The trainees are better off in terms of know-how, skills and understanding of the craft and are ready to face the students with greater confidence

Stage 1

In Faculty Development Programmes (FDPs) with Microteaching as a major component, participants, drawn from various departments, are assembled in one place. The venue is equipped with all the gadgets like LCD projector, 12 or 16 feet long white board , hi res digital camera mounted on a tripod manned by personnel from the ET





Facilities division, lectern at one end of the dais, amplifier and other tools like lavalier and cordless mikes.

On the first day of training, participants are told that they would be required to make a 20 or 30 minute presentation on any topic of their choice. Introduction to the agenda and tips on Microteaching are given. If the number of participants is more and the number of mentors / days earmarked is less, the duration is reduced to 20 minutes though it is ideal to have 30 minutes to each participant as we need to have at least 50 minutes dedicated to each trainee. This includes transition time, setup time, presentation proper, feedback and peer review. Playback can vary from selective viewing to complete playback depending upon the individual performance and can be left to the discretion of the team of mentors.

Participants are advised to choose topics of general nature as the peer group will have teachers from all disciplines. They are given enough clues about the requirements and parameters the mentors will follow in assessing their presentation. Usually, 3 days' time is given so that participants can find enough time to come up with good presentations. Various micro aspects like introducing a topic, development of a topic, interaction, closing punch etc. can be taken up as special attention areas. The presentation might be designed to put special emphasis on one or more of these micro aspects. The parameters also include language, style, diction, and non-verbal signals like gesture, posture, eye contact, and the ability to involve the students in the process through interaction, introducing the topic, use of teaching tools, videos, animations and illustrations, live examples inside the training hall, resourcefulness, ready wit, and the like.

Stage 2

Input sessions on various aspects of the profession given

FDPs have two phases. Phase I has input sessions and Model Lectures and Phase II has Microteaching exercise. During the first 3 or 4 days, the participants receive inputs on a number of areas / topics like Mapping Programme Objectives with Programme Outcomes, Course Objectives with Course Outcomes, Learning Styles and Teaching Strategies, Intervention Styles, ICT Enhanced Instruction, Technology Enabled Learning, Teaching





Tools, Team Teaching, Structuring Instruction, Effective PPTs, Non-verbal Communication, Classroom Management, Time Management, Stress Busters, Professional Ethics, Work-Life Balance, Etiquette and other relevant areas.

Stage 3

Model Lectures

At this stage, model lectures by highly talented teachers, both PPTs and White Board Presentations, are given. Many young and even older teachers find this part of the FDP very rewarding as they find out what is good in a veteran's instruction. Participants are given the anatomy of structured presentation starting with lesson planning to closing punch, through interesting areas like introduction, development of a topic, questioning and interaction, definitions and explanations, time management, use of teaching aids and so on.

Stage 4

Microteaching Phase I

As the time for the participants to start their presentations comes, usually no specific order is followed. There will always be willing horses and more confident ones coming forward to make their presentation. The most important part of Microteaching is video graphing the entire presentation. Very often, participants will not be able to complete the task in the given time. To make it rigorous, at the end of 18 minutes, a mentor will either ring a warning bell or ask the participant to conclude. Interestingly, many participants will be confounded by this *unexpected jolt* and will wind up rather than conclude.

Stage 5

Feedback by peers and mentors

Once the presentation is over, the participant is asked to sit down. A mentor will ask the participant how he/she feels. Most often there is a good, positive feeling. In some cases, there is a great sense of relief as if an ordeal is over and done with. By and large, participants will be beaming with a radiant smile or have an ungainly, awkward smirk on their faces. They do have the '*I could have done better*' feeling though they try to hide it



as far as they can. But the writing is on the wall. They have performed before peers and mentors.

