個案研究於教學上之實踐析探

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摘要

個案研究具有探索性的特質，如果得到適當地應用，可使學生在學習的當下，展現出他積極的一面。個案研究不僅可以用來鼓勵創造性思維和作為輔導教學方法，而且還可以為學習者提供各種複雜性和可變性的真實場景。個案研究盡可能的接近將現實情境導入教室，無論該教室是在家庭中、學校中、還是在工作場所中。然而，儘管合適的個案研究可以讓新手學習者了解過去的解決方案，從而有效增進渠等的專業知識及技能，但教師在運用個案研究的同時，仍須審慎的藉由資料的蒐集與比較分析，以期在研究討論的過程當中能有更進一步的詳細觀察、邏輯思考、態樣反應、特質發現等，俾利有效評估學生的表現；否則，將會影響到個案研究的實質成效。因此，本文旨在揭櫫個案研究在教學上的實踐，以便有一透徹認識，並對相關問題提出深入地剖析與建議，以為尋求解決的途徑。

關鍵字：個案研究、學習、教學

The Practice of Case Studies in Teaching

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Abstract

Given the exploratory nature, case studies can place students in active positions in the learning process when appropriately applied. Not merely can case studies be utilized to encourage creative thinking and facilitate decision making, case studies can afford learners real-world scenarios in all their complexity and variability. Case studies further come as close as possible to bringing the real world into the classroom, regardless of whether that classroom is at home, in a school, or the workplace. Albeit suitable cases can be effective in building expertise by allowing novice learners to develop knowledge of past solutions, instructors who apply case studies may not understand how to observe, react, select, prepare for, facilitate, and evaluate student performance on case study discussions. This insufficiency of knowledge may affect the effectiveness of the case study. This paper, therefore, aims to present the practice of case studies in teaching and provide recommendations for the use of case studies.

Keywords: Case studies, learn, teach

Introduction

A case study is a process or record of research in which detailed consideration is given to the development of a particular person, group, or situation over a while. Woods and Catanzaro (1988) depicted a case study as an intensive, systematic investigation of a single individual, group, community, or some other unit in which the researcher examines in-depth data relating to several variables. Yin (2009) further construed the case study research method as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used" (p 13). A case study therefore can be succinctly defined as an immersive exploration method of realities, presenting investigative nature.

Typically seen in articles in history, management, medicine, etc., case studies were one of the first types of research to be used in the field of qualitative methodology. Much famous empirical work has been produced by case study research; numerous treasured classics in different disciplines are case studies as well. Case studies have been expansively applied in social and life sciences, especially in practice-oriented fields, like military, psychology, public health, etc. For example, Heale and Twycross (2018) recognized that case study methodology serves to afford a framework for evaluation and analysis of complex issues. Albeit this long history and widespread use, case study research has received little attention among the various methodologies in social science research, particularly education. Mills et al. (2010) indicted that merely a few studies center on case studies and the design as well as practice in case study research as a guide for professionals are insufficient.

From this, it can be implied that despite their widespread use and popularity, case studies are still characterized by inadequacy in understanding their implementation. To explore how case studies can successfully be practiced in teaching, the researcher interviewed four individuals, including two males and two females. All of them are teachers respectively teaching English, marketing, politics, and statistics, at different universities in the Taipei metropolitan area. Two are Taiwanese citizens and the other

two are American citizens. Since university teachers represent the majority of teaching professionals, by focusing on this specific group, the researcher can gain valuable information about the practice of case studies in teaching.

Literature Review

The use of case studies is based upon the teaching approach of Problem-Based Learning (PBL), which was originally used at the Harvard Business School and the Medical school at McMaster University in the mid-1970s. According to Barrows and Tamblyn (1980), PBL is "the learning that results from the process of working toward the understanding or resolution of a problem" (p. 2). The case study method is further categorized as a problem-based educational method. Problem-based education is based on the assumptions that "human beings evolved as individuals who are motivated to solve problems, and that problem solvers will seek and learn whatever knowledge is needed for successful problem solving (McKeachie & Svinicki, 2006, p. 222)". McKeachie and Svinicki (2006) stated that problem-based learning especially can benefit students in cultures where they are not expected to actively participate in classes. Derived from the concept of PBL, the case study method is based upon two theories: (1) constructivist theory and (2) social learning theory. Based on these two theories, a case study is understood as the readiness to enhance learning and teaching. It also furnishes individuals with both attitudes and behavioral resources that they can use in their daily lives.

