DOES STUDENT ROLE MATTER IN CASE DISCUSSION?

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There are two key elements in case method. One is the teaching material "case", the other is the case discussion. Cases are richly detailed, contextualized, narrative accounts of teaching and learning. Cases should be sufficiently substantive and complex to allow for multiple levels of analysis and interpretation. Cases represent the problems, dilemmas, and complexity of teaching something to someone in some context. Case method is the practice of using cases as a pedagogical tool in fields such as law, business, medicine, and education. In case method, where discussion as a method of instruction, the purpose is to help engage students in a case and learn academic concepts in context by encouraging verbal interactions. To better understand teachers' use of case discussion in the classroom, this study examine a Taiwan educational professor's case discussion in terms of the types of classroom discussion and student role. One Taiwan educational professor was purposively selected. Data were collected through her class, video tape then transcript word by word, and were analyzed using 6 types of class discussion and 7 student roles. The results show that the teacher speaks for 24 minutes in a 74 minutes class case discussion, while students speak for 50 minutes. The most common type of classroom discussion is student and teacher inquisitorial dialogue, a total of 26 times; followed by a manage dialogue, a total of 7 times; then challenge-style dialogue, a total of 5 times; the least is student and student dialogue style, a total of 3 times. The assumption dialogue and teacher's role play dialogue did not appear in this study. For the student role types, they plays expert for 20 times; consultant for 19 times; opportunist for 11 times; problems guider for 5 times; synthesis for 3 times; experience sharer for 1 time. There is no information sharer and role player role in this study. Implications of these findings for teachers, teacher educators, and researchers interested in case discussion are examined.

Keywords- case method, case discussion, student roles

A case discussion differs in come important respects from what is conventional in many college and university classrooms. The students engage in the text rather than examine it. They are active and animated: offering ideas, raising questions, building on each others' statements, constructing a collective analysis, re-framing the discussion, challenging the teacher, learning with and from each other as much as, or more than, from him or her. The teacher is also active, and frequently mobile: initiating discussion and drawing the class into it, inviting engagement in the issues, amplifying some students' remarks and pointing up opposing views, feeding the group's thinking back to it, pulling the threads of conversation together and tying them in to the course's themes; in short, structuring and facilitating the students' work rather than delivering information, giving explanations, or providing answers. The emphasis is on the students' reasoning and expressions, on their capacity to structure the problem and work out a solution. It is also on the process as well as the substance of inquiry, and a case discussion often ends with questions as well as conclusions (Boehrer & Linsky, 1990).

Among the purposes of case discussion are to: ・・・Foster Critical Thinking, 2・・Encourage Student Responsibility for Learning, ・・・Transfer Information, Concept, and Technique, ・・・Develop Command of a Body of Material, ・・・Blend Affective and Cognitive Learning, 6. Enliven the Classroom Dynamic, 7. Develop Collaboration Skills, ・・・Teach Questioning and Self-Directed Learning.

Merseth (1991) pointed out that case-based discussion requires multiple levels of interaction between the case and students, between students and facilitator, and among students themselves. Christensen, et al. (1991) stated that there are four fundamental principles for a discussion class: (1) partnership: students and teacher share the responsibilities and power of teaching, and the privilege of learning together, (2) a learning community with shared values and common goals, (3) alliance with students, and (4) the ability to manage content and process .

According to Smith (2010), successful case discussions include student preparation; multiple and diverse perspectives considered; quality, depth, and repetition versus quantity of coverage – effective, not efficient; energy, collaboration, and community in the classroom; maximum engagement of students; appropriate cases discussed; students discover a need for and find value in the learning experience; environment of respect and support versus fear and intimidation; learning – deep, life-long, applied, retained, and personal; emphasis on application, decision-making, and developing an action-plan; the graphic presentation and use of technology; and overcoming challenges of case discussion leadership.

Liu (1998) stated that there are six types of student-teacher dialogue in case discussion which include inquisitorial, manage, challenge, student and student, assumption and role play dialogue. Besides, there are also six student role in case discussion which include expert, consultant, opportunist, problems guider, synthesis and experience sharer. Libby (1994) indicated that the role of the instructional leader was very important. It has been emphasized that the level and quality of the

facilitator's responses, and the role and nature of facilitator participation in case discussions, can change participants' thinking (Artan, 2007). Lundeberg (1999) mentions that micro analysis and comprehensive discourse analysis of both the participants' and the facilitator's role in case discussion would be very valuable.

This study aims to examine a Taiwan educational professor's case discussion in terms of the types of classroom discussion and student role defined by Liu (1998).

METHOD

Participants and context

The course instructor has implemented case method in her teacher education class for four years. 28 pre-service teachers participated in this study. They were enrolled in five different classes in the course of Principles of Teaching which was taught by the researcher. All participants were students in an elementary education program at an eastern university in Taiwan. This 2-year teacher preparation program leads to an elementary teaching credential. 23 participants are female, and 5 are male. 16 participants were undergraduate students. There are 6 from music department, 7 from art department, 1 from Chinese language and literature department, 1 from early childhood department, and 1 from indigenous languages and communication department. 12 participants were graduate students. There are 4 from education institute, 3 from multicultural education institute, 1 from science education institute, 3 from physical education and kinesiology institute, and 1 from natural resources and environmental studies institute.

Case materials and discussion questions

The case of the struggle of Teacher Yuan Yuan was presented to the pre-service teacher. Cases were 6 pages long, open-ended, and problem-centered. The cases reflected the difficulties and struggles that a beginning teacher who are interested in creative teaching in an urban elementary school. The case discussion questions put before the class as an assignment included the following:

(1) What are the key difficulties and struggles does teacher Yuan Yuan face when she teaches in the school? Why?
(2) Would you choose to persist in creative teaching or give up the ideal if you were teacher Lily? Why?
(3) What are the similarities and differences between Teacher Yuan Yuan and you? What do the reflections you have by reading and discussing this case?

