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By Klada Nektaria & Kafka Dimitra

Summery- The present article aims to highlight how the pedagogical courses - specifically those of Teaching Methodology and Educational Evaluation - taught to students of ASPETE Athens in previous semesters, helped them to plan, organize and implement the microteaching courses they are asked to implement in later semesters. The research was conducted through semi-structured interviews with 12 students from different departments of the faculty under the interpretive paradigm and data analysis was done through the coding process. The article, after giving a brief review on the teaching methodology and the application of the practice of microteaching internationally, presents the results of the research. According to these, most students highlighted the importance of the theoretical training they received from the above-mentioned courses, as well as from other pedagogical courses taught in previous semesters. However, at the same time they stressed that the practice was quite different and gave rise to much more reflection on the teaching profession."

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Views of Students of ASPETE Athens on the Connection between Theory and Practice in the Context of their Microteaching

Klada Nektaria [α] & Kafka Dimitra [σ]

Summary- The present article aims to highlight how the pedagogical courses - specifically those of Teaching Methodology and Educational Evaluation - taught to students of ASPETE Athens in previous semesters, helped them to plan, organize and implement the microteaching courses they are asked to implement in later semesters. The research was conducted through semi-structured interviews with 12 students from different departments of the faculty under the interpretive paradigm and data analysis was done through the coding process. The article, after giving a brief review on the teaching methodology and the application of the practice of microteaching internationally, presents the results of the research. According to these, most students highlighted the importance of the theoretical training they received from the above-mentioned courses, as well as from other pedagogical courses taught in previous semesters. However, at the same time they stressed that the practice was quite different and gave rise to much more reflection on the teaching profession.

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I. Introduction

We live in a reality in which major and rapid changes are taking place that affect all sectors, as well as the school institution. This realization leads to continuous efforts to renew the educational system and consequently the study of the initial training of prospective teachers, as well as the continuous training of those in office (Chatzopoulou, 2014). Thus, teacher education is one of the topical and controversial educational issues, in the international community. If we take into account the recent emphasis on the processes of reflection and metacognition, we are led to the conclusion that practices of teacher education that enhance the above are still at the center of educational interest.

One such practice is the microteaching technique which is applied in many departments in Greece and other countries that prepare their students as future teachers, (Fernadez, 2010; Msimanga, 2020; Danday, 2021; Sophos, et al., 2013; Karaminas, 2010).

However, while the microteaching method has been well studied mainly in terms of its effects on the trainee or practicing teacher, the way of linking the theoretical courses that students attend, and the application of this knowledge during their microteaching is absent from the literature. This practice of microteaching enables students to put into practice what they have learned earlier in theory. Thus, this article aims to identify the views of students of ASPETE Athens, how much the pedagogical courses they attended in previous semesters helped them in the planning, organization and implementation of their microteaching courses that they are required to implement in subsequent semesters.

The two theoretical courses, Teaching Methodology and Educational Evaluation are the reference courses for the implementation of the Practical Teaching Exercises by the students. The highlighting of appropriate teaching and evaluation tools that can be applied in the context of the Teaching Practice is the focus of the two courses, so that students are trained in issues related to the teaching and evaluation process.

a) *The theoretical framework: the scientific training of students in issues of Teaching Methodology and Educational Evaluation*

The training of the students of the Department of Education of ASPETE in teaching methodology is a necessary condition for them to fulfil their role as teachers. The aim of the course is to understand the phenomenon of teaching in its complexity and diversity with an awareness of its importance for education, in order to build the theoretical foundations and to cultivate the ability and readiness for the planning, organization, implementation and evaluation of the teaching practice. In particular, the aim is to gradually familiarise the teacher with teaching methods, both traditional and modern (student-centred), but also to develop the freedom and creativity of the teacher towards original, attractive and effective teaching and towards the development of a personal theory of teaching. This direction follows the direction of contemporary teaching methodology, which, adopting the principles of postmodern pedagogy, is oriented towards the construction of a dynamic system of knowledge production and use, through educational environments of communication and feedback between teachers and learners (Φρυδάκη, 2009, pp. 237-238). The aim is to maximize the teaching work, through practices that facilitate access to knowledge, the creation of a