Constructivist Theory

According to Phillips (1995), the term "constructivism" has extensively been used by such a large number of people and for a wide variety of purposes that there is almost no compromise as to its actual meaning. Constructivism, a theory of knowledge and the nature of knowledge, is considered the foremost learning theory nowadays (Boghossian, 2006). As a multifaceted concept, it has deep roots in philosophy, education, psychology, and anthropology. Under the notion of constructivism, learning is described as an active process of constructing knowledge, and knowledge is deemed as a consequence of a constructive process (Boghossian, 2006). Within the constructivist

theory, learners actively construct new meaning and connect it to previous knowledge (Driver, 1989).

The constructivist theory posits that knowledge is constructed when individuals attribute personal meaning to their learning experience. The individual makes sense of the information and then internalizes the knowledge by experiencing it (Taylor et al., 2000). Case-based learning is exactly one of the most commonly used models on a constructivist approach to education (McNergney, Ducharme, & Ducharme, 1999). Constructivists believe learning is a process of constructing meaning. It is how people make sense of their experiences. To construct that meaning, those experiences have to be separated, considered, and reflected upon. Important elements of constructivist teaching that are common in the case study approach include group learning, experience, reflection, and the process of making or constructing meaning (Glasersfeld, 1995), although the experience and reflection involved in studying cases may be more hypothetical than actual. Since constructivists posit that learning optimally occurs by the interaction with the environment in a problem-anchored and learner-centered approach, case-based learning's focus on learning with real problems and with real applications incorporates the key elements of constructivist theories. This aspect of constructivist theory provides an especially important underpinning for the case-based learning model because the goal of case-based learning is not only to solve difficult problems, but also to create an opportunity for learning and development at the individual, team, and organizational levels.

Social Learning Theory

Based on Bandura's social learning theory (1977), people copy behavior from others to achieve desired outcomes. Bandura (1977) suggested that "learning would be exceedingly laborious, not to mention hazardous, if people had to rely solely on the effects of their own actions to inform them what to do" (p. 266). Human beings learn all kinds of social behaviors and do many things by imitation and modeling of others, as learning occurs by observation of others to a big extent (Myers, 1998). The social learning theory concentrates on an individual's learning through vicarious experiences in a social context. Also known as observational learning, it does not only combine

elements from behaviorist orientation and cognitive orientation (Merriam & Baumgartner, 2020) but also involves one's self-regulation and modeling of new roles or behaviors (Bandura, 1977). This learning process begins from a constant attendance of a role model in a social context to cognitively retaining the observed information. The individual will rehearse and compare themselves to the role model; their new attitude or behavior will be willingly accumulated and subsequently presented once the individual gets motivated. The individual may change their attitude or behavior to fit into a certain group of people and that group purposely reinforces that attitude or behavior by acting as a model.

Many studies use various scenarios to exemplify that learners gain new experiences by observation and emulation. For example, Hale (1993) applied social learning theory to explore the phenomenon of serial murder. He indicated that a serial murderer must suffer heavily humiliating experience and their behaviors are always imitated. Singer and Hensley (2004), in the same vein, delved into exploring the possible link between childhood and/or adolescent fire setting and adult serial murder by applying social learning theory. They concluded that having experienced a high number of non-reward situations is the major factor for the relations based upon case studies of serial murderers. Also, incorporating Krumboltz's (1979) social learning theory of career decision making, Datti (2009) examined career development issues for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (GLBTQ) adolescents and young adults. He urged that creating GLBTQ-friendly learning environments and assessments can assist career counselors to support adults in career decision-making. In the sight of social learning, learning is an interaction of a person, model behavior, and even environment; videlicet learning always happens through observing a role model and interacting with others in a social context.

Similar to constructivism, social learning theorists claim learning can be planned based on previous experiences. Learning programs can become more successful when the learners are intelligent enough to integrate new content with prior knowledge and skills (Clark & Lyons, 2011). Merriam and Baumgartner (2020) contented that the purpose of learning is to model a new role and change one's behavior, attitude or value

toward the role model. The instructor is a role model to guide the learners and help them form realistic expectations for their achievement. Furthermore, social learning is not merely available in the classroom but also in non-classroom learning (Merriam & Baumgartner, 2020). In classroom learning settings, the teacher or peers can be a role model to the learners, which is considered an instructional strategy. On the other hand, in non-classroom learning settings, social learning is often employed as an employee training strategy and a team management strategy. For instance, the incumbent is always viewed as a role model or a mentor to new employees in a social context.

