USING PEER ASSESSMENT ON CASE DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION IN BILINGUAL/BICULTURAL CLASSROOMS

Joaquin Villegas
Northeastern Illinois University
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS, U.S.A.

Abstract

This paper examines the exposure of in-service teachers to peer assessment in higher education, both individually and collaboratively. It demonstrates how the design, construction and peer assessment of case studies engaged students in real-life learning experiences. It also taught them how to evaluate peers and how to accept evaluation from them.

KEY WORDS: analytic assessment, case analysis, case construction, case study, peer-assessment, summative assessment

BACKGROUND

Research indicates that using case studies in training both pre-service and in-service teachers provides them with a variety of opportunities to broaden and expand their teaching skills and problem solving abilities [Miller & Kantrov, 1998; Ashbaugh & Kasten, 1991; Kowalski, 1991]. The case method educates students to apply appropriate educational theory to the problem or problems, and to the problem(s)' analysis, solution and evaluation [Silverman, Welty and Lyon, 1992]. A case is an actual situation commonly involving a decision, a challenge, an opportunity, a problem or an issue faced by a person (or persons) in an organization, e.g. a school setting [Mauffette-Leenders, Erskine & Leenders, 2001]. The following are the benefits of using case studies as teaching tools as identified by Grant, 1997; Kowalski, 1998, Raju and Sanker, 1991. Case studies:

- are a bridge between theory and practice
- promote active learning
- require mature analysis, critical summaries, and responsible judgments about every intricate and difficult situation
- develop skills in communication, group work and problem solving skills, and
- increase student motivation.

Because the case method is an active learning process it requires learners to understand and apply applicable theory; thus they need to be self-reflective and think critically about their craft [Silverman, Welty and Lyon, 1992]. This active learning comes from the student’s own experience in the design, construction and assessment of case study.

In peer assessment students review learning outcomes of other students on the basis of set criteria. Students can be involved in setting these criteria, e.g. scoring rubric. Peer assessment, both formative and summative, is a way of enabling students to think critically about their peers' work. Peer assessment is an interactive and dynamic process. Learners assess, critique, and make value judgment on the quality of other learners' work. They provide feedback and receive it in return, enabling enhanced performance [Juwah, 2003].
CASE DEVELOPMENT

PARTICIPANTS

This project used case studies as a teaching tool for 15 in-service teachers who were graduate students enrolled in a course on teaching in culture and language diverse classrooms. Each student was required to construct a case study of a child in his/her classroom or school. The participants were practicing teachers holding an Illinois teacher certificate and/or a temporary teacher certificate; they were pursuing a master degree in a program with bilingual endorsement.

Case Construction

During the first two weeks of the course the participants were provided with an orientation which included samples of case studies in Education. They discussed the written instructions about designing and constructing a case in relation to a child’s academic performance, language problem and/or behavioral problem. The case was required to analyze and address the following areas of study: (1) background of the student and family, (2) home/school environment, (3) the child’s problem, (4) data collection, and (5) analysis of problem and recommendations for remedy (strategies and interventions).

Case Evaluation

Peer assessment is part of skills development - the development of evaluative, analytical and reflective skills. The steps for designing and constructing the case were the basis for analysis and evaluation. Course participants were expected to provide formative review as well as summative assessment of the case. An analytic rubric table was developed incorporating all the case elements and each case was assessed to determine if it met each of the established rubric standards.

The 15 students were put into three groups A, B, C; each group had five students. The case study peer evaluation had two phases: individual rating and group rating.

For individual ratings, materials were sent via individual e-mails. Each member of group A scored a case from a member of group B; correspondingly, group B scored group C and group C scored group B. The ratings were done at home using an analytic rubric scale and each participant sent his/her rating (minimum 5- maximum 20) via e-mail to the course instructor.

For group ratings discussions were held in the classroom. The five members of group A discussed the individual rating for each case of members from group B and by consensus gave a Total Group Rating to each case study. Group B followed this process for group C; C did the same for group A. Each participant received peer feedback of his/her case study and was required to provide a fifteen (15) minute oral presentation of the case study.

Table I shows the analytic rubric used for individual and group assessment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Beginning 1</th>
<th>Developing 2</th>
<th>Accomplished 3</th>
<th>Exemplary 4</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Demographic data</td>
<td>No demographic data</td>
<td>Indicates some demographic data</td>
<td>Meets standard on identifying essential demographic data</td>
<td>Meets standard plus adds more supportive data</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elaborates on child’s home, school environment</td>
<td>No evidence presented</td>
<td>Minimal evidence presented</td>
<td>Meets standard on elaborating on child’s home/school environment</td>
<td>Meets standard on identifying child’s home/school environment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Identifies child’s academic/personal problem | No evidence of child’s problem | Meets standards on identifying the essentials on the child’s problem | Meets standard plus additional insight on identifying child’s problem

Identifies sources of data collection | No evidence of data collection | Minimal evidence of data collection | Meets standards on identifying all sources for data collection | Meets standard plus a thorough analysis of data collection

Strategies and Interventions | No evidence presented | Minimal evidence presented | Makes logical/applicable strategies/recommendations | Exceeds standard with thorough analysis of recommendation/strategies

Findings
The design, construction, and peer assessment of the case provided the participants with the opportunity to take the initiative and responsibility for their own learning. In order to assess this learning experience, open-ended summative questions were answered in writing by the participants. The following reflects the variety of their comments.