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dynamic learning environment, capable of providing learning experiences and the development of a learning process, and the creation of a learning environment that is able to offer a learning experience for the students. In the context of this reasoning, the Teaching Practice, should aim to build knowledge, to move from the "shallow", standardized learning process to processes focused on agency and participation. It should shape productive teaching environments by drawing on learners' experiences and experiences, adopting collaborative and exploratory practices, as well as opportunities to practice and apply learning. Shape collaborative learning environments that encourage learners to question, explain and elaborate their thinking to "co-construct" solutions, as well as extended learning opportunities that foster positive relationships and support enriching learning. Organize ongoing formative assessments and opportunities to receive timely and useful feedback, teacher and student feedback, and opportunities to develop metacognitive skills through planning and managing complex tasks, self-evaluation and peer assessment and reflection on learning (Καυκά, 2022). It therefore follows that, in order to build, meaningful learning, the perspective of instruction should focus on making connections between new and prior knowledge, creating experiences, and organizing information in order to develop strategies for intentional learning and problem solving (Bransford, Brown, Cocking, and National Research Council [NRC], 2000). On this basis, students acquire specialized knowledge, design instruction and organize "open" learning environments so that the educational process meets the needs of contemporary reality. At the same time, their theoretical training on what educational evaluation is, what purpose it is called upon to perform and how to use the evaluative tools in teaching practice, is a requirement in order for evaluation to become a learning tool. Therefore, the way they are trained in the context of the course offered becomes an important and capable condition for ensuring effectiveness in the whole range of the teaching process in the school.

Based on the literature, the term Educational Assessment is distinguished for its broad and multidimensional scope of reference. The use of a variety of definitions, which have been recorded in both international and Greek literature from 1933 to the present day, demonstrates the complexity of the scientific field and the need for conceptual clarification (Black & William, 1998; Grammatikopoulos, 2006; Creemers & Kyriakides, 2008; Δημητρόπουλος, 1999; Κασσωτάκης, 1990, 2013; Masters, 2013; Newton, 2007; Provus, 2007; Provus, 1971; Stake, 1975; Stiggins, 2004; Stufflebeam, 1971; Tyler, 1942), often complementary and interdependent. The point of convergence of all the above-mentioned efforts is that they identify educational evaluation as a systematic process aimed at assessing and improving the effectiveness of all areas of education and refer to the evaluation of learners, teachers, the teaching process, curricula, educational programmes, the educational system as a whole are only some manifestations of educational evaluation. However, in contemporary pedagogical science, educational evaluation is directly intertwined with the evaluation of learners in everyday educational practice and is defined as the systematic and well-organised process of data collection and analysis aimed at assessing learners' knowledge and skills, always in relation to the intended teaching objectives set. In this light, assessment plays a catalytic role, as it runs through the whole teaching process, functioning as: a) a dynamic tool for learning (assessment for learning), actively involving learners in the evaluation of their efforts and b) as a feedback and improvement mechanism both for learners (continuous monitoring of their learning progress, detection of their weaknesses and deficiencies through the development of strong metacognitive skills) and for the teacher himself (e.g. e.g. redefining teaching objectives, redesigning appropriate teaching interventions to improve the teaching process) (Δημητρόπουλος, 1999; Κασσωτάκης, 2013). In this sense, the education of undergraduate students on the issues of educational evaluation is an important factor for their future response to the demands of the environment.

b) Research on the practice of micro-teaching

Teacher education is one of the topical and controversial educational issues, in the international community. If we take into account the recent emphasis on the processes of reflection and metacognition, we are led to the conclusion that teacher education practices that enhance the above are still at the center of educational interest (Παπαοικονόμου, 2014).

One such practice is the microteaching technique which is applied in many departments in Greece and other countries that prepare their students as future teachers, (Fernadez, 2005; Msimanga, 2020; Danday, 2021; Σοφός, et al., 2013; Καράμηνας, 2010).