Social learning theorists center on learning from the observation of other people in social settings. That learning occurs with the interaction of the person, the environment, and the person's behavior. Social learning theorists emphasize concepts like mentoring, socialization, and guiding as part of learning processes (Bandura & Walters, 1963). In the case study method, social learning theory is applicable upon two levels. In effective cases, first, the learner can position themselves as an actual character in that case. The learner makes decisions based on the situations that present themselves in the case and on the actions of other characters in the case. Second, on another level, social learning theory is applicable in the study of cases in the classroom environment. It is that discussion among learners in a classroom, all of whom bring various perspectives to a situation, that can enhance case study discussions and enrich classroom activities. Students learn from the thoughts expressed by their colleagues, from the perspectives from which they view the case, and from the experiences of other learners that lead to those learners' statements and conclusions.

Methods

To investigate how case studies can successfully be practiced in teaching, purposive sampling, the experience sampling method (ESM), and a review of literature were systematically conducted in this study.

Selection and Criteria of Participants

Participants in this study were selected through purposive sampling. A purposive sample is one where people from a pre-specified group are purposely sought out and

sampled (Holloway & Wheeler, 2010). Purposive sampling is applied to justify the inclusion of rich sources of data that can be used to generate or test out the explanatory frameworks (Bryman, 2012). It can maximize the applicability of data for study and promise the possibility of manifold realities. Accordingly, participants for this study were selected through purposive sampling. This study purposely selected university teachers the author assumed could bring rich information for this study. Because of the extensive and multiple in-depth interviews, the author also attempted to select university teachers who were easily accessible. A total of four teachers at different universities in the Taipei metropolitan area participated in this study.

The criteria included the following three principles: (1) to be university teachers, (2) to have more than five years of teaching experience, and (3) to be willing to share their experiences and thoughts. Pseudonyms were used to protect the participants' privacy. They individually were Birch, Hazel, Juniper, and Spruce. Table 1 delineates participants' information.

Table 1

Summary of Participants' Information

Pseudonym	Sex	Age	Years of Teaching	Subject Taught	Nationality
Birch	Male	49	8	Statistics	Taiwan
Hazel	Female	42	7	English	United States
Juniper	Female	39	6	Politics	Taiwan
Spruce	Male	54	9	Marketing	United States

Data Collection

Each participant was served a consent form and had it signed. Each one was engaged in a face-to-face, semi-structured, and audio-taped interview of one-hour duration. The interview guide consisted of open-ended questions. A private setting was chosen for each interview. One was interviewed in a lunchroom; one was interviewed in a park; two were interviewed in a public library. Participants were promised confidentiality.

Experience Sampling Method

According to Hektner et al. (2007), experience sampling refers to a set of data collection methods for gathering systematic self-reports of behaviors, emotions, or experiences as they occur in the individual's natural environment. These procedures may also be labeled as event sampling, real-time data capture, ambulatory assessment, diary method, or ecological momentary assessment in the research literature. Hektner (2010) considered ESM a strategy for "gathering information from individuals about their experience of daily life as it occurs" (p. 446). With tailor-made questions for participants to meet the purpose of the research, this method can be used to gather both qualitative and quantitative data. The questions generally include queries focused upon the physical context, social context, activities, thoughts, feelings, as well as cognitive and motivational self-appraisals. As a phenomenological approach, "the individual's own thoughts, perceptions of events, and allocation of attention" (p. 446) are the primary objects of study. The advantage of ESM lies in its ability to capture daily life as "it is directly perceived from one moment to the next, affording an opportunity to examine fluctuations in the stream of consciousness and the links between the external context and the contents of the mind" (Hektner et al., 2007, p. 6).

Review of Literature

Apart from ESM, a review of the literature was also conducted to compile information on the practice of case studies as educational tools. A search of online databases using Journal Storage (JSTOR) yielded a paucity of research on case studies. A review of books found in the university system libraries of the researcher yielded more results. Information gathered was synthesized and then categorized by area of focus.

Data Trustworthiness

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, the researcher used three ways: (1) theoretical triangulation, (2) member checking, and (3) peer debriefing. First, Triangulation refers to "the use of multiple methods or data sources in qualitative research to develop a comprehensive understanding of phenomena" (Carter et al., 2014, p. 545). It is a method to enhance the researcher's understanding of what was being investigated. Denzin (1978) and Patton (1999) identified four genres of triangulation:

method triangulation, investigator triangulation, theory triangulation, and data source triangulation. In this study, the researcher used theory triangulation because more than one theory was applied to gather data. Next, member checking was used for verification purposes. The author e-mailed the transcribed interviews and his interpretations back to participants and asked them if the results were correct enough and precisely reflected their points of view. All participants confirmed the accuracy of their transcripts. Finally, two peer debriefers examined the data based on Lincoln and Guba's (1986) criteria for establishing trustworthiness. These two debriefers are well experienced in conducting a qualitative research study and unacquainted with four participants. They collaboratively discussed the transparency, accuracy, completeness, and comprehensiveness of the data interpretations. The trustworthiness of the transcribed data and interpretations was accordingly ensured.