What skills were you able to revisit and/or learn in developing and or/creating your own case study?
- Taking notes and interviewing
- Problem solving
- Studying and understanding social environment and home visits
- Looking at all aspects of child’s life: social, home, psychological development, academic, etc.
- Approaching a very shy student; reading strategies, home connection, special education accommodation
- Evaluating the students’ most significant need by having a global picture; planning a variety of strategies to help students with academic and social issues.
- Using relevant texts, different modalities, incorporating parental involvement.
- Applying methods that we learned in order to provide strategies for students.
- Knowing your student’s home and background before judging or making assumptions about academic ability and/or behavioral issues
- Developing and connecting many theories with practice.
- Reflecting on the students’ performance and how our teaching influences the students’ learning.

Would you use the case study to assess and analyze future students in your classroom?
- I definitely will use this system of analyzing students in my classroom because you really can learn more about your students in order to plan for their instruction.
- Yes, this is a practical and useful way to find out about students’ background, skills, disadvantages and home environment. It is also useful to provide recommendations.
- Definitely I learned a lot.
- It was timely consuming but it was worth it. I would use it if I’m having a hard time identifying a problem but I can see the student is struggling.
- Yes, I actually used this case study to help me fill-in the CPS paper work to do a referral on the student.
• Absolutely. I feel before we even begin to try strategies or interventions we need to need to know who our students are and what will work best with them.
• Yes I would. I have used advice given to me by my peers and it has been beneficial.
• Definitely yes. This benefited my understanding and further advanced my knowledge about English Language Learners.

How comfortable do you feel in teaching other colleagues by using case studies and why?
• Very comfortable because my colleagues in monolingual classes could get a better picture of students.
• Very comfortable because I can share my previous experiences with other cases.
• Enough because I find this to be a very concept for developing good strategies.
• Very, even though it's lengthy, it truly helps the educator to pinpoint strengths and weaknesses.
• I feel very comfortable either working cooperatively with another teacher on one student or explaining to someone else because we read several case studies and wrote our own.
• I feel comfortable. After doing my own case study & reviewing others I have a better understanding of what case studies involve.
• Great because I feel confident that I will know everything because I will have done all the work.
• It was a very good idea to share and receive recommendations and feedback about each case.
• I am comfortable because they are able to provide feedback to help you.
• I feel that I would because once you gather evidence there is no argument about a student. For example if your evidence shows that a student has emotional issues at home then this needs to be considered.
• Somewhat comfortable. If I feel that my case study is good.
• Not enough. I feel I need more strategies and connections.

What skills and learning experiences did you gain in reviewing peers’ case study?
• I think you can develop critical thinking skills; get information on strategies that you can use with your own students. After all, we all have students with similar situations.
• I learned evaluation and recommendation skills.
• I got more ideas or strategies to deal with similar students in my classroom.
• I enjoyed reading cases; however I would have liked more feedback on mine from colleagues, i.e. E-mail or Blackboard discussions.
• I learned to respect students’ personality; I learned what not do with shy students; how to use more effective strategies.
• Reviewing others work was great! The strategies outlined were helpful.
• I learned about different strategies & interventions that I can use in my classroom.
• The process and ideas that others have; I saw what worked and didn’t work for others.
• I learned how to help students improve in different areas of development.
• I got ideas of what types of strategies to use. Also, I will keep the student issues I heard about in mind for future reference.
• I learned strategies that you can use in your own classroom.
• I got to see other people’s work. I got a better idea on how to do or better my future case studies.
• I was able to express the strengths of others. There were case studies that lacked information, interventions, and reflections about what was learned about the student. I know case studies work well with all population because all of our case studies had something to teach about students, community and teachers.

Analysis of Findings
Overall, the case study is a powerful teaching tool that engages students in real-life learning contexts and authentic assessment by peers. Participants indicated that the case experience went beyond the construction and design of the cases. They expressed that they were better able to examine teaching and learning outside the classroom context and to bridge the connection of theory and practice in real life settings. The participants expressed confidence in being able to continue using the case method to
assess students in their own classrooms. Participants viewed peer-assessment, as a summative method and part of the learning process. They found it valuable for their active engagement in learning about using the method and their particular case. And they found it valuable to give and receive the peer assessment of the case studies.

REFERENCES


