

# EXPLORING PRE-SERVICE ECONOMICS TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF MICRO-TEACHING: INSIGHTS AND CHALLENGES IN TEACHER PREPARATION

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## Abstract

Micro-teaching allows pre-service teachers to practice pedagogical skills through structured feedback. This qualitative case study explores third-year Economics pre-service teachers' perceptions of micro-teaching. Interviews with three participants revealed confidence building, enhanced content knowledge, and feedback-driven development as major benefits. However, limited resources and time constraints posed significant challenges. The findings recommend earlier integration and extension of micro-teaching sessions to enhance teacher preparation. These findings contribute to the discourse on the effectiveness of micro-teaching in Economics education and its potential to equip teachers for real-life classroom environments.

**Keywords:** *Micro-teaching, pre-service teachers, economic education, teacher preparation, qualitative case study.*

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## 1. Introduction

Effective Economics education requires adequately trained educators. Challenges in South African Economics education include inadequate pedagogical content knowledge and insufficient training. Micro-teaching offers structured practice with constructive feedback, yet research on pre-service Economics teachers' perceptions remains limited. This study addresses this gap through Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986), focusing on self-efficacy and observational learning.

This study addresses this gap by examining the experiences of third-year pre-service Economics teachers at a South African university. By shedding light on the role of micro-teaching in fostering confidence, enhancing pedagogical competence, and addressing instructional challenges, this research aims to inform policy and practice in Economics teacher education. The findings contribute to the broader discourse on enhancing Economics education and provide actionable recommendations for strengthening pre-service teacher preparation, ultimately supporting the sustainability of the subject in schools.

The study responded to the following research questions:

1. What are the perceptions of pre-service Economics teachers regarding the role of micro-lessons in their teacher education?
2. What challenges do pre-service Economics teachers experience during micro-lessons?

### 1.1. Understanding micro-teaching in initial teacher education (ITE)

Micro-teaching is a focused and innovative teacher training technique designed to provide pre-service teachers with opportunities to practice and refine their pedagogical skills in a controlled, low-stakes environment (Lozgka, 2024; Reddy, 2019). Originating in the 1960s and developed by Dwight W. Allen, micro-teaching involves short, structured lessons presented to a small audience, often peers, followed by detailed feedback and reflection (Reddy, 2019; Bada & Akinbobola, 2022). This method allows novice teachers to develop essential teaching skills, such as lesson planning, classroom management, and effective communication, while bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application (Bakir, 2014; Reddy, 2019). For Economics education, where abstract concepts must be translated into engaging content, micro-teaching provides pre-service teachers with a unique opportunity to enhance subject-specific pedagogical skills and build confidence (Azizah & Rahmi, 2019).

The role of micro-teaching in initial teacher education is multifaceted. It provides a structured environment for pre-service teachers to experiment with teaching strategies, integrate pedagogical content knowledge, and receive constructive feedback (Laghari et al., 2021; Kroeger et al., 2024). This iterative

process—planning, teaching, observing, and reflecting—enables pre-service teachers to identify their strengths and areas for improvement (Fischetti et al., 2021). For Economics teachers, this methodology is particularly critical as it helps them develop strategies to communicate complex economic principles effectively and manage diverse classroom needs. Additionally, micro-teaching contributes to professional development by fostering essential self-reflection and encouraging evidence-based teaching practices, ensuring teachers are better prepared for real-world classroom challenges (Mufidah, 2019; Manzi & Moreeng, 2023).

### **1.2. Challenges pre-service teachers face in microteaching**

Pre-service teachers encounter several challenges during microteaching that can hinder its effectiveness as a preparatory tool. Limited practice opportunities are a significant concern, as Hama and Osam (2021) noted, who argue that the restricted exposure pre-service teachers have to microteaching limits their readiness for real-world classroom scenarios. Moreover, the simulated nature of microteaching environments, which often lack real-life learners, constrains creativity and the application of diverse teaching strategies (Reddy, 2018). This artificial setting may lead to a disconnection between the skills practised during microteaching and the dynamic demands of actual classroom environments, leaving pre-service teachers inadequately prepared for real-life teaching challenges (Bada & Akinbobola, 2022).

Language barriers and performance anxiety are additional challenges that pre-service teachers frequently face during microteaching. Makafane (2020) highlighted that teaching a second language, such as English, often results in communication difficulties for pre-service teachers, leading to diminished confidence and effectiveness. Stage fright and anxiety, exacerbated by the requirement to perform in front of peers or supervisors, further impede their ability to deliver lessons effectively (Makafane, 2020). These factors collectively affect the ability of pre-service teachers to manage classrooms, develop engaging lessons, and establish rapport with their audiences. Such barriers can create a gap between their theoretical understanding and practical execution, complicating their transition from pre-service to in-service teaching roles (Manzi & Moreeng, 2023).