A mentor will ask the participant to rate his/her own presentation on a scale of 1 to 10. In most cases, the answer is 8 or 9. However, the mentors start their feedback with all the goods points about the person and the presentation. Positive strokes on dress, shining shoes, socks matching with trousers, hairdo, facial expression, posture, eye contact etc. are given. After these compliments are over, the mentors go into the minutiae. The countenance, resourcefulness, and the creativity with which a topic is introduced get full attention. For instance, some participants get off the dais, approach the students with some probing questions not only to get them involved but also to test their knowledge of the subject at hand and try to link it to the world or society but better still with everyday life. After getting some expected answers, they move on. Some teachers even ask questions like what is everybody's dream about. Some teachers withhold the first slide or title slide intentionally until the topic emerges from the audience. There is thrill in this kind of introduction. One teacher from the Civil Engineering department followed the style of eliciting the topic of discussion from the participants as he went on the discuss 'Green Buildings'. In fact, this young teacher had only 2 months of teaching experience. Well begun is half-done.

The mentors then move on to discuss how the topic was developed. Tips are given on how to structure this part of instruction.

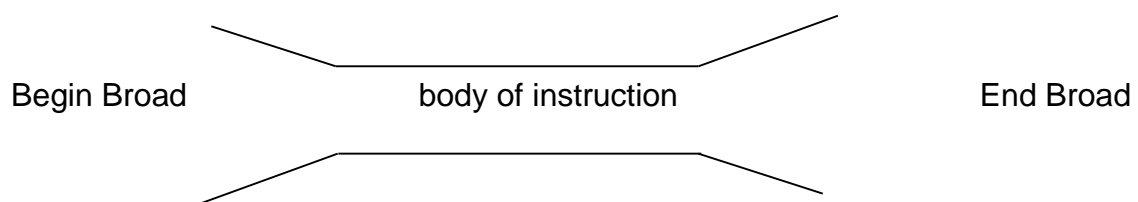


Figure 1: The shape of class room instruction

They are advised to begin broad, narrow down to the topic and end broad, from general to the specific and finally general, touching upon the applications and usefulness of something in everyday life. Very often young teachers simply 'throw up' whatever they

have mugged up. They are admonished gently to assimilate and integrate their knowledge into something concrete and wider. A good teacher makes the complicated simple. This is possible only when one gets the basics right. Very often key words like *stress* or *strain* are not explained properly. '*Sheer force*' is not very easy to explain. *Elongation, elasticity, malleability, ductility* are very often *successfully* confused by teachers. Consequently, students suffer as the teachers do not have clarity or they lack the words needed to explain or illustrate.

In one PPT on 'Strength of Materials', the participant gave wrong definitions and the mentor, a senior pro, took a half an hour session to explain the basics. Young teachers benefit by this kind of intervention and interaction. In one training class, I asked a young teacher the meaning of the word *embedded* after she completed a 20 minute PPT on *Embedded Systems* as a part of Microteaching. She could not answer my question. If this word *embedded* is not explained and exemplified in the introduction, the students will never really get the full grasp of the topic. I told her the simple, basic meaning of the word by splitting the word into em + bed + ed . (em - verb prefix, – bed –base word , ed – participial adjective suffix) She will probably do well to spend more time on explaining the key word before going into technicalities after this *bitter* experience. It is obvious from the above incident that many teachers take basic words for granted and often try to build their instruction on assumptions.

The next step is to discuss the examples used and the use of White Board along with the PPT. Some teachers use 'Ok' 140 times in a 20 minute class. One trainee did keep count of his friend's oks. Others make noises or become guilty of speech disfluencies like breaks, irregularities, or non-lexical vocables. These disfluencies include false starts, i.e. words and sentences that are cut off mid-utterance, phrases that are restarted or repeated and repeated syllables, fillers i.e., grunts or non-lexical utterances such as "uh", "erm" and "well", and repaired utterances or mispronunciations. These disfluencies are discouraged as these can be irritants and can be kept to a minimum with some conscious effort and practice.



