Microteaching: A Technique to Enhance English-as-a-Foreign-Language Teacher Candidates' Professional Learning

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Abstract

Practicing teaching occupies a vital place in initial teacher training programs, and microteaching technique is implemented in teacher training to create an environment where teacher candidates have a chance to transfer accumulated content knowledge into practice. This qualitative case research was undertaken to explore 35 third-year Turkish English-as-a-foreign language (EFL) teacher candidates' perceptions of the contribution of the microteaching they either conducted or observed in Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYLs) II course to their professional learning, to what extent getting feedback on their microteaching from their peers reinforced their professional learning, their conceptions of the contribution of reflecting on their own microteaching to their professional learning, and how they would redesign the way the microteaching process was gone through to better serve EFL teacher candidate professional learning. The findings demonstrated microteaching was viewed as effective at enhancing professional learning and the incongruence with respect to their views on the contribution of receiving peer feedback to their professional learning. Additionally, the findings indicated that engaging in self-evaluation enhanced EFL teacher candidate professional learning and a set of suggestions were put forward to improve microteaching experience for EFL teacher candidates. Even though the effect of microteaching on professional learning was evaluated in the context of the initial EFL teacher training and TEYLs II course, the findings of this research could be thought-provoking for teacher educators from diverse disciplines already integrating or intending to integrate microteaching into their teaching.

Suggested Citation

Mikro Öğretim: Yabancı-dil-olarak-İngilizce Öğretmen Adaylarının Mesleki Öğrenmeleri İçin Bir Teknik

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Öz

Öğretme pratiği yapma aday öğretmen yetiştirme programlarında önemli bir yere sahiptir ve mikro öğretim tekniği aday öğretmenlerin edindikleri pedagojik alan bilgisini uygulamaya aktarabilecekleri bir ortam oluşturmak adına uygulanmaktadır. Bu nitel durum çalışması, İngilizce öğretmen adaylarının Çocuklara Yabancı Dil Öğretimi II dersinde yaptıkları ya da gözlemledikleri mikro öğretimlerle alakalı görüşlerini, arkadaşlarından aldıkları geri dönütlerin mesleki öğrenmelerine ne oranda katkı sağladığını, kendi mikro öğretimleri üzerine yansıtma yapmalarının mesleki öğrenmelerine sağladığı katkıya dair görüşlerini ve mikro öğretim sürecinin İngilizce öğretmen adaylarına daha fazla katkı sağlayabilmek için nasıl iyileştirilebileceğini araştırmak için yürütülmüştür. Bulgular, mikro öğretim yapmanın mesleki öğrenmede etkili olduğunu ortaya koyarken, arkadaşlardan alınan geri dönütün mesleki öğrenmeye katkısı açısından farklı fikirlerin olduğunu ortaya koymuştur. Bulgular, aynı zamanda, mikro öğretim üzerine öz değerlendirme yapmanın mesleki öğrenmeye katkı sağladığını işaret etmekte ve mikro öğretim sürecinin iyileştirilebilmesi için katılımcıların önerilerini içermektedir. Bu çalışma, mikro öğretimin İngilizce öğretmen adaylarının mesleki öğrenmeleri ve Çocuklara Yabancı Dil Öğretimi II dersi özelinde yürütülmüş olsa da farklı disiplinlerden hali hazırda mikro öğretim tekniğini kullanan veya kullanmayı planlayan öğretmen eğiticileri için merak uyandırıcı olabilir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Akran geri bildirimi, İngilizce öğretmen adayları, mesleki öğrenme, mikro öğretim, öz değerlendirme