Allen and Ryan define microteaching as an instructional practice that provides a teaching environment that familiarizes teacher trainees with situations found in a regular classroom, (Allen, & Ryan, 1969). More specifically, microteaching is a 5 to 30 minute laboratory exercise, depending on the model followed at the time, in which the teacher candidate teaches a limited teaching unit to a small audience of fellow teacher trainees in order to familiarize them with specific teaching skills and to acquire pedagogical approaches. A key element of the micro-teaching is its video recording, so that, in addition to the trainees, the teacher is able to observe him/herself on video as a teacher, immediately after the teaching has been carried out or later, and to reflect on it. After the viewing,

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comments and judgments from the trainees and the supervising pedagogue follow (Χατζηδήμου, 1997; Κουγιουρούκη, 2003; Γιαννακοπούλου, 2008). Through this practice of micro-teaching, the trainees have the opportunity and under the supervision of a supervisor, to utilize certain skills and receive feedback on their teaching and pedagogical behavior (Darwish, Sadeqi, 2016).

However, although, as a teacher education practice it has been encountered for several years, there are many contemporary researches dealing with this issue. Some of them will be presented below to highlight the parameters of the topic that have been studied and those that complement the present research.

One study that combined qualitative as well as quantitative data to investigate the effectiveness of microteaching on the teaching skills of prospective teachers is that conducted by Selda Bakir (2014) who found the effectiveness of microteaching to a significant extent on skills related to lesson planning, classroom management and time management. Moreover, the contribution of micro-teaching in increasing the confidence of prospective teachers, gaining teaching experience and more effective transmission of the lesson was emphasized. Finally, students argued that because of the help they received from the microteaching exercises, it should be included in other years of study, not only in the last year of study, (Bakir, 2014).

Another experimental study is described in the article by Zahid, Khanam, (2019). It was found that teachers' participation in microteaching had improved the skills and performance of teachers who reviewed and modified their teaching strategies through reflective practice. Finally, the findings led to the revision of educational interventions and strategies and the methods of microteaching were further improved (Zahid, Khanam, 2019).

Interestingly, research was also conducted at the University of Flores, Indonesia, where students implemented distance microteaching during the pandemic period due to Covid-19. In this case too, although they did not meet physically in a classroom but through an online platform, it was evident from the results that they also benefited from the process. They learned to actively use their skills, produce learning plans and implement a lesson, all while adapting to particular circumstances. The students in this particular department felt that they benefited significantly from the process by applying in a virtual classroom what they learn theoretically in their classroom with face-to-face observation (Nasar, Kaleka, 2020).

In conclusion, from the above literature review it can be concluded that Micro-teaching practice is a key element of education that provides an opportunity for teaching practice for those who are destined to become teachers and its place in education is essential. However, despite the many published international researches on microteaching, what is mainly examined is the effectiveness of microteaching in enhancing some teaching skills of teacher candidates, its contribution to communication and reflection. At the same time, there is a lack of literature and research on the correlation between the practice of Microdidactics and the theoretical courses taken by students as teacher candidates and the relationship between theory and practice. This is the dimension that this research aims to address.

II. Research Methodology

a) Objective and Research Questions

The aim of the present study was to investigate the opinions of the 7th semester students of the Mechanical Engineering Department and the 9th semester students of the Civil Engineering Department of ASPETE Athens, on whether the pedagogical courses, and especially those of Teaching Methodology and Educational Evaluation taught in previous semesters, helped them in the design, organization and implementation of their Microteaching courses that they were asked to implement in the respective semesters that the research was conducted.

From the above objective, the following research questions arise:

1) How much did the theoretical training received by the students, mainly in the courses of Teaching Methodology and Educational Evaluation, but also in other pedagogical courses, help them in the organization and implementation of their microteaching?
2) What do the students themselves suggest regarding the organization of the above theoretical courses, so that they are guided to the successful organization and implementation of the practical teaching exercises they are required to implement (PAD)?

b) Method

The topic under investigation was approached through qualitative research, which was approached in the light of the interpretive epistemological paradigm, since we were concerned with understanding the students' views. Thus, since in the interpretivist paradigm the question is not what is happening in the field of education from the observer's point of view, but what the learner or teacher believes is happening in the immediate educational environment and how they interpret it (Scotland, 2012), this epistemological paradigm. At the same time, the choice of qualitative research enabled us to deepen the analysis of students' perceptions and opinions. This is why qualitative research is a typical approach to educational research (Robson, 2010), as it is flexible and allows topics to be shaped, changed and further defined during the course of the research, contributing towards a holistic

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understanding of the topic to be investigated (Creswell, 2016).

