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An investigation of the affordances and limitations of on-campus microteaching as an alternative to the traditional in-schools teaching practice in preparing the PGCE students for teaching Life Sciences after qualification: a case study

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Abstract

The use of microteaching is a topic of controversy continuous discussion in teacher training programs. While some studies suggest that microteaching can be used effectively to develop student teacher skills other studies suggest that it has limitations. The purpose of this study was to investigate the affordances and limitations of the on-campus microteaching programme that was used as an alternative to in-schools teaching experience to train Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) students to teach life sciences in high school. To understand the affordances and limitations, this study investigated the competences that manifested in students' planning, microteaching, and video stimulated recall interviews. The study was done at a South African university. There were 5 participants in total. Collected data included lesson plans, videorecording of microteaching and interviews done with the participating PGCE students. The research study employed a qualitative research design and a case study research strategy. The analysis of collected data was guided by the Minimum Requirements for Teacher Educator Qualifications framework as well as the Topic Specific Pedagogical Content Knowledge framework. The results showed that the on-campus micro-teaching programme afforded PGCE opportunities to apply and develop further their knowledge of planning lessons and teaching of a life sciences topic. The on-campus micro-teaching also enabled students to get immediate feedback from supervising teachers and peers. Though the microteaching affordances were observed there were limitations that manifested during micro-teaching: the inability of the PGCE students to use certain teaching strategies due to the artificiality of microteaching classroom, limited teaching time, absence of opportunities to practice class management skills as peers were well-behaved most of the time and also lack of opportunities to deal with incorrect answers and misconceptions as peer students were providing correct answers most of the time. PGCE students' concerns included not having experienced actual learners and actual classrooms, no opportunities for practicing other teacher professional duties such as marking registers, class management, giving tasks, marking, and giving feedback. The findings suggest that the artificial nature of microteaching including short duration of the lesson is a limitation in developing certain teaching and professional skills.

Key words

Post Graduate Certificate in Education, Topic Specific Pedagogical Content Knowledge, on-campus microteaching experience.