Research Article

Investigating the Impacts of Previous and Current Learning Experiences on Student Teachers' Teaching Experiences

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Abstract

This study investigated the impacts of the previous and current learning experiences of the student teachers on their microteaching practices. The study pursued threefold research goals: to diagnose the microteaching stance, to treat it, and to explore and evaluate the progress. The participants were 24 undergraduate third year student teachers attending the English Language Teaching (ELT) Department at a Turkish University. Two types of research were used for data collection: *ex post facto research* to scrutinize the previous learning experiences and teacher cognitions of the participants and *phenomenographic research* to specify their current performance in microteaching practices in terms of 1) professionally self-development 2) sharing others' experiences 3) developing educational aims 4) enhancing skills development 5) focusing on learners and 6) negative impacts of microteaching. Depending on the ex post facto data, it was assumed that the previous learning experiences and teacher cognitions of the student teachers might have had some undesirable impacts on shaping their teaching perception. Drawing on the perspectives of the student teachers who were exposed to treatment process, it was noticed that the treatment process assisted them to participate in a more constructive and functional manner in microteaching practices.

Keywords

Microteaching • Teacher cognition • Student teachers • Teacher training • Professional development

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Teacher education is a process in which student teachers are trained to gain theoretical field knowledge and practice-oriented teaching knowledge. In practice oriented side, student teachers are trained to teach efficiently through various teaching practices. Microteaching applications among such practices are implemented for the purpose of preparing qualified teachers and providing student teachers with the opportunities to explore teaching strategies and develop novel teaching techniques (Akalın, 2005; Eick, Meadows, & Balkom, 2005). Microteaching applications are also expected to allow student teachers to have experiences before they involve in teaching practice in their future occupations (Ismail, 2011).

Microteaching was originally developed by Dwight Allen and his colleagues in the early 1960's (Rather, 2004). Microteaching is widely used in teacher training process to expand the scope of student teachers by mastering the teaching practice. In a simulated setting, student teachers are exposed to condensed teaching situation practice systematically for developing teaching experiences for natural classroom environments (Amobi & Irving, 2005; Busher, Gündüz, Çakmak, & Lawson, 2014). It is generally agreed that microteaching promotes practical teaching experiences (Remesh & Memorial, 2013), prepares student teachers to gain perceptions of appropriate teaching skills, encourages them to become effective and reflective in teaching profession (Akalın, 2005; Çakır, 2000; Eick et al., 2005), and shapes student teachers' professional growth (Honigsfeld & Schiering, 2004). Further, microteaching offers opportunities for student teachers to practice what they have learnt in theory, to examine different teaching techniques and styles, to prepare materials, to improve teaching repertoire, and to design lesson plans in a systematic way (Arends, 2000; Benton-Kupper, 2001).

Microteaching stages in which all aspects of teaching action are implemented within a cycle comprise teach, review, reflect, and re-teach (Arends, 2000; Harmer, 2007). In this cycle, a micro lesson is initiated by teaching stage. While teaching, student teachers who are observed by their classmates and educator/s follow a pre-designed lesson plan; then, the micro lesson is discussed for evaluating student teachers' performance. By observing what others do, student teachers can decide on how they will perform their own microteaching lessons with immediate feedback in a simulated environment (Mergler & Tangen, 2010). In re-teaching stage, student teachers re-teach the lesson with regard to the suggestions offered in the discussion stage.

Microlesson and Preparing Lesson Plans

In the primary stage of micro lessons, lesson plans in conformity with the lesson cycle are designed. A number of studies reveal that microteaching is an effective means

of improving student teachers' teaching skills and pedagogical planning capabilities through designing lesson plans (Arends, 2000; Demirel, 2004; Wallace, 1991; Yeany, 1978) and a tool of continuous training applicable at all stages of the teaching profession (Kaustuva, Santoshi, & Abhijit, 2015). In a study carried out by Fernandez (2010), it is stressed that preparing lesson plans has led to growth in participants' knowledge of teaching when supported with meaningful discussion, planning, and practice as well as feedback from others. Despite devoting themselves to follow the previously prepared lesson plans, student teachers can learn how to divert from their lesson plans in some unexpected situations and make decisions when necessary. In this respect, microteaching practices are the occasions for student teachers to experience how to make modifications in the sub-divisions of a lesson plan when any problem is encountered (Coşgun Ögeyik, 2009; Tülüce & Çeçen, 2016).

Microteaching Practices and Evaluation

For evaluating microteaching practices, two associated components are generally included into the sessions: videotaped micro lessons and feedback on videotaped teaching (Umeh, Mogbo, & Nsofor, 2015). The use of video with guided reflection is important for assisting student teachers to form links between theory and practice and for raising awareness of teaching practices (Kourieos, 2016). Student teachers can benefit from a video-tape recording on microteaching for self-evaluation and self-analysis (Honigsfeld & Schiering, 2004), immediate peer and tutor feedback (Al-Humaidi & Abu-Rahmah, 2015; McAlpine & Weston, 2002; Umeh et al., 2015), and reflective practice (Kane, Sandretto, & Heath, 2002; Kponja, 2001). Receiving feedback on a microteaching task fosters student teachers' teaching skills development (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000; Fernandez & Robinson, 2006; Marzano, 2003; Ndileleni & Maphosa, 2014; Subramaniam, 2006). For improving teaching practices, reflection as an indispensable part of microteaching process has also been widely acknowledged. It is agreed that through reflective practice, student teachers find opportunities to revisit their teaching and make decisions for better ways of teaching (Ping, 2013). Dees et al. (2007, p. 133) developed a teaching/learning transactional model to provide a framework to guide reflection. The model highlights the importance of reflection with several dimensions: understanding how individuals' own life stories impact their practice; identifying their awareness of the in-the-moment factors that affect student learning; and identifying how an individual teacher defines the role of a teacher in the process of learning. Unlike traditional teacher education models, reflective practice places student teachers at the centre of education process to observe their own development by analysing and evaluating their own practice (Richards, 2008). Following the assessment of the videotaped

practice and feedback, student teachers are expected to gain a deeper understanding of teaching profession (Coşgun Ögeyik, 2009).