Results and Discussion

Terry Gross, the famous host and co-executive producer of Fresh Air, an American radio talk show broadcast on National Public Radio (NPR) stations across the United States (US), said: "Many artists use their own lives as a kind of case study to examine what it is like to be human". Based on this purposeful philosophy, four areas of focus emerged when categorizing research. To successfully practice the case study methodology, attention should be paid to the following four areas: (1) instructors, (2) essence, including its learning goals, (3) environment, and (4) learners. Each is individually presented and discussed in detail below. Figure 1 portrays four areas.

Figure 1

Summary of Four Areas
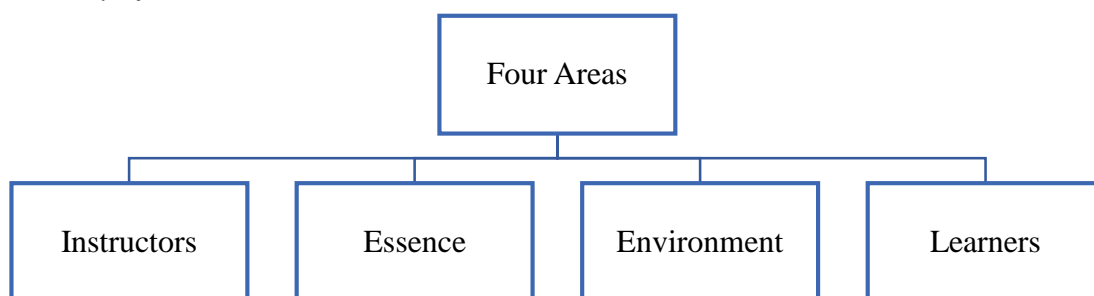
Instructors

Although the case study approach is learner-oriented, the instructor still has many tasks to do. The difference is that much of the work completed by the instructor happens in the peripheral; much of it is out of sight from the students themselves. The preparation of the case, the learners, and the environment are the main tasks for the instructor. Regarding the preparation for the case, the instructor ought to choose a case that is consistent with learning goals and objectives in advance, have a comprehension of the learners' existing skills and needs, and most significantly scrutinize the details of the case with the learners to foster mutual understanding (Gallucci, 2006). Guidelines prepared for learners are necessary as well, including steps to carefully examine and critique the case study, logically connect course content or theory to the case, and actively participate in the effective discussion. During the discussion of the case, the instructor has to be particularly sensitive. The discussion should be liberal with an open-ended question. This stimulates learners to express their ideas without hesitation or pressure from the instructor or peers. Among discussion, the instructor has to promote critical thinking and reflection, including giving credit for one's perception, re-examining assumptions, or challenging beliefs upon which solutions are based. Participation and engagement by all learners must be concerned. The instructor also needs to keep learners on track in the discussion. This includes confirming what information is already known, explicating the differences between stated facts and learners' evaluations of those facts, and managing the discrepancy. The instructor should also value notions mentioned by learners; key concepts ignored should be introduced by the instructor as well.

As case studies usually do not offer right or wrong answers, the instructor must ask learners to heed appropriate solutions rather than correct answers. The instructor must realize that learners approach case studies from personal experiences and multiple perspectives. One individual might emphasize the learning piece of a study; another might weigh the issue of diversity. Some may concentrate on facts, and some on emotions. Instead of preparing questions that will guide the learners down to certain paths or lead to certain answers that are believed to be correct, the instructor should encourage assorted perceptions.

