



7th International Conference on Intercultural Education “Education, Health and ICT for a Transcultural World”, EDUHEM 2016, 15-17 June 2016, Almeria, Spain

The use of case studies as a teaching method in Brazil

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Abstract

This paper presents a proposal of application the teaching case method. This method, based on case studies, helps to develop the arguments to a point of view. The case study is defined as an in depth exploration method of realities (cases); presenting investigative analyses. This method promotes critical thinking, encourages debates and stimulates teacher and students interaction. This article presents the teaching case method and a brief history of the case method in Brazil. This work was conducted through literature review and ends with a proposal of application of the method as an active learning strategy. Conclusions point the feasibility of the method as a teaching strategy.

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Peer-review under responsibility of the organizing committee of EDUHEM 2016.

Keywords: Case Study; Teaching Case; Didactic and Pedagogical Methodology.

1. Introduction.

This paper aims to stimulate the debate on teacher and student interaction through the presentation of the methodology of teaching case as a didactic and pedagogical alternative in classroom. Based on several authors (Roberts, 2001; Gil, 2009; Martins, 2007; Rodrigo, 2008; Ventura, 2007; Fagundes, 2009; Yin, 2005; Wang & Wang, 2001) the teaching case is a powerful methodology for management classes, once it makes possible to establish a link between the learning environment and the real world of organizations, favoring the development of cognitive skills in the students through analysis, synthesis and judgment, encouraging them to be active protagonists in the learning process.

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The case study is defined as immersive exploration method of realities, presenting investigative nature. Its operation can be driven by one or more provocations, which may arise along the immersion experience, posing new outlines and analyzes. So, the case study as a teaching strategy enables the experience of data collection and its systematization, placing the student in the context where the phenomenon analyzed happens or expressed.

The case study approach implies in a closed and prolonged contact of the researcher with the situation or object of the research. It requires accurate practices for reading angles relevant to the exploration of the problems and to propose solutions. In fact, the case study allows penetration into a social reality, not fully achieved by a sample survey and exclusively quantitative evaluation.

Gil 2005 defines the following steps: problem formulation; set a unit case; determine the number of cases; protocol development; data collection; review and analysis; and preparation of the report. Vasconcelos (2012) suggests the following steps: planning; choose and definition of unit case; formalization of the study protocol; immersion on-site observation; data collect; data organization; analyze and discussion; drawing the conclusions from the theoretical framework and results.

A practical case study still demands skilled researchers in the topic object that motivated the study, capable to understand the reality investigated. The case study as a teaching strategy must be orchestrated by the experienced teacher, with the active participation of the students.

A single unit case has the potential to house different lines of development, circumscribed in well-defined limits. This means that the same problem situation can be evaluated from different perspectives, which makes them always particular cases. Case studies when adopted as a research strategy ranging from simple studies to those complex and abstract. What matters is the peculiarity of the analysis.

Vasconcelos (2012) defines the case study as a prospective analysis, including: articulation of the contents in different disciplines; connection with business reality; critical in assessing problems; obtaining backing for the decision-making process, considering a larger universe of variables.

The case studies deliver interpretations, explanations, descriptions, comparisons, evidence that contribute to the clarification of outstanding issues and thematic provocation. Its application is a preliminary exercise in the decision-making process, sharpening his critical perspective, assessing the contribution of management techniques, an inductive approach.

2. Case study, case method and teaching strategy.

The case study is a qualitative research technique that has turned its attention from the search for a diagnosis of a case. The case method, in turn, presents educational purposes and serves mainly to illustrate concepts and develop skills in students, and may also be drawn from a case study. The case study, in line with a research method, not to be confused with a teaching strategy since this latter condition requires involvement, full immersion in the reality investigated or explored. It also does not match the case method, where the real situations are presented to students for analysis and discussions, without flexibility to intervene in reality or even possibility of perception spot. In fact, the method is implemented in the classroom.

The case method consists of an educational strategy whose aim is to get students to reflect on situations presented in the case and may involve making decisions about the episode studied. The aim of the technique is basically present a problem to the students, making the analyze and reflect on the subject.

2.1. Case study as a method of research.

Investigate very specific and limited objects contextualized in temporal and spatial dimensions. The student researcher co - participates in the planning and design of the study most of the time process, but in some cases their autonomy is relativized by the frequent interventions of the teacher or the imposition of a rigid model. It requires in-depth knowledge of the unit case, but not necessarily, a full immersion. It includes multiple dimensions of analysis.

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