The research studies in the literature generally point out that student teachers are well prepared for teaching profession through microteaching practices. In a study carried out by Amobi and Irwing (2009), microteaching has been valued as a practice increasing student teachers' capabilities to reflect on their teaching practice. In a study by Donnelly and Fitzmaurice (2011), it was concluded that although initially giving rise to anxiety among some participants, microteaching has led to greater self-awareness and increased confidence in participants' own ability and expertise; and thus it has encouraged them to be reflective and reflexive for creating their own professional knowledge. The efficiency of microteaching on developing professional identity and efficacy is also noteworthy to mention here. In a study, Mergler and Tangen (2010) evaluated student teachers' efficacy through microteaching and found out that microteaching practices had positive impacts on developing teacher identity and self-efficacy. Microteaching also helps student teachers discover and analyse their strengths and weaknesses by engaging in reflective practice. Warin, Maddock, Pell, and Hargreaves (2006) argued that self-awareness is an essential tool for teachers and that reflective practice is essential for this capacity to integrate and make sense of the self. Punia, Miglani, and Singh (2016) explored that microteaching practices help student teachers gain pedagogical competence and professional experience by boosting student teachers' teaching competencies for real teaching sessions.

Although microteaching has long been appreciated as a professional development tool in teacher training programs, student teachers may sometimes be unenthusiastic to participate in microteaching activities due to non-natural classroom environments and time limited course schedules. Additionally, the cost and maintenance of equipment regarding reduced budgets of student teachers, the amount of time for preparing materials, and the difficulty of material production may also cause unwillingness (Coşgun Ögeyik, 2009; Cripwell & Geddes, 1982). Moreover, when student teachers do not have satisfactory feedback, they may encounter some problems related with the factors like teachers' psychology, pedagogical planning, lack of confidence (Punia et al., 2016). Furthermore, when proper training is not given to student teachers to handle the instructional endeavours, they may feel nervous and face difficulties in microteaching sessions (Fisher & Burrell, 2011; Ndileleni & Maphosa, 2014; Tütüniş, 2014). It is also stressed that undertaking to look at oneself through other people's eyes is a revealing and sometimes disturbing exercise (Moore, Walsh, & Risquez, 2007). Despite such negative views, motivating student teachers to improve themselves and offering comprehensive feedback may foster in-depth awareness of microteaching and result in remarkable improvements. Since microteaching is a simulated teaching experience of short duration, it allows the practitioner to practice

teaching techniques, strategies or procedures, to test innovative approaches, to experience peer and self-evaluation by reducing anxiety in a supportive environment (Taggart & Wilson, 2005), and to improve critical thinking disposition (Arsal, 2015). Accordingly, microteaching fits with reflective teaching as a contemporary approach to teacher education.

As Borg (2003) claims although professional preparation through microteaching practices may shape student teachers' teaching experiences, teacher training programmes which ignore student teachers' prior beliefs may be less effective at teacher training, since teacher cognition and practices are mutually playing an important role in shaping student teachers' teaching experience. Borg (2015) also declares that teachers' prior language learning experiences establish cognitions which form the basis of their initial conceptualization of language teaching during teacher education and may continue to be influential throughout their professional lives. In the literature, detailed research has been conducted to investigate the benefits of microteaching or teacher cognitions as separate topics. But there is still a need to search for the impacts of the prior experiences and teacher cognitions of student teachers on their microteaching practices with an attempt to treat the undesirable effects of antecedent impressions. The present study may contribute to language teacher education by introducing the assumption that student teachers' teaching capacities may be shaped by their previous learning experiences and teacher cognition; thus, investigating student teachers' previous learning experiences is important for finding solutions to the unforeseen problems in teacher training process.

Purpose

This study pursued threefold research goals: to diagnose the problems about microteaching stance of the student teachers attending a Turkish University, to treat microteaching, and to evaluate the progress. The present study differs in a few ways from other studies. At the outset, the present study replicated one of the previously carried out research study at the same Turkish University (Coşgun Ögeyik, 2009). Replication studies are the repetition of former studies and are divided into three types: literal replication is the exact duplication of a previous methodologically sound study in which original methods and conditions are repeated to confirm the original findings; approximate replication involves the duplication of the methods of the original study but altering some non-major variable; and constructive duplication means beginning with a similar purpose as the original study but creating a new means or design to verify the original findings (Hinkel, 2011; Tavakoli, 2012). This study that is a kind of constructive duplication was replicated for some reasons: first, the former study which was carried out in 2009 to explore the attitudes of the student

teachers through a Likert type scale presented positive attitudes of the student teachers toward microteaching. The results were verified via quantitative data. Conversely, in the present study, the attempt to explore the similarities or differences, regarding the past five-year span, about the views of the student teachers attending the same university was made through two different types of research methods: *ex post facto research* to scrutinize the previous learning experiences and teacher cognitions of the student teachers, and *phenomenographic research* to analyse the findings after the treatment process that was implemented to change the undesirable effects of the potential antecedent teaching impressions. The attempt to discover the impacts of the previous experiences was based on the assumption that student teachers' practices have been shaped by their language learning histories, namely by their previous learning experiences and teacher cognitions (Borg, 2003, 2015; Crooks, 2015; Kubanyiova, 2015; Kubanyiova & Feryok, 2015). The study tried to seek answers to the research question: "How did the student teachers perceive their microteaching practices?" Based on the main research question, some sub-questions were designed and answers were sought in the research process.