Whole-class case discussions

Participants first discuss the above three questions in small groups of four to five students for 26 minutes followed by whole-class discussion for 74 minutes. The second question was chosen for whole-class discussion. Discussion was facilitated by the researcher who taught the course. The focus of this study is upon the whole-class case discussions, with both students and facilitator as participants.

Data Analysis

To better understand teachers' use of case discussion in the classroom, this study examine a Taiwan educational professor's case discussion in terms of the types of classroom discussion and student role. Data were collected through her class, video tape then transcript word by word, and were analyzed using six types of student and teacher inquisitorial dialogue and seven student roles. The six types of student-teacher dialogue include inquisitorial, manage, challenge, student and student, assumption and role play dialogue. Student role categories include expert, consultant, opportunist, problems guider, synthesis and experience sharer. Definitions and examples of codes are explained in table 1. The numbers of these codes are calculated. The content of the instructor's and students' statements was not the focus, but just the categories and numbers of their statements was reported.

The reliability of interaction coding was checked by looking at the percentage of the agreement between the researcher and a graduate student. The percentage of agreement on categories is 96%. Referring and clarifying were added as new categories after the reliability.

Table 1: The analysis framework of student teacher dialogue in case discussion

Types of teacher & student dialogue	code	examples
T-S inquisitorial dialogue	I	What do you mean of the parent's conception problems?
T-S challenge dialogue	C	Does creative teaching lead to student's low academic achievement?
T-S assumption dialogue	S	There is no examples in this study
S-S dialogue	EX	Xiao-Wei: This homework ought to be held after the class when all students have the background knowledge. You can't do it in the beginning or middle of the class. Xiao-Zhe: There is a way to improve in her teaching. That is, instead of assigning it as homework, we'd better discuss it during class break.
T-S role play dialogue	SS	There is no examples for this study
T-S manage dialogue	M	Could you take turns to express your ideas? We hope there are more students to speak in class.

Table 2: The analysis framework of student roles in case discussion

Categories of student role	code	examples
Expert	E	We believe that the main conflict is in students' low academic achievement and parents' conceptions.
Consultant	Co	I will response Xiao-Zhe's questions. This school values examinations. On page 5 it mentions that....
Opportunist	O	He mentions about recruit students but it does not show in the case so we can't regard it as the evidence for his statement.
Problems guider	Q	Another point of view, I found she has time management problems.
Information sharer	In	*The examples in this study is none*
Experience sharer	EP	But for me, I would not in the classroom during break. How can I discuss during break time? And I seldom write homework. How can the teacher ask me to write home works?
Role player	R	*The examples in this study is none*
Synthesis	S	I like Teacher Yuan Yuan's ideal of making students become active learners and build up happy classroom climate. However, she also needs to face the fact of students' low academic achievement performance. What we can do is....

Findings and Suggestions

There are many different scenes in case discussion class. Does student role matter in case discussion? The findings of this study are as follows.

Firstly, the most common types of student role are expert, followed by consultant, opportunist, problems guider, synthesis and experience sharer. There is no information sharer and role player role in this study. It shows that the most common type of student role is expert, a total of 20 times; followed by consultant, a total of 19 times; then opportunist, a total of 11 times; then problems guider, a total of 5 times; then synthesis, a total of 3 times; the least is experience sharer, a total of 1 time. There is no information sharer and role player role in this study.

For students who had carefully read the case and prepared for case questions, they acted as expert and consultant. For students who had listened cautiously and thought carefully, they acted as opportunist, and problems guider. For students who had reached to a new understanding, they acted as synthesis. For students who had rich experiences, they acted as experience sharer. Students' different roles in case discussion make the class rich, full of variation. They are challenged, promoted to listen carefully, think thoroughly, and reached to a better understanding the case facts and the embedded teaching principles.

If I would like some students to act as information sharer, I need to encourage students to study the case background. And if the purpose of the case discussion and the time is allowed, I could arrange role player in the class too.

Secondly, teacher student interaction is IR-IR-IR- pattern. The study found that teacher student interaction shows IR-IR-IR- pattern. That is, teacher initiate, student response, teacher initiate, student response, teacher initiate, student response dialogue pattern.

Thirdly, the most common types of classroom discussion dialogue are as follows: student and teacher inquisitorial dialogue, manage dialogue, challenge-style dialogue, student and student dialogue style. The assumption dialogue and teacher's role play dialogue did not appear in this study.

It shows that the most common type of classroom discussion is student and teacher inquisitorial dialogue, a total of 26 times; followed by a manage dialogue, a total of 7 times; then challenge-style dialogue, a total of 5 times; the least is student and student dialogue style, a total of 3 times. The assumption dialogue and teacher's role play dialogue did not appear in this study. Teacher student interaction pattern might results in classroom discussion dialogue pattern.

Finally, students speak time are twice longer than teacher. The study found that in

a 74 minutes case discussion class, teacher speaks for 24 minutes, while students

speak for 50 minutes. Students speak time are twice longer than teacher.

Student-centered learning acknowledges student voice as central to the learning

experiences. This type of case discussion is really student centered. Student roles matters in case discussion. This study suggests to defining different types of case method with students teacher speak time ratio. This study found that students speak time are twice longer than teacher in case discussion class. The ratio for students speak time versus that of teacher is 2:1. There are so many case method related researches, yet they might quite different in teaching reality. Student role matters in case discussion. Students teacher speak time ratio would be a good indicator for different types of case method.

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