Introduction

Putting theoretical knowledge into practice is indisputably of vital significance in initial English-as-a-foreign-language (EFL) teacher training programs given the fact that EFL teacher candidates can have the chance to practice the language teaching methods and techniques they have learned in the courses offered in the program through the medium of either personally practicing them or observing other teacher candidates applying them in their microteaching, thereby enabling meaningful EFL teacher candidate professional learning (Diana, 2013). Microteaching technique, which was pioneered in the 1960s at Stanford University, paves the way for setting up an environment where teacher candidates could transfer pedagogical content knowledge into practice. Allen and Eve (1968) define microteaching as a "scaled down teaching encounter" (p. 181) and accentuate that the teacher is provided more feedback on their microteaching while the degree of complexities existing in real teaching is lessened. Similar to the definition introduced by Allen and Eve (1968), according to McKnight (1971), microteaching is "a scaled down but realistic classroom context which offers a helpful setting for a teacher to acquire teaching skills and to redefine old ones" (p. 24). The rationale underpinning the use of microteaching is postulated by Francis (1997) as promoting professional growth by virtue of engaging in the process of "conceptualizing, goal setting, observation and reflection" (p. 216). However, conceiving teacher candidates as active agents in their professional learning, Francis (1997) places the emphasis on the need for reforming the concept of microteaching by adding critical aspect to be realized by encouraging critical friendship.

Review of related literature has uncovered that the lack and/or paucity of research on the probable contribution of microteaching to EFL teacher candidates' professional learning, the place of peer feedback on conducted microteaching and its self-evaluation in their professional learning (e.g., Karakaş & Yükselir, 2020), and their suggestions concerning improving the microteaching process to enhance their professional learning requires studies to

be conducted. For this reason, the present research could add to the literature through investigating the effect of implementing the microteaching technique on EFL teacher candidates' professional learning. Filling the mentioned gaps in the literature, this research could guide EFL teacher educators on how to apply the microteaching technique in the courses they teach to help EFL teacher candidates prepare for the profession better.

Teacher Candidate Professional Learning

Teacher professional learning could be explicated as extending the existing pedagogical content knowledge via either undertaking personal initiatives such as following related literature or taking part in collaborative teacher research. Teacher professional learning is construed to be of high significance in enhancing the quality of teaching (Prenger et al., 2018) and promoting student learning (Desimone, 2009), yet also to be complex (Edwards & Nuttall, 2015). In view of the fact that initial teacher education programs perform a vital role in teacher candidate professional learning, it could be contemplated that how they are designed and executed has a substantial part in teacher candidates' professional performance as they start to teach.

Considering the function to be carried out by initial teacher education programs, papers have been produced on the effect of the methods and techniques used in the programs on teacher candidate professional learning (e.g., Bone et al., 2019; D'Rozario, Low et al., 2012; Ruys et al., 2012). To exemplify, the research by Parr et al. (2004) reported that peer teaching improved teacher candidates' professional learning and Gao's (2015) study indicated experiential learning stimulated their professional growth. Microteaching technique is also employed to improve teacher candidate professional learning.

The Place of Microteaching in Teacher Candidate Professional Learning

Within the borders of the initial teacher training, implementing microteaching could produce positive results in regard to teacher candidates' professional learning (e.g., d'Alessio, 2018; Fernandez, 2005; Golightly, 2010; Mikulec & Hamann, 2020; Özcan & Gerçek, 2019). The

quasi-experimental study done by Arsal (2014) revealed the correlation between being

subjected to microteaching technique and having greater self-efficacy in teaching. The effect

of microteaching on designing lessons was explored in the research conducted by Golightly

(2010), the findings of which revealed that implementing microteaching brought about an

inclination among teacher candidates to design and carry out learner-centred instruction.

Review of relevant literature also demonstrated that microteaching led teacher candidates to

engage in reflective practice and to heighten their awareness of how their teaching was

evaluated by others (I'anson et al., 2003; Jones & Jones, 2013; Karlström & Hamza, 2019).

Kuswandono (2014) conducted a study to investigate university mentors' experiences of

guiding teacher candidates' reflective practices in microteaching practice. The participating

university mentors pointed out the importance of collaborative reflection in teaching practices

while placing emphasis on the necessity for giving genuine peer feedback, which should not be

jeopardized due to being under the pressure of providing polite feedback to peers.

The answer to the question of why microteaching is significant in teacher training can

be received so long as the value of practicing teaching in learning to teach is taken account of

(McDonald et al., 2014; Zeichner, 2012), because, as is posited by Skinner (2012),

microteaching functions as a context in which teacher candidates practice teaching skills.