1. How did they conceptualize their prior teachers' teaching behaviours?

2. How did student teachers evaluate their professional development through microteaching?

3. What were the challenges of microteaching practices for student teachers?

Method

Research Design

In the study, sequential mixed methods research was used for collecting and analysing quantitative and then qualitative data in two consecutive phases (Creswell, 2011; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). In this research design, *ex post facto research* for collecting quantitative data and *phenomenographic research* for gathering qualitative data were used. *Ex post facto research* is a method for investigating the possible past experiences that happened and cannot be controlled or manipulated by the researcher (Cooper & Schindler, 2001). Therefore, in this study, *ex post facto research* was used for exploring the previous learning experiences and teacher cognition of the student teachers that were assumed to be effective in their teaching practices; in the *ex post facto research* process, the task of the researcher was to report and interpret only what happened or what has been happening. It is suggested that, in *ex post facto research*, the researcher takes the effect (or dependent variable) and examines the data retrospectively to establish causes, relationships or associations, and their

meanings by postulating hypotheses according to one's personal experience; and thus, the researcher begins with certain data and looks for an interpretation consistent with them through the cause-and-effect relationships directly when laboratory controls for many research purposes would be impractical, costly or ethically undesirable (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). *Ex post facto research* would be appropriate particularly in social and educational contexts where the independent variable is beyond the researcher's control.

Phenomenography is the study of the different ways in which people experience, perceive, understand, and conceptualize various phenomena in the world around them. *Phenomenological studies* attempt to capture the essence of the human experience and individual perspectives of the participant by stressing the importance of each individual and his/her respective of reality (Tavakoli, 2012). By *phenomenographic research* method, the understandings of individuals about a phenomenon in teaching and learning settings are researched and established. In this study, the reason of applying *phenomenographic research* was to check the student teachers' perceptions and experiences about their own microteaching practice, rather than solely collecting observable and empirical data.

Study Population

The study was carried out with the participation of total 24 non-native speaker (NNS) student teachers of English attending the third year of the ELT program at a Turkish university. All student teachers (N = 24) who enrolled in the ELT Methodology II course were recruited for the study. The participants were nearly at the same age level (about 20s) and 81% of the participants were female. It is stated that if the participants in a study are same on a given characteristic, that characteristic is constant, not a variable in the study (Gliner, Morgan, & Leech, 2010); therefore, the variables -age differences and gender differences- were not evaluated in the study. All participants were exposed to consent process wherein they accepted volunteer participation in the survey.

Data Collection

Demographic information and evaluation forms, teaching experiences reflection sheets, opinion essays, and semi-structured interviews with a set of in-depth questions were used for data collection.

Research Procedure and Data Analysis

The research process was initiated by observing the microteaching practices of the student teachers in the ELT (English Language Teaching) Methodology II course in which the student teachers were exposed to microteaching practices. The English language teacher training bachelor's degree program consists of basic courses and electives in which student teachers are tutored for the principles of education for gaining effective teaching practices through microteaching activities and classroom presentations (Yükseköğretim Kurulu [YÖK], 2008).

To report the microteaching sessions, co-observation sessions were implemented by both non-native speaker educator, who was also the researcher of the study, and a native speaker educator who was invited to the sessions by the researcher in order to avoid bias and subjective evaluation during observation. The observable problems were diagnosed and reported by these two educators. During the microteaching sessions before the treatment process, it was observed that the student teachers mostly had difficulties to implement the recent teaching approaches and techniques, which were theoretically lectured in the course sessions, though they prepared lesson plans and designed activities in an innovative way. *Ex post facto research* was designed in order to discover whether the possible causes of such troubles resulted from the prior learning experiences and teachers cognitions of the student teachers (Borg, 2003).

Ex post facto research procedure. *Ex post facto research* was conducted to establish the causal relationships between the current and past events in the microteaching sessions. This alternative research method searched the dependent variable 'prospective teachers' current performance in microteaching' in retrospect for the possible relationship with the independent variable 'prospective teachers' previous learning experiences and their teacher cognitions'. The findings of the diagnostic stage were expected to highlight the probable effects of the past events on the current situation.

For *ex post facto research* data, demographic forms and evaluation sheets were used to gather specific background information about the student teachers. In demographic forms, the schools the student teachers graduated from and the graduation years were investigated. In the evaluation sheets, the student teachers made evaluation about their previous English courses and their previous teachers' teaching behaviours. They were asked to rate their previous teachers' professional preferences and approaches in terms of student-centeredness/ teacher-centeredness, the ways of teacher behaviour such as eye contact, voice quality, being well, rapport, body language use, professional expertise, mastering the subject matter, building confidence, self-esteem, and self-efficacy (Appendix I).

