Chapter 10

Learner Perception of Using Case Study Method as a Teaching Method in Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the study is to explore learners' perception of case study method within the context of a Degree in Infant Education. The research is carried out at Salamanca University during the academic year 2017-2018. In order to achieve the goal of the research, a quantitative study is employed. The sample of the research is composed of 77 learners enrolled in the compulsory subject School Organization. To operationalize the variables and collect data researchers use a questionnaire. Analyzing the results, it is highlighted that most learners emphasize the benefits of case study method to be involved in the real context of a classroom setting, and to contribute to the development of different skills such as communication, problem solving, decision-making, organizing and planning, analytical thinking, conflict resolution, negotiation, coordination, cooperation, flexibility, tolerance, and respect. They state that it is a fantastic experience to put into practice the knowledge previously acquired. This research points out how the case study method maximizes the learning experience.

INTRODUCTION

The intent of this research is to contribute to the overall knowledge base about the use of case study method as a teaching method in higher education. Different authors (Leenders, 2001; Mauffette-Launders, et al., 2005; Popil, 2011) consider that a case is normally a description of a real situation, which commonly implies a decision, a challenge, an opportunity, etc., faced by a person or a group of people in an organization. A case allows learners to step metaphorically into the shoes of decision-makers and contribute to the development of decision-making skills.

On the other hand, as Herreid, Schiller, Herreid, & Wright (2011) points out the case study teaching method can be defined as a highly adaptable style of teaching which favours the development of different skills as analytical skills, critical thinking, and implies problem-based learning. It can be defined as an active teaching strategy, which has the potential to improve the quality as well as quantity of students' learning (Razali & Zainal, 2013). Dahlkwist (2007) adds that the case study method allows learners to face several situations and problems related to their future work, being more prepared and having a more stable ground with knowledge to face similar situations when they begin to work. As Tal (2010) states case study can be defined as a meta-skill that integrates cognitive perceptions, self-regulation skills, and interpersonal relationships with learners and teachers. It is also perceived as a cyclical process that includes advance planning, implementation, assessment during the implementation, and a final evaluation that takes into account factors related to the learners and their environment, intended to bring about progress in the activities carried out for the learning and emotional well-being of the learners in the class (pp.143-144). On the other hand, Lee & Choi (2008) add that case study is a teaching method which requires learners to actively participate in real or hypothetical problem solutions, reflecting the kinds of experiences naturally encountered in the discipline under study (pp. 936-937)

There are many international researchers that have carried out several studies that highlight how case study method can be considered a bridge between theory and practice (Bolinger, Herold, Ramnath, & Ramanathan, 2011; Davis & Wilcock, 2003; Habasisa & Hlalele, 2014; Mayo, 2004; Olkum, Altun & Deryakulu, 2009). A didactic and pedagogical alternative in classroom (Minniti, et al, 2017) that allows bringing real situations into classrooms, establishing a link between real life situations or problems, and classroom and learning environment (Hackney, McMaster & Harris, 2003; Minniti, et al, 2017; Olkum, Altun & Deryakulu, 2009; Roberts, 2001; Wang & Wang, 2011). Several studies have proved the positive impact of the case study method as a teaching method to promote and improve learners' academic performance and their interest towards the subject (Bonney, 2015; Habasisa & Hlalele, 2014; Muraya & Kimamo, 2011; Schunk, Meece & Pintrich, 2014; Swanson & Morrison,

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