Teacher candidate efficacy could be enhanced by implementing microteaching as

demonstrated in the study by Mergler and Tangen (2010). The findings exhibited in the

research conducted by Mikulec and Hamann (2020) indicated that microteaching aided

teacher candidates in deeply delving into the complexities of teaching and student behavior,

and in finding out strategies they would take with them to real classrooms. Benefits to be

derived from microteaching technique in teacher education have been stated by Frenandez

(2005) as getting the chance to practice teaching, broadening prospective teachers' subject

matter knowledge, learning from others, a starting point for linking theory and practice, and

evaluating teacher candidates' own and other candidates' teaching skills. To what extent

microteaching was useful for creating an environment for teaching practice was explored in the study by Ng (2017). The results of the study showed that using microteaching technique helped participating teacher candidates practice teaching literacy skills, albeit a number of limitations involving time constraints.

Practicum-based microteaching model is developed by Zhang and Cheng (2011) as a model which enables teacher candidates to teach in a scaled down learning situation in phase 1 but in an actual learning environment in phase 2, which provided teacher candidates with a chance to engage in "interactive learning practices, for rehearsal, revision, and retrial" (p. 343). Microteaching method may function as a platform in which new forms of teaching and learning can be explored as yielded in the study undertaken by Kloet and Chugh (2012). In that study, using open-ended feedback forms was demonstrated to afford an opportunity for reconsidering what good teaching was.

The related literature also entails studies conducted in an attempt to investigate the effect of using microteaching technique on the professional development of practicing teachers, one of which is the one carried out by Donnelly and Fitzmaurice (2011). In that study, it was revealed that the participating teachers developed their reflective skills, raised their awareness of their teaching roles by virtue of microteaching technique. That study also revealed that applying microteaching technique boosted their confidence in their own teaching ability and expertise.

Factors Influencing the Effectiveness of Microteaching

The results of the paper produced by Özcan and Gerçek (2019) demonstrated a set of factors, including "teachers' personal traits, their subject matter competence, personal skills and their knowledge and skills about the methods and techniques" (p. 93), which are likely to impinge on to what extent microteaching technique is effectively conducted. Farrell (2008) underscored the importance of clearly expounding the purpose of implementing microteaching so that it can stimulate English language teacher development. He and Yan

(2011) carried out research to investigate teacher candidates' perceptions regarding microteaching and the results provided clues about the factors impacting on its effectiveness. It was depicted that microteaching fostered teacher candidates' professional development but was still inadequate for preparing students for real life teaching as a consequence of teaching their peers, and therefore, the need for complementing microteaching by teaching practice and school experience was enunciated.

The lack of a comprehensive study into the contribution of microteaching to EFL teacher candidates' professional learning, and their views about the effect of peer feedback on their microteaching and self-evaluation of it on their professional learning encouraged the researcher to conduct this study. Additionally, the review of the related literature disclosed the need for investigating EFL teacher candidates' recommendations as to the way/s to be devised to enhance the effectiveness of microteaching in their professional learning. In the light of the gaps in the literature, this study seeks answers to the following research questions:

1. What is the overall evaluation of EFL teacher candidates of their microteaching experiences?

2. What are the perceptions of EFL teacher candidates with regard to the contribution of peer feedback to their professional learning?

3. What are the perceptions of EFL teacher candidates about the impact of reflecting on their own microteaching on their professional learning?

4. How would EFL teacher candidates redesign the structure of microteaching to better aid them in their professional learning?

Methodology

Research Design

This research is designed as a qualitative case study. According to Creswell (2012), "In qualitative inquiry, the intent is not to generalize to a population, but to develop an in-depth exploration of a central phenomenon" (p. 206). In agreement with what is maintained by Creswell (2012), the purpose of this research is thoroughly exploring the study participants'

viewpoints on their microteaching experiences and it does not aim to generalize the findings to a larger population.