Treatment process. After gathering and analysing the initial *ex post facto research* data, the student teachers were exposed to the treatment process. During the treatment process, three-hour microteaching sessions a week were put into practice. The treatment process continued for five weeks. Before the microteaching sessions, each participant prepared his/her lesson plan with supplementary materials. While performing the fifteen-minute micro lessons, they were recorded on the video. After each session, sometime was allocated for the collaborative discussion in which the educator, the native speaker observer, and the classmates participated. The student teachers were provided with the reasonable feedback about their microteaching presentations. The given feedback was mainly on designing appropriate classroom activities, selecting and preparing course materials regarding the needs and expectations of the target group, implementing appropriate teaching methods, developing teaching skills, and consuming teaching time efficiently. As feedback research indicates (Bloxham, 2013; Brooks, 2012; Carless, 2013), the aim was to assist the student teachers to reflect on their teaching performance for coping with their weaknesses and valuing their strengths through feedback. By observing and evaluating the ongoing sessions, the student teachers were also encouraged to implement the related theoretical issues in practice. Additionally, they were encouraged to share their previous school experiences, their previous teachers' manners, and their present experiences. The educator behaved as a controller and observer during those sessions and lent assistance when necessary.

Phenomenographic research procedure. For the exploration and evaluation of the treatment stage, *phenomenographic research* was conducted. The aim was to investigate how student teachers categorized the contribution of the microteaching practice to teacher training process. For collecting phenomenographic data, the student teachers were asked to reflect their ideas and experiences through teaching experience reflection sheets designed by both the researcher and native speaker lecturer (see Appendix II). They were invited to evaluate the microteaching sessions regarding their strengths, preferences, and needs in terms of professionally self-development, sharing others' experiences, developing educational aims, skills development that have been described as the provisions of effective teacher education (Benekos, 2016; Harmer, 2007; James, 2001), and the challenges of microteaching. The student teachers were assisted while responding to the questions in the reflection sheets.

For phenomenological data, semi-structured interviews were also used in order to set aside some prejudices and presuppositions for penetrating into the essence of the phenomenon (Tavakoli, 2012). The purpose of the interviews was to encourage the participants to describe their understanding the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). During the interview sessions, the researcher, who is the author of this study and the educator in the treatment process, made every effort to suspend her own beliefs and to set aside her own assumptions/experiences in order to take a fresh perspective

from the student teachers who experienced the phenomenon; that is, the researcher tried to bracket her own belief and assumption, which is also referred to as epoche in phenomenological research (Ary, Jacobs, & Sorensen, 2010; Hycner, 1985).

The semi-structured interview questions were developed regarding the questions and themes in the reflection sheets. The responses of the participants in the interview sessions were recorded and the subsequent questions were asked; in the case of ambiguity, clarification questions were asked. As suggested in the research literature, (Cohen et al., 2007) content analysis was carried out for categorizing the recorded responses. The similarities and dissimilarities in the responses were categorized for the analysis, and the categories were identified from particular to general as regards the responses of the participants. The expressions that had relevant meaning were clustered as similar units; then the themes from those clusters of meaning were examined. The interrelation of the categories was set and described by the researcher as offered for the phenomenographic data analysis (Reid & Petocz, 2002).

Written opinion essays were also used as supportive data for the reflection sheets and interviews. In essay writing phase, the participants were asked to write an essay on the topic "If you were to inform someone about the advantages and disadvantages of microteaching practices as teacher training procedures, how would you express your ideas? Describe the contribution of microteaching practices to professional knowledge, professional consciousness, professional development, problem-solving, and understanding the teaching profession". The essays were read and evaluated by highlighting the motifs mentioned by the participants. In the written essays, the views of the student teachers were also analysed and combined into the similar set of ideas as implemented in the interview analysis. They were recorded as extracts. The quotations of the participants were included into the related category. Some sample views of the participants declared in the reflection sheets, interviews and written essays were extracted and presented in the results section of this paper. The data gathered from reflection sheets, interviews and written essays were evaluated as a whole for evaluating the student teachers' perception of microteaching practices in teacher training process.

Results

The *ex post facto research* data were categorized in one table to reflect the relative ratings (Table 1). The data set was established according to the questions in the demographic information form; but the graduation years were excluded from the data, since nearly all graduated in the same year. The evaluation sheets with the items about professional preferences and teaching behaviours of their previous teachers

were evaluated by calculating the arithmetic means of ratings. The student teachers were informed about how to rate the items in the evaluation sheets. A 10-point scale in which the numbers represent the word labels as 1- not at all important, 2 -very poor, 3- poor, 4 -not so poor, 5 and 6 -fair, 7 -good, 8- better, 9 -very good, 10 – excellent (Sullivan, 2009) was used for evaluating the previous learning experiences and teachers.

Table 1
School Information, Professional Preferences and Behaviours of the Previous Teachers

School	*f*	%				Ways of behaviour	Rate	M	Std.
State	19	79				Eye contact	5	3.61	1.02
Private	5	21				Voice quality	7	4.07	0.76
						Being well	2	2.97	1.10
Professional preferences	Rate	M	Std.			Rapport	1	1.70	1.18
Student-centeredness	3	2.83	1.72			Body language use	4	3.31	1.02
Teacher -centeredness	9	4.02	0.44			Professional expertise	4	3.27	1.02
Both student and teacher-centeredness	5	3.22	1.07			Subject matter	8	4.83	0.49
						Self-confidence	3	3.04	1.24
						Self-esteem	2	2.91	1.06
						Self-efficacy	3	3.07	1.24

