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Educational Potential of Case-Study Technology

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Abstract

This article presents the results of phenomenological and typological analysis of case-study technology educational potential. The definition "educational potential of case-study technology" is given, the main characteristics of which are changed in communication and collaborative activity quality, appearance of educational initiatives, change of participants' position in learning process, formation of "collective subject" in collaborative activity, increase of learning (subject) results. Dependence between case-study technology application and quality of learning process participants' involvement in the collaborative activity, and with the quality of educational (subject) results is established.

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Keywords: Case-study technology; educational potential; communication; collaborative activity; learning process participants; involvement.

1. Introduction

In modern conditions of innovative development in education, changing its quality is caused by inclusion of the students themselves in learning process and in their learning organization. Today the priority in education is not given to such processes as "mastering" and "remembering", but to the ability of a person to be the subject of their learning, participate in generation of goals and meanings of learning, building of personal presence place by a person, comprehension of one's own learning, which is developed during interaction and communication

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(Prozumentova, 2009, p. 16). Thereupon, a special interest is expressed to using the technologies, providing the involvement of students in their own learning process organization that allows organizing a productive communication among learning process participants at the lesson. Such technologies also include case-study technology. Having appeared in the beginning of the previous century, the technology is still very popular nowadays among teachers of different disciplines. It is actively used both in secondary schools and in higher educational institutions.

2. Literature review

A literature review is used to study different definitions of case-study as well as its educational opportunities, which have been already revealed by different domestic and foreign scholars.

Analysis of various literature sources allowed selecting the following definitions for the term “case-study”. Fry et al describes case-studies as complex examples which give an insight into the context of a problem as well as illustrating the main point (Fry, 1999). According to Stake, case-study is both the process of learning about the case and the product of our learning (Stake, 1995, p. 28). Yin speaks about case-study as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident (Yin, 2009). George and Bennett consider that case-study is an instance of a class of events where the term class of events refers to a phenomenon of scientific interest that the investigator chooses to study with the aim of developing theory regarding causes of similarities or differences among instances (cases) of that class of events (George & Bennett, 2005).

So, one can say that the term “case-study” covers a variety of problems posed for analysis, but most types include several key elements. Case-studies are either based on real events, or a construction of events which could reasonably take place. They tell a story involving issues or conflicts which need to be resolved – though most case-studies do not have one obvious or clear solution. The information contained in case-study might be complex (including charts, graphs, and relevant historical background materials) or simple – a human story that illustrates a difficult situation requiring a decision.

We define case-study as a student-centered activity based on topics that demonstrate theoretical concepts in an applied setting. This definition of case-study covers a big number of different teaching structures we use, ranging from short individual case study to longer group-based activities.

Educational research has shown case-study to be a useful pedagogical tool. Grant (1997) outlines the benefits of using case-study as an interactive learning strategy, shifting the emphasis from teacher-centered to more student-centered activity Raju and Sanker (1999) demonstrate the importance of using case-study in engineering education to expose a student to real-world issues which they may faced in future. Case-study has also been linked with increased student motivation and interest in a subject (Grant, 1997; Rahu & Sanker, 1999; Mustoe & Croft, 1999).

Thus, educational opportunities of case-study technology are determined by its being based on two powerful stimuli of learning activity: 1) inclusion of real, practical situations and real-world examples where experienced, knowledge of those solving the case are needed; 2) a wide range of forms and ways of communication regarding a case (situation).

Popularity of the technology is also provided by the fact that it gives teachers the right to decide on a way of communication with students during case solving, developing different models of communication for solving a wide range of learning and educational problems. In addition, practical use of case-study technology can become a successful method of professional growth and teaching skills improvement. Even a long experience of technology application will not allow it become “*customary*” and “*boring*”. The technology continuously opens new opportunities for teachers to try, search, find new unexpected learning effects, and therefore is able to form a positive motivation towards professional activity (Fedorinova & Kalachikova, 2013)

Actualization of anthropological approach to learning organization, in which rethinking of the essence of learning itself, understood as a space for meaning-making, human and personalized communication (Kabrin, 2005), humanitarian medium (Slobodchikov, 2000), learning medium, in designing and creation of which only a person himself takes part (Prozumentova, 2005), here case-study technology is seen in the context of solving the problem of human learning. Not only formation of various qualities and competencies are mentioned herein, but establishment of subject position of learning process participants (Korovina, 2010), their initiating of meaning-making

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