Participants and the Context

The study participants included 35 third-year Turkish EFL teacher candidates enrolled in TEYLs II course in the spring term of the academic year 2018/2019. TEYLs II course is offered in the sixth term of the initial EFL teacher education program in the context where this research was undertaken. The average age of the participants was 21.5, and while 21 participants were female, 14 were male. All the participants had taken and successfully completed TEYLs I course, offered in the fifth term of the program and aiming to support EFL teacher candidates in learning the differences between young and adult language learners, misconceptions about learning English at an early age, young language learners' learning styles and strategies, developing activities conducive to young language learners and developing and evaluating materials for young language learners. 14-week TEYLs II course targets assisting EFL teacher candidates in learning to teach language skills, grammar and vocabulary to young learners, and in how to assess and evaluate their progress in English language learning in the first six weeks. Remaining eight weeks were allocated to EFL teacher candidates' microteaching. The participants were informed about the purpose of the study and the fact that they could withdraw from it any time they wanted. Throughout this research, no information that could reveal the identity of the participants is given to protect their privacy and maintain anonymity. Instead, they are assigned numbers (e.g., EFL teacher candidate 1, EFL teacher candidate 30) which are used when sharing excerpts from their statements in the findings section.

Procedure

This qualitative case study was carried out in TEYLs II course offered in the department of English language teaching in a state university. The EFL teacher candidates taking the course were required to microteach once lasting for 10-15 minutes. Following each microteaching,

the EFL teacher candidates filled out a peer feedback form. At the outset of each microteaching, the researcher informed the participants about the importance of providing clear, constructive and unbiased feedback for their professional learning. The form was designed to create a space for the EFL teacher candidates whereby they could evaluate each other's performance on microteaching. In five minutes subsequent to each microteaching, the participants commented on the areas the EFL teacher candidate was good at, and the areas in which they needed to develop their skills. All the forms were submitted to the EFL teacher candidate to give them a chance to judge their own performance better bearing in mind other EFL teacher candidates' evaluations of their microteaching.

Following the submission of peer feedback forms to the EFL teacher candidate, the lecturer, who is also the researcher of this research, provided oral feedback to them on their microteaching, yet in addition to the oral feedback, she graded their performance by the medium of filling out a microteaching evaluation form adapted from Cambridge Assessment International Education (2018) and subsuming the subsections of preparation, physical environment, use of resources, relations with students, lesson pacing, student motivation, diversity in the class and assessment. The highest score the teacher candidates could get for their microteaching performance was 100 and the score they got comprised 20% of their final grade on TEYLs II course.

Each microteaching was video recorded and given to the EFL teacher candidates after they had conducted their microteaching. The lecturer asked the EFL teacher candidates to evaluate their own microteaching on the day they microtaught via filling out the self-evaluation form (a form similar to the one used by the lecturer to evaluate EFL teacher candidates' microteaching) after watching the video recording of their own microteaching, reading the peer feedback forms and taking into consideration the feedback provided by the lecturer. The EFL teacher candidates were expected to submit the self-evaluation form to the lecturer in the next two days following their microteaching.

Data Collection Tools and Data Analyses

Qualitative questionnaire

Following the completion of all the microteaching, the participants were asked to answer four questions about the effectiveness of conducting microteaching in their professional learning, the effect of the peer feedback they got on their microteaching and their self-evaluations of their microteaching on their professional learning, which were read by two EFL teacher educators to ensure the validity of the questionnaire. The teacher educators deemed the questions as suitable for serving for finding out answers to the research questions. In the last 30 minutes of the final lesson of TEYLs II course, the researcher handed out the questionnaire and collected them back at the end of it. Content analysis was used to analyze the data gathered from the questionnaire. Two coders, one of whom was the researcher, conducted the analysis and the inter-rater reliability was .87, which, according to Miles and Huberman (1994), indicates a high level of agreement between the coders.

Semi-structured interview

A semi-structured interview containing three questions about the effect of microteaching experiences on the study participants' professional learning was conducted with five volunteer participants to clarify and extend participants' responses to the questions in the qualitative questionnaire. The semi-structured interview questions were checked by the two EFL teacher educators to ensure they could serve to provide detailed answers to the research questions. The comments of the teacher educators on the semi-structured interview questions indicated that they were appropriate for looking for answers to the research questions. Each audio-recorded interview lasted for 13-17 minutes and was transcribed by the researcher. The data gathered from the interviews was used to support the data obtained from the qualitative questionnaire.