The challenges pre-service teachers face in microteaching underscore the need for further investigation into how these experiences influence their preparedness and perceptions of teaching. While existing literature explores microteaching as an effective tool for skill development, there is limited focus on the specific obstacles pre-service Economics teachers encounter (Mukuka & Alex, 2024). This gap necessitates studies like the present one, which aims to uncover the nuanced perceptions of pre-service Economics teachers regarding microteaching, shedding light on potential solutions to enhance its effectiveness and better prepare future educators for the realities of classroom teaching.

### **1.3. Theoretical framework**

Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), developed by Bandura in 1986, highlights the reciprocal relationship between behaviour, cognition, and environment in shaping human learning and development (Govindaraju, 2021; Koutroubas & Galanakis, 2022). Central to SCT is observational learning, which explains how individuals acquire and maintain attitudes and behaviours through interactions with their environment and feedback mechanisms (Nwosu et al., 2022). A key component of SCT, self-efficacy, is particularly relevant to this study as it explores pre-service Economics teachers' confidence in their teaching abilities, which is shaped by mastery experiences, mediated learning, and feedback during micro-teaching sessions (Jenkins et al., 2018; Krmar, 2020). Bandura's self-efficacy concept asserts that individuals' belief in their capabilities influences their motivation, persistence, and performance (Wilkerson et al., 2023), making it a crucial factor in understanding how pre-service teachers develop pedagogical skills. This framework provides insights into their classroom management strategies, teaching behaviours, and professional development, offering a lens through which the cognitive and environmental influences on pre-service teachers' engagement with micro-teaching can be examined (Luszczynska & Schwarzer, 2020).

## **2. Methodology and design**

This study employed a qualitative approach within an interpretivist paradigm to explore pre-service Economics teachers' perceptions of micro-teaching. A case study design was chosen to facilitate an in-depth analysis of participants' lived experiences within a real-life educational context, enabling a nuanced understanding of their attitudes, challenges, and engagement with micro-teaching (Kumatongo & Muzata, 2021; Schoch, 2020). Purposive sampling was used to select three Bachelor of Education students enrolled in an Economics methodology module, ensuring participants had direct experience with micro-teaching. Data collection involved semi-structured interviews, allowing for detailed insights while exploring emerging themes flexibly (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). Thematic analysis was conducted following Braun and Clarke's six-step framework to systematically identify recurring patterns in the data,

including confidence-building, content mastery, and pedagogical challenges (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018; Dawadi, 2020). This methodological approach thoroughly explored how micro-teaching influences pre-service teachers' professional development and readiness for real-world teaching.

### 3. Results and discussion

#### 3.1. Theme 1: Perceptions of pre-service economics teachers regarding micro-lessons

The study found that pre-service Economics teachers generally perceived micro-teaching as a useful preparatory tool that allows them to practice and refine their teaching strategies in a controlled environment. Participants described micro-teaching as a platform that helped them build confidence, structure their lessons effectively, and gain familiarity with classroom management techniques.

**3.1.1. Confidence-building and skill development.** Participants reported that micro-teaching was vital in increasing their confidence in lesson delivery. The simulated teaching experience allowed them to refine their teaching approaches and practice classroom engagement strategies in a controlled environment before real classroom exposure. Pre-service teachers described micro-teaching as:

*It's very nice. It's like knowing something to a certain extent and then being able to practice it (PST1).*

*It allows me to test my teaching strategies and see how students react (PST2).*

*I feel more prepared to handle a real classroom after micro-teaching sessions (PST3).*

Participants also emphasised its role in refining their teaching:

*I think micro-teaching is a form of preparation. It allows us to see what it would be like to teach in real life, even though it's not the same (PST1).*

*Micro-teaching prepares us for how to conduct lessons and structure our teaching. And it teaches us how to organise a lesson from introduction to conclusion (PST2).*

This finding aligns with prior studies that emphasise the role of micro-teaching in improving self-efficacy (Jenkins et al., 2018).