Specifically, the research tool used was a semi-structured interview, lasting 25-30 minutes on average, of approximately 12 (there may have been some clarifications on a case-by-case basis) open-ended questions, predetermined for all sample members, following all the procedures for conducting this research (obtaining consent, communicating the research protocol to the participants). This particular instrument was chosen due to the fact that the open-ended questions of semi-structured interviews are flexible and facilitate the collaboration between the researcher and the respondent (Robson, 2010). Finally, the interviews lasted from October 2022 to December of the same year and were conducted in the Faculty premises after the implementation of the micro-teaching sessions by each group of students.

c) Sample

In the present study, the reference point is 12 students (7 female and 5 male), who were studying in the 7th semester of the Department of Mechanical Engineering or respectively in the 9th semester of the Department of Civil Engineering of ASPETE Athens. The students in the sample can be characterized as a "feasibility sample", because these students have attended the theoretical courses whose contribution is examined in the research, their participation was highly voluntary and they showed particular interest in participating in it. So the main criterion for selecting the participants was their attendance of the pedagogical theory courses in previous semesters. Also, as stated by Ίσαρη & Πούρκος (2015), qualitative research does not follow fixed rules and numerical limitations with regard to the sample size. Therefore, the number of 12 participants that constituted our sample was considered satisfactory, since the aim of the research was to elicit subjective and personal opinions and or in-depth understanding of them (Μαντζούκας, 2007).

III. Validity and Reliability

In order to ensure the validity of the research and to avoid the possibility of misunderstanding the questions during the interview process, a pilot interview was conducted with two groups of students who would not participate in the research, and once the readability and clarity of the questions were ensured, the individual interviews were then conducted.

In order to ensure reliability, transcribed interviews were given to some of the participants - specifically five of our sample - to confirm their responses. In other words, the process that Creswell (2016) defines as "member checking" was applied and considers it necessary to validate the accuracy of the data.

IV. Data Analysis

In this study, the thematic analysis followed the stages of analysis according to Τσίωλη (2014), so that the researcher links the next step to the previous ones through a circular feedback process with accurate recording and attribution of the themes in the context of the research questions. In the first stage, the researcher proceeded to transcribe the interviews with an emphasis on accurately recording what was said without deleting any interruptions, errors or repetitions (Τσίωλης, 2014). Next, the analysis stage which involves the generation of initial codes by examining the texts in order Each code briefly expresses the meaning the researcher gives to the particular section of data. Some codes can be combined (codes with similar features or meanings) and unified at a higher level (before the framing of issues) forming categories or higher level codes (Τσιώλης, 2014). In short, the process of coding according to Glaser and Strauss' Grounded Theory was followed (in Τσιώλης, 2014) without the researchers aiming to derive a new theory, but to confirm pre-existing findings or to formulate new ones.

V. Survey Results

The results of the coding of the interviews indicated that the pedagogical courses generally helped the students to implement their microteaching. In particular, they helped them to concretize their thinking and use the respective concepts of Teaching Methodology and Educational Evaluation (lesson concepts, objectives, methods, teaching techniques, teaching tools, etc.). It was also said that it was facilitated by the concept maps taught in the Teaching Methodology course, because they gave students an idea of how to organize their recapitulation and how to reformulate the main concepts of their teaching. As the student (4) puts it:

> "*These lessons helped me in terms of bringing out my thinking and vocabulary.... In the PADs (Practical Exercises of Didatics) that we do now and later on in school, we have to have some concepts in our minds, such as methods, means, techniques...we were able to separate these in our minds. We didn't know these things, and we were taught them in specific courses. That's what it helped me with: being able to separate them and being able to use them at any time, either now or in the future if I get involved (in education), to make the course more interesting and less ineffective*..."