Findings

EFL Teacher Candidates' Overall Evaluation of Their Microteaching Experiences

The content analysis of the data gathered from the first question in the qualitative questionnaire led to the development of two themes, the first of which is effective and valuable experience.

Effective and valuable experience

All the participants viewed conducting microteaching and observing other EFL teacher candidates' microteaching as a valuable and effective experience. The categories that led to the development of the theme are a chance to gain insights into how their microteaching was perceived by others, practicing teaching, and raising their awareness of what should and should not be done as teaching English to young learners. The extracts taken from two participants' responses in the qualitative questionnaire and the interview exhibit the widely-held views of the study participants about their microteaching experiences.

> *I believe that microteaching was really effective. I observed more than 30 microteaching and they were all useful experiences with all the accurate and inaccurate practices demonstrated during microteaching. I once again realized the importance of putting theory into practice though I faced some difficulties both at the preparation stage and during microteaching.* (Interview- EFL teacher candidate 4)

> *Microteaching helped me to become aware of my weaknesses in my teaching skills. I learned about my mistakes and how to correct them. To improve my teaching skills, I observed my classmates' microteaching and evaluated them. I want to say that the last eight weeks during which we microtaught were very useful.* (Qualitative questionnaire- EFL teacher candidate 24)

Contribution to professional learning

Another theme that emerged from the content analysis was the contribution of microteaching to EFL teacher candidates' professional learning. The categories producing the theme are gaining an opportunity for developing skills of classroom and time management, taking teaching anxiety under control, putting the previously learned language teaching methods and techniques into practice, preconceiving the problems that might arise in real teaching, gaining experience of lesson planning, and designing appropriate materials for

students. EFL teacher candidate 12 stated in the qualitative questionnaire: "Microteaching has contributed a lot to my professional development. I realized that nothing may go in the planned and intended way in the classroom environment. I experienced how exciting teaching could be." Below are the statements EFL teacher candidate 1 made in the interview:

> *Microteaching provided me lots of ideas about different materials I can use as teaching young learners and how to teach effectively. It also helped me realize how I can use my creativity and be an unforgettable teacher. During microteaching, I envisaged how I would teach English to my real students in the future. This process also helped me develop my skills in lesson planning*. (Interview-EFL teacher candidate 1)

The Impact of Getting Feedback from Peers on EFL Teacher Candidates' Professional Learning

The content analysis revealed that the participants had diverse views on the effectiveness of the feedback they received from their peers in their professional learning. While some participants evaluated the feedback given by their peers as useful for their professional learning, others' perceptions of it were negative.

Contributing to professional learning

One of the emerged themes is contributing to professional learning. The analysis of the data gathered from the second question in the qualitative questionnaire revealed that for most of the participants, the feedback provided by their peers on their microteaching was effective and made a major contribution to their professional learning. The categories leading to the emergence of the theme are raising an EFL teacher candidate's awareness of how other teacher candidates evaluated their microteaching performance, developing a higher consciousness of an EFL teacher candidate's weaknesses in teaching, and getting the chance to identify the areas to be improved. EFL teacher candidate 3 stated in the interview: "My microteaching could be perfect but my friends acted like primary school students and their feedback made me become aware of my weaknesses in teaching English. This really helped me overcome my weaknesses." Likewise, EFL teacher candidate 21 wrote down in the qualitative questionnaire: "We may not be aware of our mistakes but being observed by other EFL teacher candidates and getting feedback on our microteaching from them helped us realize

our mistakes and work on correcting them." In line with the views of EFL teacher candidate 21, EFL teacher candidate 13 stated in the qualitative questionnaire: "I believe peer feedback really helped me become aware of my weaknesses in teaching English. My classmates sorted out the weaknesses that were not identified by the lecturer".

No contribution to professional learning

The second theme detected through the content analysis is no contribution to professional learning. The categories that produced the theme are not receiving constructive feedback from the peers due to not getting along well with each other and peers' not taking the task of giving feedback seriously. EFL teacher candidate 1 stated in the interview: "Frankly speaking, peer feedback was not very effective because my friends' feedback was useless, and their comments were meaningless. I guess they did not take it seriously." In the qualitative questionnaire, EFL teacher candidate 16 stated: "I do not think the feedback I got from my peers was useful. Constructive feedback was rare. They took the task of giving feedback personally, and because of this, their feedback was not constructive and they criticized me severely."

