

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.

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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). Dahlkvist (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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