**3.1.2. Bridging theory and practice.** Participants noted that micro-teaching served as an essential link between theoretical knowledge gained in coursework and its practical implementation in the classroom. The sessions helped them transition from understanding content to effectively communicating it to learners. It served as Kroeger et al. (2024) peers and supervisors, which helped them refine their teaching and lesson-delivery techniques. Pre-service teachers commented:

*I think it's an improvement in my content knowledge and how to deliver the subject better. And the feedback we get from peers and lecturers is very useful in improving my teaching (PST1).*

*Constructive feedback gave me insights into areas I need to work on (PST2).*

*Understanding how to convey complex economic concepts became easier. It also helps us refine how we deliver subject content effectively (PST3).*

These perceptions align with existing literature highlighting the micro-lesson role in fostering pedagogical competence and self-efficacy, further reinforced by studies emphasising the benefits of feedback in teacher development (Bandura, 1986; Bakir, 2014; Kroeger et al., 2024).

However, some participants also felt that while micro-teaching was beneficial, it was not always sufficient in preparing them for real-life classroom challenges, as it did not fully replicate the challenges faced in actual classrooms. Pre-service teachers mentioned:

*Micro-teaching helps, but it does not fully prepare us for dealing with real learners in a real classroom setting (PST2).*

*It was not that bad, but it was not enough and should be more structured (PST3).*

#### 3.2. Theme 2: Challenges Pre-service Economics teachers face during micro-lessons

Despite its perceived benefits, participants identified several challenges in micro-teaching that affected their ability to maximise the experience. The following sub-themes emerged:

**3.2.1. Time constraints.** A common concern among the pre-serve teachers was the limited time allocated for micro-lessons. They felt the sessions were too short to cover lesson content comprehensively and practice and refine their teaching skills effectively. The pre-service teachers noted that:

*I feel like the time given is too short to deliver a proper lesson. (PST1).*

*I had to rush through my lesson and couldn't focus on student questions (PST2).*

*More time would allow better practice and feedback application (PST3).*

This is consistent with research indicating that limited time in micro-teaching restricts experiential learning (Hama & Osam, 2021).

**3.2.2. Classroom management and student engagement issues.** The pre-service teachers found maintaining discipline and keeping students engaged during lessons challenging. They shared:

*In class, class management and sometimes keeping the students engaged was difficult (PST1).*

*Students sometimes lose focus, and I struggle to bring them back (PST2).*

*Handling different learning paces in the same classroom is challenging (PST3).*

These findings align with Reddy (2018), who identified classroom management as a critical hurdle for novice teachers.

**3.2.3. Language barriers and student diversity.** Language barriers emerged as a significant challenge, particularly in schools where English is the medium of instruction, yet students are more comfortable in their native languages. Some pre-service Economics teachers mentioned difficulty teaching Economics concepts due to language differences. They stated:

*The policy only permits us to teach in English, but most students understand better in their mother tongue (PST1).*

*Explaining economic concepts in a way that students from different backgrounds can understand is difficult (PST2).*

*Some students struggle with English terminology, making engagement harder (PST3).*

This challenge is well-documented in South African educational research, emphasising the need for multilingual instructional strategies (Makafane, 2020).

**3.2.4. Formalities and rigidity in lesson planning.** The pre-service teachers found the structured nature of micro-teaching sessions restrictive. They felt that the lesson planning process lacked flexibility and did not allow them to experiment with different teaching strategies. One pre-service teacher noted:

*I wouldn't say I like the formalities. It would be better if we had more flexibility in lesson delivery (PST1).*

## 4. Conclusion and recommendations

The findings of this study underscore the benefits of micro-teaching in enhancing pre-service Economics teachers' confidence, lesson planning, and pedagogical skills. However, several limitations hinder its effectiveness, including time constraints, a lack of real-world teaching exposure, and rigid lesson planning structures. Participants emphasised the need for extended session durations to allow for more practice and refinement of teaching strategies. Additionally, integrating real classroom environments with actual learners, rather than solely teaching peers, was suggested to better prepare pre-service teachers for real-world teaching challenges. Greater flexibility in lesson planning was also recommended to encourage experimentation with diverse teaching methodologies. These insights contribute to the broader discourse on improving teacher training programs and ensuring that micro-teaching adequately prepares educators for the complexities of the classroom.

To enhance the effectiveness of micro-teaching, several targeted improvements are proposed. Extending micro-teaching session durations will provide pre-service teachers with sufficient practice to refine their instructional techniques. Enhancing classroom management training by incorporating specialised student engagement strategies can equip teachers with essential skills to handle diverse learning environments. Integrating technological tools, such as digital teaching aids or simulation, can create dynamic micro-teaching environments and support interactive and practical lesson delivery. Implementing multilingual teaching strategies, including code-switching and bilingual instructional materials, can help bridge language barriers and improve comprehension. By adopting these recommendations, teacher training programs can optimise micro-teaching as a critical component of pre-service teacher education, ultimately improving the quality of Economics education and preparing future educators for successful classroom practice.

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