The Influence of Self-Evaluation of Microteaching on EFL Teacher Candidates' Professional Learning

The analysis of the EFL teacher candidates' answers to the third question of what their perceptions concerning the contribution of self-evaluation of their microteaching to their professional learning were revealed that they construed self-evaluation as having a strong effect on their professional learning. The common comments made on the effect of carrying out self-evaluation via watching video recordings and taking into account the feedback given by the peers and the lecturer concentrated on getting the chance to objectively evaluate microteaching in a relaxed mood and thinking over the things that worked well and/or did not go well and what could be done for ameliorating the things that went wrong.

Objective evaluation of microteaching

One of the themes that developed in the content analysis is getting the chance to evaluate one's own microteaching without prejudice by virtue of watching the video recordings of their microteaching and pondering upon them. The categories that contributed to the production of the theme are paving the way for recognizing weaknesses and stimulating to strive to overcome them. The statement of EFL teacher candidate 2 epitomizes other participants' perceptions in relation to the link between professional learning and self-evaluation of microteaching: "I would not have been able to evaluate my microteaching objectively and been aware of my mistakes unless I had watched my video-recording".

Heightening EFL teacher candidates' awareness of the weaknesses in their teaching skills

Another theme that emerged from the content analysis is heightening EFL teacher candidates' awareness of the weaknesses in their teaching skills. The categories leading to the development of the theme are raising EFL teacher candidates' awareness of the weaknesses in teaching effectively and raising EFL teacher candidates' awareness of deficiencies in their own language skills. The two excerpts given below illustrate the perceptions of other participants regarding the relationship between raising EFL teacher candidates' awareness of their weaknesses in their teaching skills and their microteaching experiences.

> *While watching the video recording of my microteaching, I realized that I was not giving clear instructions and I was mispronouncing frequently used words. My friends and the lecturer had also given feedback close to my own evaluation but watching me making those mistakes really opened my eyes. I will work hard not to make the same mistakes next time and when I start to teach*. (Qualitative Questionnaire - EFL teacher candidate 5)

> *Watching the video recording of my microteaching really helped me. I realized that students could not hear me especially the ones sitting at the back row. A good teacher should be heard by all the students in the classroom no matter what the classroom size is.* (Qualitative Questionnaire - EFL teacher candidate 2)

How EFL Teacher Candidates Would Redesign Microteaching

The analysis of data obtained from the fourth question in the qualitative questionnaire revealed that the majority of the participants would take a number of initiatives to enhance

the effectiveness of the microteaching experience while 10 of the participants were content with how the microteaching process took place and consequently there was no need for redesigning it for them. The themes that developed from the content analysis are as follows: increasing the number of microteaching an EFL teacher candidate must conduct, peer feedback read by the lecturer and starting to implement microteaching technique earlier in the program.

Increasing the number of microteaching an EFL teacher candidate must conduct

The categories which produced the theme are the enthusiasm felt by the EFL teacher candidates to microteach more and the enthusiasm felt by the EFL teacher candidates to observe more microteaching. EFL teacher candidate14 stated in the qualitative questionnaire: "I wish I had had the chance to microteach at least three times because practicing teaching can teach a teacher candidate how to teach." Similarly, EFL teacher candidate 2 expressed in the interview: "Microteaching was the most effective technique used by the lecturer in this academic year. It would have been better for us if we had microtaught more."

Peer feedback is to be read by the lecturer

Another theme that developed from the content analysis of the participants' answers to the question of how they would redesign the microteaching process was that the lecturer had to read all the peer feedback. The categories contributing to the development of the theme are EFL teacher candidates' not taking the task of giving feedback on microteaching seriously and the probable positive influence of the lecturer. The statements below typify those of other participants.