As displayed in Table 1, of 24 student teachers, 19 were the graduates of the state school. Although most of the student teachers were graduated from state schools, the ratings of the state school graduates were similar to the ratings of those who graduated from private schools where teacher behaviours in the classroom are expected to be slightly better than the others. The behaviours of their previous teachers in the classroom, namely having rapport, being well, having self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-efficacy, professional expertise, body language use were rated on a scale of 1 to 4 by the student teachers; that is, at a low level in rank between 'not at all important and not so poor'. As displayed in the table, most of the student teachers evaluated their previous teachers' professional preference as teacher-centred. The scores of the behaviour evaluation denote that their previous teachers were evaluated as having low self-esteem, low self-confidence and low self-efficacy, and as being far from having rapport with the students. For the student teachers, their previous teachers were not so efficient in interactive teaching. The highest rate among the items belongs to the teachers' subject matter; but being good at subject matter does not mean that they are good teachers, as they need to be proactive and develop successful behaviour toward students for being appreciated as good teachers (Harmer, 2007; James, 2001).

The analysis of *ex post facto* data led to treatment process to discuss the potential unconstructive and constructive impacts of their previous experiences on their teaching sessions. After the treatment process, *phenomenographic* data were

collected to explore how the student teachers evaluated the microteaching practice in the course ELT Methodology II. The categories of evaluation are displayed in Table 2. First of all, each category was labelled clearly; the categories were then designed in a consistent and logical relationship; finally, the conceptions in the categories were described and analysed. The categories were re-checked a few times in some intervals and the original data were re-visited to confirm the results and to set aside the individual perception of the researcher. The researcher asked the native speaker educator who participated in microteaching observations to read the original data and reflect on the categories. The native speaker educator confirmed the analysis of the researcher. The reflections of the student teachers about microteaching were classified in six categories and discerned as 1) professionally self-development, 2) sharing others' experiences, 3) developing educational aims, 4) enhancing skills development, 5) focusing on learners, and 6) negative impacts of microteaching. Each category was presented through five themes: a) the nature of professional knowledge; b)professional consciousness; c) the nature of professional development; d) problem-solving; e) understanding and integrating.

As indicated in the table, the student teachers reflected the positive impacts of the microteaching practice in terms of professional self-development and professional knowledge. They stated that they learnt the requirements of teaching profession such as designing lesson plans for the students at different age and linguistic levels, using appropriate teaching techniques/methods, developing materials, and managing the classroom. Moreover, reflecting on teaching practice by sharing others' experiences, discovering good and bad teaching behaviours, and learning teaching skills were other benefits of microteaching approved by the student teachers; they claimed these benefits increased their professional consciousness and problem-solving abilities. They also reported that they could bridge the gap between theory and practice by gaining experiential knowledge. Despite the positive outcomes of microteaching practices, they also declared some negative aspects of microteaching mostly in terms of artificial classroom settings; they thought microteaching would create risky and artificial professional consciousness and development.

Some sample quotations from the raw *phenomenographic* data which were categorized with the relevant themes are displayed below:

Microteaching for professionally self-development. In this category, the participants generally agreed on the positive impacts of microteaching on professionally self-development as displayed in the following extracts:

Microteaching helps me build self-confidence… (professional development)

It provides me with high standards of professional understanding… (understanding and integrating)

Table 2
Categories of the Student Teachers' Views about Microteaching

Themes	Categories					
	1 professionally self-development	2 sharing others' experiences	3 developing educational aims	4 enhancing skills development	5 focusing on learners	6 negative impacts of microteaching
the nature of professional knowledge	Specialized knowledge for teaching and learning	Knowledge in action by observing others	Knowledge in specifying educational aims and objectives	Skill-based knowledge in language use	Improving the ability of stimulating learners' needs and interests	Having difficulties while getting prepared for microteaching sessions
professional consciousness	Highlighting the significance of self-observation	Appreciating the shared experience of practice with others in building up personal experience	Deciding on the appropriateness of teaching methods and techniques	Discovering good or bad language teaching behaviours	Promoting the knowledge of handling learner differences effectively	Gaining artificial consciousness
the nature of professional development	Building self-confidence while teaching	Evaluating others' teaching techniques	Developing experiential knowledge in a controlled and progressive way	Developing new skills while learning about teaching	Promoting one's professional capacity to meet the expectations of learners	Due to artificial classroom settings, risky professional development
problem-solving	Reflecting on professional competence and performance	Deciding on better ways of teaching through feedback	Modifying the procedures when necessary	Getting opportunities for experimentation	Improving the ability of classroom management	Menacing and demoralizing experience
understanding and integrating	Bridging the gap between theory and practice	Promoting the ability of integrating one's own teaching techniques with the others'	Promoting the ability of preparing and conducting an appropriate lesson plan	Observational and analytical skills	Regarding learners' expectations, organizing individual and pair/group works	Having difficulty in incorporating real life classroom settings with the simulating ones

It helps me gaining experiences about teaching proficiency… (professional consciousness)

Microteaching activities are beneficial for evaluating my teaching performance… (problem-solving)

I comprehend the teaching methods in a better way with microteaching activities… (professional knowledge)

The student teachers reflected the constructive impacts of microteaching on individual professional development. The similar ideas were also reflected in the essays they wrote after the interview sessions:

Microteaching practices may initially seem difficult for student teachers…after a few practices in the classroom you gain insights about teaching profession… the most important aspect of microteaching is to put theoretical knowledge into practice…the more I apply microteaching sessions in the course, the more, I believe, I learn…