In addition, it was felt that the examples presented to the students during the Teaching Methodology lesson, the explanation of the different phases in each teaching method and the guidance in completing the form describing the lesson plan they carry out in each of their micro-teaching sessions were particularly useful for them to carry out these. According to Student (1):

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"*The truth is that both courses (Teaching Methodology and Educational Evaluation) were quite helpful, because the teachers were showing us during the course how to use each teaching method and so on, so now that it was time for me to use it, it seemed easier than if I had no contact with it...and I would have had to pull it out of nowhere.*"

Similarly, Student (5) stresses:

"*Definitely the Teaching Methodology course helped me the most of all and the reason is that we had seen the phases for each different way of teaching separately...*".

And Student (2) adds: "*Yes, the pedagogical courses helped me quite a lot, but I mostly apply something simple to my own teaching....*".

Subsequently, the students who had attended the pedagogical courses, namely those of Teaching Methodology and Educational Evaluation, felt more comfortable to put into practice the different teaching methods they were asked to apply in their microteaching, such as concept elaboration, group collaboration and inquiry. Although most of them emphasise that they have not fully assimilated each method and when they apply them they understand them better, they admit that they have received a satisfactory insight into these methods from the delivery of their respective courses:

Student (1): "*I think I have a good understanding of them and that I can apply them in the classroom.*"

Student (2): "*I think yes, maybe not all of them. Working out concepts is easier, exploratory is difficult, as well as group work, because I can't think how I can put the children in groups, because some may not have the same knowledge as others, they may be weaker than others...*"

Student (3): "*It helped me, because we had the slides explaining them...but there I was a bit confused about what each one was.....but okay...the lesson helped me in general...*"

Student (4): "*Yes, ...it is very different to have a definition in your head, such as working out concepts, and very different to have to organize a whole lesson on that, even if it is 15 minutes long... That is, I who will next time present the group collaborative ... was very much helped to sort out what I have to do ... first having been in the position of the student, which I have been for so many years and continue to be, and then also getting into the position of the teacher, the professor ...*".

However, there were also opinions that found the process difficult because they had no experience of anything like this and the only thing they had as a model was the lessons of some of their teachers. As Student (8) states:

"*It is definitely a difficult process because I have not experienced anything similar. We have many teachers as a model that we can follow some scenario. We definitely have the basics from some courses we have been taught. We know the steps we need to follow but from there it's up to us.....*"

While, for the Teaching Methodology course, this student felt that it had some "gaps", in contrast to the Educational Evaluation course which he felt was more clear, with specific objectives.

"*I did have some gaps indeed. I asked some teachers again to pass it on to my teaching. Maybe some things were kind of rushed through in the lessons [that we did] and not as well understood. Some concept, methods nine relatively close ... are some details that need to be understood ...*"

"*There [in the Educational Assessment] things were clearer because it has to do with the last part of the process... things were more clear*".

There was also a feeling from some participants that they only gained a general idea from the theoretical courses, which they felt not quite sure how to put into practice, and it was said by several that the past time between the theoretical courses taught and the Microlearning sessions also made it difficult for them:

"*To a certain extent I can say that I have understood some things. But it's generally what I remember. it's been a long time.... Also the classes were in quarantine so we were not able to ask questions... to talk to the professor/teacher in the context of the way the class was conducted...*" *(Student 9)*

Continuing with the students' views on the relationship between theory and practice, it was found that theory generally helps to apply what was taught, but there is also some distance between the two. Most students claimed that the theory they learn is far from the application of the theory they learn. In Practice, they are asked to take into account various factors, the needs of the children, unpredictable situations that will arise and they have to manage them. Generally, while they felt they had some elements of theory in mind, they felt insecure when they had to apply it to their teaching eventually.