> *The feedback I got from my friends was not very effective. I guess some of them were playing with their mobile phones while I was microteaching and they gave feedback because they had to do so. If the lecturer had told the EFL teacher candidates that she would read all the peer feedback forms, they would give feedback more seriously.* (Interview- EFL teacher candidate 16)

Starting to implement microteaching technique earlier in the program

Since the participants found their microteaching experiences as effective at their professional learning, they suggested commencing to microteach earlier after being enrolled in the initial EFL teacher education program rather than waiting for TEYLs II course. The categories that developed the theme are the wish for microteaching not only in TEYLs II course and asking for a program rich in microteaching. EFL teacher candidate 4 stated in the interview: "EFL teacher candidates need to engage in microteaching before taking TEYLs II course. We can start to microteach even in the first year of the program." EFL teacher candidate 31 stated in the qualitative questionnaire: "I believe microteaching is very important to learn to teach and more important than learning theories. Because of this, EFL teacher candidates should be given an opportunity for starting to microteach before the third year of the program."

Discussion

This study was carried out with a view to exploring the effect of microteaching on EFL teacher candidates' professional learning via uncovering their overall evaluation of the effectiveness of conducting microteaching and observing the microteaching their classmates conducted in their professional learning, their perceptions regarding the effectiveness of getting peer feedback and engaging in self-evaluation, and through unpacking the suggestions they had as to enhancing the quality of the microteaching process for their professional learning. The findings as to EFL teacher candidates' overall evaluation of their microteaching experiences are in congruence with the results of existing research in the literature examining students' perceptions concerning their microteaching experiences (Arsal, 2014; Frenandez , 2005; Golightly, 2010; Karlström & Hamza, 2019; Mikulec & Hamann, 2020; Özcan & Gerçek, 2014). The EFL teacher candidates stated in the qualitative questionnaire that conducting microteaching contributed to their professional learning by providing opportunities for putting what they had theoretically learned about classroom management and language teaching

methods into practice, and they gained experience of lesson planning and of preparing materials to use as teaching English to young learners. Considering the prevalently raised issue of the dichotomy between theory and practice in teacher training, the contribution of microteaching to EFL teacher candidates' professional learning once again brings forward the requirement for offering more chances to practice teaching in the initial EFL teacher education. The findings indicate that teaching EFL teacher candidates approaches, methods and techniques recommended to be used in English language teaching is insufficient for preparing them for the teaching profession. Microteaching, albeit the fact that it is a scaled down teaching experience, could perform a crucial function in supporting EFL teacher candidates in developing their teaching skills, as was figured out from the comments of the EFL teacher candidates on the effectiveness of microteaching in their professional learning.

The results of the study demonstrated the incongruence among participants' conceptions of the effectiveness of peer feedback in EFL teacher candidates' professional learning in that whilst there were participants valuing peer feedback for their professional learning, for other participants, peer feedback made no contribution to it. The participants setting forth peer feedback as a component of the microteaching process contributing to their professional learning underscored that reading peer feedback enabled them to have a clearer understanding of the weaknesses in their teaching, which is in line with the research undertaken by He and Yan (2011). The findings in that research also revealed that Chinese EFL pre-service teachers viewed peer feedback as effective in raising their awareness of their weaknesses and strengths. The participants who did not find peer feedback as an agent that enhanced their professional learning stated that some EFL teacher candidates did not provide constructive feedback because of personal issues. This seems to be an acute problem because the lecturer had told the EFL teacher candidates to be fair and give constructive feedback to their peers by accentuating the fact that they would teach different students in the future they might or might not like yet they could not behave in a biased manner towards them. Teacher

educators using microteaching technique, therefore, need to spend more time on expounding teacher candidates the significance of providing constructive feedback to their peers, and besides, on highlighting the ability of giving constructive feedback as a quality of successful teachers.

In addition to researching the impact of peer feedback on EFL teacher candidates' professional learning, this study scrutinized the probable contribution of self-evaluation to EFL teacher candidates' professional learning. The findings showed that EFL teacher candidates valued engaging in self-evaluation through watching their own micro lessons and taking into consideration the lecturer and peer feedback as they got opportunities for evaluating their performance on microteaching in an unbiased manner and for heightening their awareness of their strengths and weaknesses in their teaching skills. These results illustrate that self-evaluation gets EFL teacher candidates to delve into reflective practice, which is in line with those of the studies carried out by I'anson et al. (2003), Karlström and Hamza (2019), Jones and Jones (2013) and Karakaş and Yükselir (2020). Self-evaluation plays a significant role in teacher candidate learning because teacher candidates should be active agents in their professional learning as postulated by Francis (1997). EFL teacher candidates can evaluate their microteaching in the absence of its video recording by taking into consideration the feedback they receive from the teacher educator and classmates. Nevertheless, watching their own microteaching performance offers an opportunity for fostering their awareness of their strengths and weaknesses in their teaching, which could remain intact if they did not watch their microteaching.