Microteaching is a practical way of sharing others' experiences. In microteaching practices, the student teachers observed each other's' teaching procedures and gave feedback; thus, they could share their experiences and ideas. Such implications were also found out to be encouraging by the participants:

Microteaching provides a space for me to evaluate others' teaching techniques… (professional development)

It gives the opportunity of discussing and sharing the experience of teaching… (professional consciousness)

In the classroom, I can evaluate the teaching performances of others… (understanding and integrating)

In the essays, the student teachers also mentioned the benefits of observing the others during a microteaching session:

I think the most important contribution of microteaching is to gain insights form others' teaching experiences…while giving feedback to my classmates after the microteaching session, I get professional expertise…micro lessons are the directive practices for improving yourself through other models…

Microteaching is an occasion for developing better educational aims. While training the student teachers, they were expected to build up educational aims for implementing appropriate teaching methods, techniques, and strategies. The practice through microteaching applications would yield better result than solely imposing pure theoretical knowledge. They gained experiences for setting their own educational aims:

> Microteaching practices help me specify appropriate teaching goals… (professional knowledge)
>
> Designing lesson plans for microteaching sessions promotes my ability for choosing appropriate activities and materials… (understanding and integrating)
>
> I feel myself well prepared after preparing lesson plans… (professional consciousness)
>
> Microteaching helps me modify the procedures when necessary… (problem-solving)

In the essays, the student teachers emphasised the positive impact of microteaching activities on developing educational aims:

> Microteaching is a way of getting opportunity for finding our own ways in teaching profession…while preparing lesson plans and implementing them, we mostly face some troubles, but through microteaching we find a space to reflect our ideas and get feedback…teaching practices are difficult but enjoyable…

Skills development is enhanced through microteaching. In language teacher training, language skills development is one of the main concerns of education process. During microteaching activities, the student teachers monitored each other for developing observational and analytical skills.

> I learn through the microteaching activities of my friends within the classroom… (understanding and integrating)
>
> Microteaching allows for demonstrating certain skills while presenting a short lesson... (professional development)
>
> It provides me an opportunity to use classroom language… (professional knowledge)
>
> I improved self-confidence and became competent enough about teaching issues… (professional consciousness)

In the essays, the benefits of microteaching in terms of skills development were also approved by the student teachers:

> Professional growth in teaching profession is directly related with skills development in the classroom… While presenting a topic during a short lesson, you should manage all items in regular stages…microteaching is an occasion for prospective teachers to test and evaluate their own skills…

Occasions for focusing on learners. In learner-centred approaches, ascertaining the needs and expectations of learners is the central topic of teacher training. In the treatment process, the student teachers could find ample opportunities to determine the learner needs and expectations; accordingly, they prepared lesson plans. In the interview sessions, they confirmed the benefits of microteaching in this respect:

I have discovered how to handle learner differences during microteaching sessions… (professional consciousness)

I know how to manage classroom… (problem-solving)

During micro lessons, I have ascertained how to apply group/pair/individual works... (understanding and integrating)

I know how to encourage learners during the course time… (professional development)

I can use a variety of techniques regarding the learner differences in the classroom… (professional differences)

Similar statements were also reflected in the essays:

Promoting one's professional competence to meet the expectations of learners can be best realized through microteaching practices…I know theoretically that we should set some aims and objectives regarding the needs of the target group and individual differences; during microteaching practices I could manage how to cope with such differences…

Negative impacts of microteaching. Despite the optimistic views about microteaching, some negative views were also proclaimed by the student teachers. Most of the negative views were about the artificial classroom settings and material production stages:

I have difficulties while producing materials for microteaching activities… (professional knowledge)

I have difficulty in incorporating real life classroom settings with the artificial ones… (understanding and integrating)

Preparing teaching aids is too expensive and time consuming… (professional knowledge)

In the essays, few student teachers also focused on the similar points:

Since microteaching practices were carried out with our own classmates, I know that the students are not real students. They are just my friends, so I do not feel myself so comfortable…The criticisms made by my classmates seem threatening; therefore microteaching sessions are demoralizing and demotivating experiences for me…

As indicated in the categories and quotations from reflection sheets, interviews and essays, the student teachers declared mostly the positive aspects of microteaching, and they believed that microteaching was a pathway for acquiring professional proficiency and professional development.

Discussion

In this study, the previous learning experiences and teacher cognitions of the student teachers of English and their perception of the microteaching practice in teacher training process were reported. This study was also designed to replicate a previously carried out research study by the same researcher at the same university. The former study (Coşgun Ögeyik, 2009) explored the attitudes of the fourth year student teachers of English through quantitative data. In the former study, in which simply the consequences of the microteaching applications were evaluated, the previous learning experiences of the student teachers were not investigated and no treatment was implemented. The results of the former study showed that microteaching applications were practical experiences for meeting the desired objectives of the student teachers to become effective and reflective in the teaching profession; thus, it was concluded that microteaching as the main medium of instruction should be practiced in teacher training departments for training experienced teachers; additionally, the student teachers of the former study admitted that they benefited from microteaching practices for fulfilling appropriate classroom activities. The findings of the present study also yielded similar results after the treatment process. But before the treatment process in the present study, the student teachers did not show any optimistic behaviour towards microteaching practices and had difficulties while implementing the recent teaching approaches or techniques, though the recent approaches, methods, techniques were theoretically emphasised in the course sessions.