"*...it's a lot of work behind the scenes until you get into the classroom...but I hadn't experienced it, to actually understand how difficult it is, and when I actually did....or was....it was actually very demanding, very demanding.*" *(Student 1).*

"*....it's completely different...because when you say it theoretically...you say okay...one, two, three,...but when you come into a room...it's that there are different opinions...the fear of how you're going to say it...you're thinking about resonance...and you're thinking about other things and you're trying at the same time not to forget the pattern that you want to follow...and Yes! ...it's different...(Student 3).*

"*It's too far away! Because in theory we have a certain student pattern in mind. Whereas in practice, we talk about different students who may not be able to fit into it...*"*(Student 6).*

When asked what helped the students to organize and prepare more effectively for the Practical Teaching Exercises (PADs) in terms of the two courses, the respondents said that they were particularly helped by the information given to them before the Microlearning sessions, but also by the teaching, the notes taken by the students individually, the discussions

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during the lesson, which fostered teamwork and collaboration, and the material posted by the teacher.

As the students argue:

"Definitely the notes because I had taken them as I wanted and I could understand them afterwards on my own...so definitely the notes I had taken from that lesson and how well the professor explained it..." (Student 5).

Or according to Student (7):

"I would say first of all the professor because the more e.g. he gives you the material and applies it already, the more he helps you to digest it better,... This, but also with notes and the forms that were given to us at the beginning of the PADs that is and there I keep referring especially to the form for the steps of each teaching....".

However, it was emphasized by all respondents that the course books were not used or utilized by the students and barely thumbed through by some. They all relied on the teacher's notes or their own notes as well as the material provided by the lecturer which was on slides. As the students argue:

"More from slides, from my own notes...so I was writing down all the things that were explained to us...and now I still write down more what the teacher says...it helps more in assessment because books are harder to understand." (Student 2)

"The discussions and examples within the lesson and the material he had put up...not the book..." (Student 3).

When asked if they felt that something was missing from these particular lessons and what it was, almost all respondents said that they would have liked to have seen more "Practice" before implementing their microteaching. In particular, others suggested that groups of students make small presentations of lessons or lesson plans within the courses to get an idea of the process and to implement the teaching methods they were taught to at least some extent. Others suggested seeing examples of micro-teaching by other students or lecturers, while some suggested having small seminars to present the methods. Of course it was said again that these courses should be held in semesters closer to their microteaching. Let us look at some of these views:

"As I told you before...I would like these courses to be as close as possible to the PADs..."(Student 3)".

"I think that in the theoretical courses there could be something like small sketches (she means something like simulated microteaching). Now we faced something new (in PAD). If we had done it even for five minutes in class, with improvisation completely, it would have helped us more....we would have been less stressed, because we would have had a picture in our minds the first time of what we had to do..."(Student 4).

"Yes...if we could see it...I mean, if we could see the PADs of other kids who would practice on it, so that we could see it for next year." (Student 6).

"For me what would be ideal would be at the beginning of the semester to have a small seminar showing a little bit of the methods from the teachers themselves or from other children... ..."(Student 7).

"It could be more interactive and with more practical applications. Because we are tertiary, what was done now in the Micro-teaching could have been done earlier, in the first courses, so that we could make it more our own, get closer to it." (Student 8).

Clearly then, this highlights the need for students to have more practice, examples and interaction in order to more effectively consolidate the theory they are learning.

Finally, as to whether the teaching practice is demanding for the teacher, the students felt that it is indeed a very demanding process, which requires good preparation, transferability, comfort with students, good subject knowledge and fluency in the use of new technologies. At the same time, they argued that the teacher should make the course engaging and inspire the students. The combination of all the above skills the students admitted that it was very challenging.

Let us look at some of the students' views:

"He has, yes because he has to keep the time and the children have to understand, he has to keep some handouts and he has to know his subject,..." (Student 2).

"...it's definitely, it's not simple...because there has to be liveliness in the classroom...you have to do different things so that you spark interest and there's always excitement about what they're going to learn in the future...." (Student 5).

"It is a demanding process to teach. You have to master the course first of all, be able to have fluency in the classroom, constant interaction with the children so they don't lose interest, lots of material and up-to-date material: videos, power points...and definitely not just standing on one source...I think the textbook is very outdated now...so lots of preparation!" (Student 7).