The analysis of the data on the research question of what they would do to increase the quality of the microteaching process displayed that the EFL teacher candidates were in need of conducting more microteaching in TEYLs II course, and additionally emphasized the need for commencing to microteach earlier in the initial EFL teacher education program. Conducting only one microteaching was perceived to be inadequate by the participants, yet

crowded classes stand out as a major impediment for teacher educators because a theoretical basis needs to be formed before EFL teacher candidates begin to teach their micro lessons and then a group of 35-40 EFL teacher candidates should be observed when they are microteaching. To alleviate this problem, a-five-hour microteaching course which is dedicated to creating an environment for EFL teacher candidates to conduct microteaching could be added to the initial EFL teacher education program. In doing so, they can microteach more than once to practice the theoretical knowledge they have accumulated, and furthermore, they can observe more microteaching, meaning having more opportunities for witnessing what works and what does not work. EFL teacher candidates can also be given a chance to commence to teach micro lessons starting from the second term of the program before taking the courses of Teaching Language Skills and TEYLs, and the video recordings of all microteaching conducted by EFL teacher candidates could be archived to evaluate the progression of teacher candidate learning and teaching performance.

The results indicated that providing the lecturer had read peer feedback forms before they were submitted to the teacher candidates, they would have taken the task of giving feedback to their peers more seriously and adopted a fair attitude whilst giving feedback. This suggestion merits consideration by EFL teacher educators implementing or planning to implement microteaching technique because EFL teacher candidates can really attach more significance to providing quality feedback if their feedback is read by the teacher educator.

Conclusions

Practicing teaching undeniably holds a noteworthy place in the initial EFL teacher education, which requires offering more opportunities to EFL teacher candidates for putting what they theoretically learn into practice. The findings reported in the current research demonstrated that conducting microteaching aided the EFL teacher candidates in enhancing their professional learning by virtue of experiencing practicing the language teaching methods they had covered in the courses they had taken. The findings also indicated that whilst they

found peer feedback as effective in encouraging their professional learning, there were participants deeming it as ineffective because of the issue that they could not get unbiased feedback from their peers. Furthermore, the study participants highly valued evaluating their own microteaching performance, which fostered their professional learning. EFL teacher candidates start to take Teaching Practice course at the seventh term of the program in the context of this study, which is added to the curriculum to create opportunities for them for practicing teaching English to real students and confronting the complexities of real teaching, and one of the criticisms about applying microteaching technique is the lack of encounter to the complexities of real teaching. Notwithstanding the fact that EFL teacher candidates do not teach real students in a real school environment in microteaching, as was the case in this study, they can still practice teaching English, which enhances their professional learning.

Limitations of This Study and Recommendations for Further Research

The EFL teacher candidates did not redesign their lesson plans and microteach again considering the feedback provided by the lecturer and their peers, and self-evaluation, which is an important limitation of this study. Further studies need to be undertaken to explore how getting feedback from the lecturer and peers, and engaging in self-evaluation contributes to EFL teacher candidates' professional learning by having them redesign their lesson plans and remicroteach. By doing so, it could be possible to observe the change, if any, in EFL teacher candidates' microteaching performance rather than merely relying on the EFL teacher candidates' statements, though they are precious as well, about how they would improve their teaching next time. Moreover, a microteaching course could be added to the EFL teacher education curriculum, which can enable EFL teacher candidates to microteach more than once, and, consequently, to observe more microteaching. Further research should be conducted to broaden the existing body of knowledge on the effect of microteaching on EFL teacher candidates' professional learning, and notably, to propose solutions for advancing the quality of peer feedback.

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There is no potential conflict of interest.

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