Some teachers mistake speed of delivery for fluency. They are also asked to make effective use of pace, voice modulation, pitch, tone, tenor etc. The importance of repetition and recap is recapitulated and reiterated. Making the students to respond to some probing questions is very effective as the class remains alert. Interaction can be planned and embedded in the delivery. It can also be incidental and spontaneous. In the feedback stage, the mentors make their *postmortem analysis* on the presentation dispassionately and objectively. The participants zealously note down all the observations, tips and suggestions.

Stage 6

Participants, peers and mentors view the playback of the presentation

After all the feedback comes the next important stage ... playback of the performance. The recording is played back before the participant, peers and mentors. This is the most beautiful part of Microteaching. We are able to notice many minute things; especially, the participants are able to see how they look when they are in action. This helps in identifying their strengths and weaknesses. "Self-confrontation microteaching processes appear to have a possibly highly significant role to play in self-judgmental and hence self-reinforcement processes, by helping to reveal the discrepancy between present and required performance. Self-reinforcement through video replay self-confrontation appears to have been a consistent feature of microteaching studies reporting significant short term behavioural changes". (Ian R. Cornford, 1991)

Stage 7

Microteaching Phase II

In some cases, the second round of presentations starts immediately after the first round is over. Participants are asked to choose another topic but this time around, they have to incorporate all the suggestions and tips to make a better presentation. In most cases, the second presentation is much better as the mentors succeed in telling them how they want the final outcome to be. "Knowledge acquisition, skill acquisition, and transfer are the three different phases of microteaching. Knowledge acquisition phase is the preparatory, pre-active phase, in which the teacher gets trained on the skills and



components of teaching through lectures, discussion, illustration, and demonstration of the skill by the experts. In the interactive, skill acquisition phase, the teacher plans a micro-lesson for practicing the demonstrated skills. (Remesh et al, 2013)

Table 1: Regular Teaching and Microteaching – A comparison

Dimension	Regular Teaching	Microteaching
Skills	Several	Limited to one or two
Duration	50 to 60 Minutes	20 minutes or less
Class size	60 to 100	15 to 25
Purpose	Content Delivery	Practicing specific skills
Conditions	Natural	Simulated
Audience	Students	Peers and mentors

However, in some cases, we could also observe either no improvement or worse performance as some teachers tend to get nervous before peers and mentors. This could be because of a sense of insecurity or lack of comprehension. Performing before peers and mentors is very different from a real classroom context where teachers might behave more naturally and act with confidence and authority. Candidates who do not exhibit the required level of mastery are advised to repeat the training and do this exercise several times until they get better. It becomes a cycle when they go all over again.

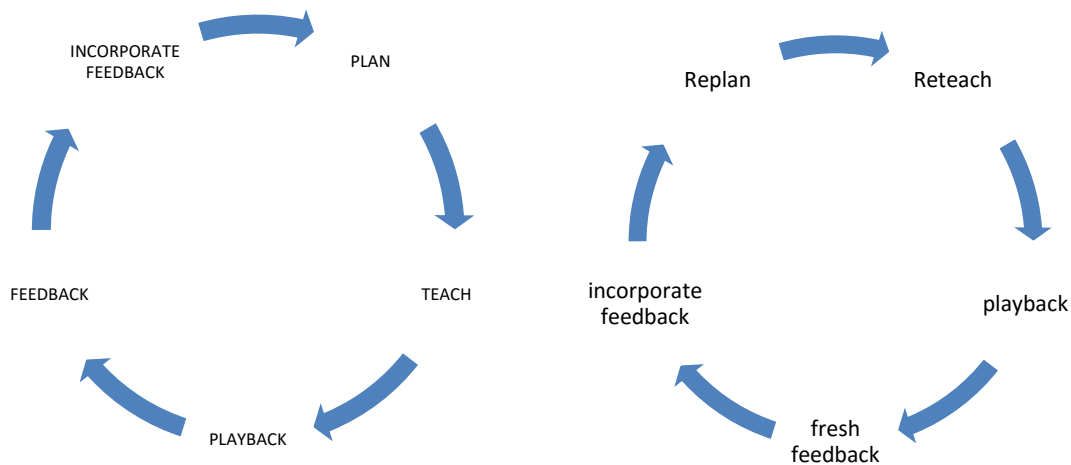


Figure 2: Microteaching Cycles

It is observed very often that after going through a 6 or 8 day Microteaching exercise, 85% of the trainees are able to understand nuances of the craft. After the exposure and interaction, most teachers showed the following changes or improvements:

