

Students' Perceptions of the Case Study Method in PETE

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Case Study Methods

- A pedagogical tool used to present students with complex issues in the school context
- Origins in the fields of law and medicine
- Constructivist theory – students as participants in the development of knowledge
- Since the late 1980's case studies have grown in popularity in US teacher education programs

Research on Case Studies

- Students may prefer case studies to lecture-style classes (Kleinfeld, 1991; Collier & O'Sullivan, 1997)
- Students believe that case studies contribute to learning (Carlson & Schodt, 1995)
- Case studies may promote reflection and critical thinking skills in pre-service teachers (Beck, 2007)
- Help pre-service teachers develop alternative solutions to problems (Boyce, 1996)

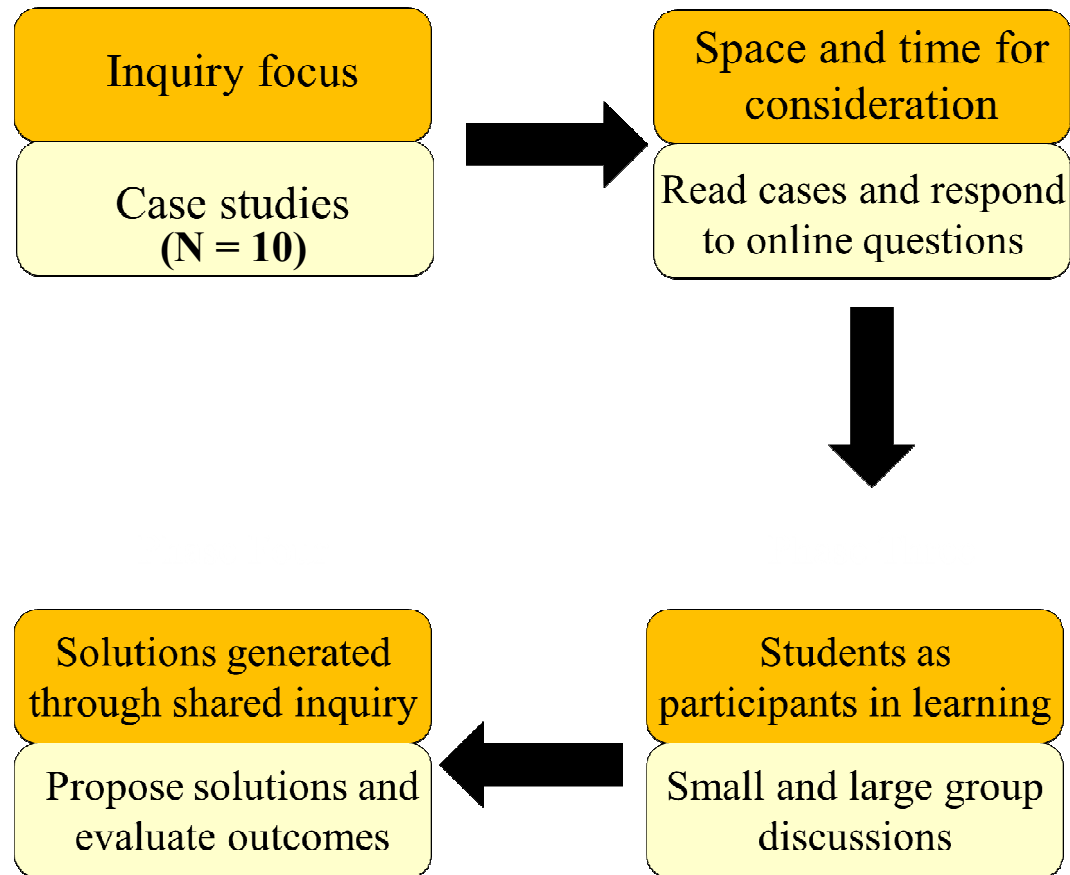
Case Studies in PETE

- Cases have existed in PETE for years (Zeigler, 1959), but were prominent until the 1990s
 - Several case study articles were published in JOPERD (Boyce, 1992, 1998; Veal & Taylor, 1995)
 - Stroot (2000) published an edited book of cases
- Research in PETE is limited, but cases may:
 - Promote critical discussion (Collier, 1995)
 - Increase students' ability to identify problems and think critically (Bolt, 1998)
 - Impact students' value orientations related to critical issues in the classroom (Timken & van der Mars, 2009)

Case Studies as Shared Inquiry

- Case studies can promote shared inquiry (Thomas & Oldfather, 1995) by asking students to take an active role in the teaching-learning process
- The phases of the Shared Inquiry Cycle are:
 1. Inquiry focus
 2. Space and time for consideration
 3. Students as participants in learning
 4. Solutions generated through shared inquiry
- Cases that promote shared inquiry may help students to think more critically about school-based issues (Harrison & Garrison, 1992)

Course Description



Methods

- **Participants:** Nineteen (N=19) undergraduate students in a junior level PETE seminar course; The course instructor and teaching assistant served as informants.
- **Data Collection:** Data were collected via individual interviews, a focus group interview, and participatory observations.
- **Data Analysis:** Data were analyzed through inductive analysis and constant comparison.
- **Trustworthiness:** Data and researcher triangulation, a search for negative cases, and peer debriefing increased trustworthiness.

Results

- The following themes have emerged as important to understanding students' experiences:
 - Future Focus
 - Multiple Sources of Knowledge
 - Reflection and Critical Thinking
 - Student Engagement

(Hemphill, Richards, Templin, & Lux, In Review; Richards, Hemphill, Templin, & Eubank, In Press)

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Future Focus

- Students believed the cases made them aware of potential problems they could face as future physical education teachers or during their student teaching experience.
 - “It is getting us ready to face problems that we are going to find in schools systems with our colleagues, students, parents, faculty, and administration...so we may know how to handle it or how others have handled it” (Jessie).
 - “The reaction that I have gotten...is that the course provides a very real life connection in anticipation for what they may face when they become teachers” (Course Instructor).

Multiple Sources of Knowledge

- Students engaged with the case, their own thoughts, their classmates, and the instructors in creating responses to the cases.
 - “I actually learn the most when some of my peers answer questions...So, I also [learn from] people around me” (Felix).
 - “I think it shows different perspectives...the course instructor, my peers, and others that I would not have considered” (Jessie).
 - “You get to see all of the different situations that could happen...you think about how you could handle them, and after reading it you can ask the instructor for advice” (Patty).

Reflection and Critical Thinking

- Students felt as if case studies helped them to engage frequently in critical thinking and reflection related to the topics discussed in class
 - “You are thinking critically...about what the teacher did well or was not doing well. There is constant evaluation” (Thomas).
 - “It gives you the opportunity to think about something in a completely different way” (Derek).

Student Engagement

- Students found the case study method to be an engaging way to learn about issues they may face in the future.
 - “It engages you and you are more involved...When we actually get good conversations going in class you pay better attention and actually learn more” (Andy).
 - “I didn’t miss this class once... I never dreaded going to this class” (Thomas in Focus Group).
 - Students “show up to class and come on time ... we actually let class out late sometimes and they don’t pack up early” (Field Note)

Summary and Conclusions

- Our research and experiences using the case study method in PETE has taught us that:
 1. Students enjoy reading and discussing case studies and view them as relevant to their futures.
 2. There appears to be a positive relationship between student engagement and critical thinking.
 3. Shared Inquiry provides students the open space to add to class discussions and learn from their peers.
 4. Social learning situations may be more effective in teaching certain topics than traditional lecture settings.

Thank you!

Handouts available upon request

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