Because learners approach case studies from diverse perspectives, case study outcomes may run the gamut in terms of gist conveyed, solutions proposed, and conclusions made. This complexity may perplex the instructor to evaluate learners' performance on case study projects. The following eight principles can be considered when assessing learners' performance on case study assignments:

1. Learners' decision-making processes in evaluation

2. Connections made to course themes

3. The ability to bridge theory to practice

4. The framing of the case through manifold perspectives

5. The identification of innovative approaches

6. The ability to justify a course of action

7. The ability to use persuasive language

8. The ability to discern between facts and opinions

Essence

Creswell (1998) defined case studies as "an in-depth exploration of a bounded system (e.g., an activity, event, process, or individuals) based on extensive data collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context" (p. 485). The central notion is to use cases as the basis from which to inductively promote a viewpoint. Being typically structured as follows: problems, solutions, and outcomes, case studies go beyond simple testimonials by providing real-life examples of how the gist satisfied readers' needs and helped them accomplish their goals. The case study should be considered a natural activity that is within the guidelines of the course itself. Case studies used simply as filler in the classroom will result in a lack of interest and confusion on the part of the students. Using irrelevant and inappropriate cases will also hamper the instructor's efforts to use cases in the future – despite those future case studies may be relevant and proper.

Environment

Fostering environments that support the development of engagement can create an overall sense of safety (Harter et al., 2003). Safety was conceptualized as the ability to be one's preferred self without fearing "negative consequences to self-image, status,

or career" (Kahn, 1990, p. 705). Participants need to trust their learning environment in ways that allow participants to be their authentic selves in learning. Regardless of whether the classroom is in the workplace or at a school, the classroom environment is next to none. For the case study concept to be effectively run in the classroom, that classroom must be conducive to adult learning as most learners are adult students. Instead of being instructor-centered, case-based learning is learner-centered. Open communication and trust between the instructor and participants are fundamental, and the classroom should be informal, collaborative, and supportive (Merriam & Baumgartner, 2020). Students should feel encouraged to freely express their opinions and engage in a topical debate.

Learners

Learning is defined as a change of behavior from not knowing to know something new or it is being aware of something new. Learning is closely intertwined with daily work activities, and as a result, it "cannot stand out as separate from effective individual or organizational practices" (Watkins & Marsick, 1993, p.7). As a process of gaining knowledge and expertise, learning is an episode in which "a motivated individual attempts to adapt his behavior to succeed in a situation, which he perceives as requiring action to attain a goal" (Pressey et al., 1967, p. 232). To effectively participate, learners must know the details of the case and the expectations of the instructor ahead of time. They should be prepared to discuss the case, present solutions, and connect course topics to issues presented in the case. Case studies play an important role in the learning process of students and their creative thinking. As part of the critical reflection process, learners ought to reflect on their assumptions and beliefs when examining the case. They should also be open to solutions other than their own. Besides, learning from others is an important source for improvement with the learning occurring at multiple levels. This notion also echoes the concept of interdisciplinary learning presented by Rao (2004) and Wang, Korte, and Sun (2008) in the field of human resource development.

Conclusion

Gragg (1951) made comments when it comes to the influence of the case study as a learning tool:

> The case system, properly used, initiates students into the ways of independent thought and responsible judgment. It faces them with situations which are not hypothetical, but real. It places them in an active role, open to criticism from all sides. It puts the burden of understanding and judgment upon them. It provides them with the occasion to deal constructively with their contemporaries and their elders. (And) it gives them stimulating opportunities to make contributions to learning (pp. 11-12).

Even though this statement was made seven decades ago, it is still accurate today. Case studies can be effective learning tools if appropriately applied. The proper use of case studies involves preparation on behalf of instructors, essence, environment, and learners. By appropriately using case studies as a teaching method, the students will be more motivated to learn more, the information that is given will make people transfer their knowledge into different novel situations (Grassberger & Wilder, 2015). There is much more to facilitate a case study than simply distributing the case as a handout and hoping for the best. Proper preparation is the key. It is finally hoped that this study will serve as a catalyst for further studies of the incorporation of case studies and teaching where education is valued.

Limitations and Suggestions

The limitations of the study are those characteristics of design or methodology that impacted or influenced the interpretation of the findings from this research. The aspects that hinder this study are fourfold: (1) formulation of research aims and objectives, (2) implementation of data collection method, (3) sample size, and (4) participant variables. First, the formation of research aims and objectives in this study focused on general case studies; future research may emphasize certain categories of case studies, like an exploratory case study, descriptive case study, or explanatory case study, to investigate how those be successfully practiced in teaching. Second, qualitative data

collection methods were implemented in this study; future research may quantitatively conduct it. Third, statistical power issues exist within this study because the overall sample size, 4 university teachers in this study, is small. A larger sample might find significant differences; therefore, future research may use a larger sample. Finally, yet importantly, many participant variables, which could have impacted on responses, were also not noticed, e.g., individual age, years of teaching, subject taught, occupation, not only limited to teachers, and nationality. Future research may consider participants' variables.

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