In the present study, the observable data from the initial microteaching applications of the participants directed the researcher to discover the invisible dimensions of their mental lives by investigating their language learning histories and teacher cognitions (Borg, 2003). The ex post facto data showed that the student teachers evaluated their previous teachers' teaching behaviours as teacher-centred. Therefore, it was assumed that the initial state of undesirable microteaching practices of the student teachers in terms of professional preferences and traditional teaching behaviours might have been affected by the general conceptualisation of their previous learning experiences and teacher cognitions. Accordingly, the first sub-question of the study "How did they conceptualize their prior teachers' teaching behaviours?" was responded through the ex post facto data. The general picture of their previous teachers described by the student teachers was the traditional teacher who could not foster good relationships in the classroom and were not so efficient in interactive teaching (Harmer, 2007). Regarding their evaluation of the previous teachers' manners, it was assumed that the student teachers were mostly affected by their previous teachers' traditional teaching behaviours. The results are in line with the previous studies by Borg (2003; 2015), Cochran-Smith and Zeichner (2005), Crooks (2015), Kubanyiova (2015), Ladson-Billings (2006), and Numrich (1996) who claim that teacher cognitions and

previous experiences of student teachers may shape what they do as teachers and how they develop professional knowledge. However, the past events affecting the student teachers' teaching experiences might not always correspond to the gaps in understanding the nature of instructional decisions during microteaching.

The observation reports before the treatment also displayed that teaching the theoretical issues in the course was not alone so effective on gaining teaching experiences. Therefore, the student teachers were exposed to treatment process for microteaching applications and the outcomes of the treatment process were evaluated through *phenomenographic* findings. The findings were used to answer the second sub-question of the study "How did student teachers evaluate their professional development through microteaching?" Regarding the results, it was reported that microteaching presentations helped them specify applicable teaching goals while designing appropriate lesson plans for microteaching sessions, promoted the student teachers' ability for choosing proper activities and materials for the needs and expectations of learners, encouraged them to make instant decisions in teaching process when necessary and to demonstrate certain teaching skills while presenting a short lesson.

The results also displayed that the microteaching practice and using it in legitimate functional contexts could be a useful tool for student teachers. This interpretation about the results is in line with a study by Tülüce and Çeçen (2016) who concluded that the microteaching practice encourages student teachers to conceptualize alternative perspectives in their teaching objectives and decisions. Additionally, the student teachers strongly acknowledged the usefulness and resourcefulness of microteaching for boosting creativity and for gaining practical experiences. In the statements of the student teachers, microteaching practices were admitted to be supportive for discovering and analysing their strengths and weaknesses as prospective teachers. The results of the present study support the prior literature pointing out that microteaching applications are practical experiences for producing desired change in the objectives of training teachers (Ghanagura, Nair, & Young, 2013; Ping, 2013) and for offering student teachers opportunities to orient themselves to teaching issues (Al-Humaidi & Abu-Rahmah, 2015; Eick et al., 2005). Among the findings of the present study, the student teachers' desire to receive feedback after microteaching sessions for developing teaching skills and capabilities is another point supporting the findings of the previous studies (Kaustuva et al., 2015; Marzano, 2003; Umeh et al., 2015). The acknowledged contribution of the microteaching to the development of teacher identity and self-efficacy is also in-line with the views reflected in other studies by Donnelly and Fitzmaurice (2011), Mergler and Tangen (2010).

Another positive outcome of the study was about the benefits of designing lesson plans; the participants declared that preparing lesson plans fostered their professional

knowledge while deciding on the stages of the lesson; this result is in line with the findings of the studies by Fernandez (2010), and Ndileleni and Maphosa (2014). Moreover, the student teachers agreed on the idea that microteaching presentations raised their own consciousness in developing operational teaching strategies by putting the theory into practice and promoted real time teaching practice. As consistent with the previous studies by Ndileleni and Maphosa (2014) and Punia et al. (2016), the findings revealed that micro-teaching practices encouraged the student teachers to use the appropriate teaching methods and to develop teaching competencies. Therefore, microteaching applications can be acknowledged as having a significant role for pre-service teacher training (Sevim, 2013).

As for the last sub-question "What were the challenges of microteaching practices for student teachers?, the student teachers thought that due to artificial classroom settings, microteaching might lead to risky professional development, create difficulties while getting prepared for microteaching sessions, and could be threatening and demoralizing experience. Still, the student teachers attached more importance to the benefits of microteaching in teacher training. In this regard, it is worth mentioning that the benefits of microteaching were also appreciated by the student teachers in the previous study carried out by Coşgun Ögeyik (2009). The results showed consistency in the two studies. In both studies, microteaching was recognized as a way of experiencing teaching and learning in educational settings. But in the present study, the data collected through *ex post facto research* demonstrated that the student teachers' prior language learning experiences established cognitions; therefore, they need to be observed, questioned, and treated in teacher training process.

The results of this study were expected to make some crucial contributions to the literature and language teacher training. In the study, by searching for the impacts of the past experiences and teacher cognitions of the student teachers on their teaching practices, it was aimed to discuss whether their language learning histories and their previous teachers' teaching behaviours shaped their current unobservable cognitive dimension of teaching practices. In this respect, the study might contribute to the literature by taking the attention of researchers to the *ex post facto research design* for exploring the impacts of previous learning experiences of student teachers. Additionally, the present study presents the treatment process in microteaching applications and evaluates the data through another research design, *phenomenographic* research. In this sense, the study attempted to use two different research designs for comparing past and present experiences of the participants. Another attempt was made to replicate a former study by the same researcher to establish the similarities or differences, regarding the past five-year span, about the views of the student teachers attending the same university.