1. They learnt to state the Lesson Objectives in the second slide. The first slide is devoted to the topic and name of the presenter etc.
2. They introduced the topics better
3. They made the peers behave like a real class of students.
4. Became increasingly aware of their OKs, noises and gap fillers.
5. Avoided redundancies like 'return back', 'could not be able to' etc.
6. Used more meaningful pauses and paced their deliveries well
7. Dedicated one slide to recap questions / mini quizzes to make the class answer them in order to make sure that the class understood the key points.
8. Used videos and animations carefully and judiciously
9. Used on 7 to 9 lines per slide and good contrasting colours.
10. Avoided pacing around the stage
11. Exhibited better control over the flow and time allotted.
12. Used better examples
13. Demonstrated that they had spent time thinking about 'how to present' much more than 'what to present'

14. Acknowledged their sources and even showed web links
15. Developed self-confidence and also learnt to treat their colleagues with respect.
16. Were careful in capping the white board marker when not in use
17. Learnt to pay compliments and to recognize merit in others also
18. Became a cohesive unit and even got to know the names of participants from other departments and in a few days' time began to gel well.

Limitations

1. Some teachers could not understand the importance of sequencing and using the correct tense form. They were comfortable with their broken English and appeared as though they would not make any effort to use grammatically correct English. When the mentors drew their attention to the errors, they showed no remorse or compunction.
 2. They found it difficult to incorporate discourse markers, transition words, signpost words and hedges. Only some teachers showed genuine interest in improving their English.
 3. Their knowledge of current affairs was appalling
 4. They seemed preoccupied with real estate and stock market, movies and petty issues.
 5. Some teachers wore shabby clothes and footwear; some did not understand the negative impression sneakers can create.
 6. Some participants appeared disgruntled and looked upon their being nominated by the department for the Faculty Development Programme as a vendetta or worse still as an insult.
 7. Some participants thoroughly enjoyed the AC rooms, e class rooms and relaxed atmosphere. In some places, the managements provided executive lunch to all the participants. They provided coffee and snacks during breaks.
 8. In the post lunch sessions, some 'enlightened', uninspired participants chose cozy corners to doze off.
 9. For some, it was just a welcome break from the daily grind and monotony.
- In real class rooms, however, the first few minutes are spent on marking the attendance and settling down. A few ice breakers, sweet nothings, catching up with a few pending things, instructing the students to keep the notebooks, textbooks ready etc. also take time.

But the business proper starts with recapitulation of the previous class. Some teachers do spend close to 10 minutes on recapitulation alone. They move to the next topic only after this ritual is over. Placing the present subject in the general context of the syllabus is a must.

Conclusion

Teachers ought to be genuinely interested in what they do on a daily basis. There is no place for mediocrity here. Training programmes are golden opportunities to young teachers in professional colleges. They learn the ropes and hone a few basic skills. They also begin to appreciate their own strengths and abilities. “The colleagues and peers can act as constructive evaluators which also enable them to modify their own teaching-learning practices. The teacher can reinforce behaviors and skills that are necessary and extinguish that are not needed. Ultimately, they can integrate and transfer this learned skills from simulated teaching situation to real class room teaching” (Remesh et al, 2013). In fact, watching peers perform is a useful activity as participants are able to see how other teachers are handling the given task. We can say that most teachers are not actually aware of the effects they are producing.

When they go through Faculty Development Programmes like Microteaching, they wake up and begin to understand their foibles and follies. They also gain all the new tools and techniques, methods and tricks of the trade. This makes them better teachers. In many cases, reverse mentoring was also happening. What more can we ask for? May their tribe increase!

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