But apart from the aforementioned, it is worth noting in closing with the results that several students also found courses such as Psychology or Educational Technology useful, which indirectly but in a meaningful way made them interpret more correctly adolescent behaviours, ways of thinking, what to observe in their students' behaviour. Similarly, Educational Technology showed them ways of integrating New Technologies in education, ways of interactive lessons, and in this course they were also taught lesson plans which were useful for the organization and implementation of their Microteaching.

VI. Conclusions - Discussion

The above analysis shows that to a fairly sufficient level feel that they have benefited from attending theoretical courses related to the practice of the Microteaching that they are implementing. This finding also coincides with research by Aslihan, Naci (2013), according to which the microteaching method gives teacher candidates the opportunity to evaluate what they gained from teaching the theory they were taught and how much they were able to put into practice what they learned theoretically (Aslihan, Naci 2013). This

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view was evident in the present study in which participants claimed that the theory helped them to apply some elements in practice and that they would have found it more difficult if they had not been aware of them.

However, almost all participants stressed that while they were helped to some extent by the theory, in practice they felt quite different and reflected on teaching and pedagogical issues that they had not imagined while theoretically teaching the Teaching Methodology and Educational Evaluation courses. So, when implementing their microteaching, it seems that they focused more on practical issues and less on the theory they had been taught. This finding is also confirmed in the research of (Crichton, et, all, 2021), where also few students made connections with learning theories when they applied their microteachings, and those participants also claimed that they were greatly helped by the practical experience they gained from teaching their colleagues, which was also confirmed in our research. We also found that when our students put a micro-teaching module into practice, apart from difficulties they faced, they became more aware of what they had been taught and felt more prepared to teach. Something similar was also found in the research of (Crichton, et, all, 2021) in which it was noted that there too the participants gained more confidence and better understood the pedagogical approaches they had been taught in the theory courses (Crichton, et, all, 2021).

In addition, we think it is important to highlight the request of many of the students interviewed that they would have liked to have been 'exposed' to more practical teaching exercises and teaching models from professors or older students, in order to link theory and practice more effectively, and interestingly, the suggestion that these theory courses should be taught in semesters that are close to the micro-teaching requirement, so that there is not a long time gap between theory and practice.

Finally, it is also interesting to note that the teaching practice is a highly demanding process that requires a number of skills to be effective. This makes the teaching profession particularly demanding and difficult, which the students found out when they taught themselves in the context of micro-teaching. A similar finding was also made in the research of (Karlström, & Hamza, 2019), according to which, through reflection after implementing their microteaching in science subjects, the participants realized the importance as well as the difficulty of the teaching task (Karlström, & Hamza, 2019).

VII. Research Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

This research is important for teacher education, where it is recognised that there is some difference between the theoretical and practical aspects of teaching. It provides a basis for further research that will explore in greater depth students' perceptions of different elements of a microteaching project. However, there are some limitations that could be addressed in subsequent research. First, we acknowledge that the study involved students who were taught the specific theoretical courses in Educational Evaluation and Teaching Methodology online due to the recent pandemic. This parameter could affect the results of this study and if these courses had been taught face-to-face, other connections between theory and practice could have been made.

Also, due to the choice of semi-structured interview as the main methodological tool, a limited number of students were interviewed so we cannot confidently claim the generalizability of the results. It would be possible here to supplement this research with quantitative data from a much larger sample of students.

Finally, the fact that there was, according to the curriculum of the faculty, a significant time gap between the teaching of these courses with which the research was basically concerned, and the implementation of the Microteaching, is something that also, could influence the results of the present research and would be useful as a topic to be taken into account by the curricula of all university departments of Education.

In conclusion, we find that the application of theory in the design, organization and implementation of student-teachers' microteaching raises questions about the purpose of teaching theory at the university. Does the teaching of theory need to be aimed at developing students' ability to put into practice what is taught and making the specific lessons more experiential?

This research has attempted to raise the concern. Subsequent research efforts could be extended to the relationship between other pedagogical courses and teaching practices implemented by prospective teachers in the classroom, as well as to investigate the contribution of pedagogical theory courses to the practical teaching practice implemented by prospective teachers in a real classroom.

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