All in all, drawing on the perspectives of the student teachers, microteaching could be evaluated as functional practices in teacher training for motivating and encouraging student teachers to develop a deep understanding of teaching profession. Microteaching practices can also enhance student teachers' understanding of teaching methods in a better and more suitable way and may contribute to efficient material production. Further, microteaching practices may enable student teachers to develop innovative teaching and learning strategies. By observing other student teachers' microteaching applications, they can have discussion sessions and reflect on their performances. Through microteaching applications, student teachers can gain experiences by defeating undesirable behaviours, and even the attention of inattentive student teachers can be taken to teaching practices through discussions and reflections. To conclude, there are various opportunities of microteaching: developing oral presentation skills and group discussions; gaining proficiency in using teaching aids and teaching materials; preparing well-organized lesson plans; and establishing teaching objectives.

Limitation of the Study

The study in its present form comprises some limitations. The findings of the *ex post facto* research were merely based on the student teachers' invisible mental lives that reflected by them; therefore, their language learning histories and teachers' behaviours might have emerged from the participants' prejudices. The other limitation is that the treatment and observation attempts were carried out in the microteaching practices of ELT Methodology II course. The observation could be carried out in other courses of ELT teacher training programs to verify the data. The other limitation is the size of the participants; the study was conducted on a small size, and in further studies, the sample size can be increased. Another limitation is that the study did not contain a true control group; a future study could further validate the results by conducting a study that uses control group. Additionally, instead of mere microteaching practices in teacher training program, student teachers could be observed during school experience and practicum courses in school-based contexts. This study was carried out at a single university; further studies can include other participants from different universities, whether national or international or both, to compare their views.

Recommendations

Depending on the results of the present study and previous studies, some suggestions can be recommended for the applications of microteaching: microteaching as a professional tool in teacher training departments should be implemented so as to

encourage student teachers for their future profession; in reflective process, student teachers should be provided with satisfactory feedback in a constructive way; student teachers can be supported to cope with the financial problems while preparing teaching aids and materials; the education policies of teacher training institutions, curriculum developers, and teaching staff can be reorganized for motivating student teachers to participate in microteaching practices enthusiastically; to evaluate the effectiveness of any issue properly and appropriately, as in this study, the research needs to be replicated through mixed research methods; and the previous learning experiences of student teachers should be examined; in other words, as Borg (2003; 2015) suggested student teachers' histories and their teacher cognitions should be investigated in teacher training process.

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Appendices

Appendix I

Demographic Form and Evaluation of Previous Learning Experiences

Please tick you answer

1. Gender

   a) Female □   b) Male □

2. Age

   17-18 □   19-20 □   21-22 □   Above 22 □

3. Education (the school you graduated)

   State school □   Private school □

Rate your previous English teachers' professional preferences on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being the worst and 10 the best

   a) Student-centeredness □

   b) Teacher –centeredness □

   c) Both student and teacher-centeredness □

 Rate your previous English teachers' behaviours on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being the worst and 10 the best

   a) Eye contact □

   b) Voice quality □

   c) Being well □

   d) Rapport □

   e) Body language use □

   f) Professional expertise □

   g) Subject matter □

   h) Self-confidence □

   i) Self-esteem □

   j) Self-efficacy □

Appendix II
Teaching Experience Reflection

Date: _____

Student Teacher:_____

Purpose is to collect data on the individual student teacher's strengths, preferences, interests and needs as they relate to the demands of current microteaching practices in terms of professionally self-development, sharing others 'experiences, developing better educational aims, skills development, negative impacts of microteaching.

Supervisor uses the information from these reflections to assist the student teacher during the microteaching experience.

Directions
Complete parts A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I

A. Your strengths in teaching issues.

B. Your areas of needed growth for teaching.

C. In which areas do you feel you have grown or developed in this course? (2-4 sentences):

D. Reflect on your areas of weaknesses (2-4 sentences):

E. Give a brief description of the microteaching activity you have completed. (2-4 sentences):

F. What did you like about this activity? What were you able to do well?

G. What did you not like about this activity? What problems did you have? Why?

H. What did you learn about yourself as a teacher candidate?

If you are having trouble finding things to write in either category, look for the following:
Microteaching:

• resulted in neglecting key activities in the methods course
• consumed a lot of my time.
• was carried out in an artificial environment
• forced me to do difficult tasks
• made me feel embarrassed when teaching my colleagues
• forced me to think of the evaluation criteria while planning
• helped me learn to organize my time
• helped me learn how to manage the class
• offered me a practical opportunity to teach a lesson
• gave me an opportunity to improve my lesson planning
• encouraged me to develop teaching activities and materials

- helped me learn to use technology appropriately
- helped me develop awareness of my teaching competence
- helped me develop the actual teaching skills I'll need later.
- gave me an opportunity to learn by observing others
- made me aware of what makes a good teacher
- helped me discover my teaching strengths and weaknesses
- helped me develop confidence in my speaking ability
- helped me learn to speak clearly
- allowed me to apply ideas I learned from different courses
- raised my motivation in the present methods course
- helped me to better understand different teaching methods
- was beneficial for my future occupation to see course designs in different linguistic and age levels through microteaching activities
- forced me to learn how to prepare lesson plans
- was beneficial for evaluating my teaching performance
- was enjoyable and beneficial when applied individually
- was time consuming (i.e., not useful)
- directed me to consume the course time inefficiently

I. What suggestions can you make for the instructor to improve his/her teaching?

Student Teacher Signature _____