

STORYTELLING: USING A CASE METHOD APPROACH IN ADMINISTRATOR PREPARATION PROGRAMS

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This paper advocates the use of the case method to teach concepts of school administration to educators entering public school administration. While traditional methods may be effective in covering many aspects of educational leadership, the case method offers an interesting alternative. The case method approach can be modified to include discussion-starters for limited use with graduate classes in educational administration. The case method is defined and differentiated from other terms and purposes. Various methods of instructional delivery are compared so the advantages and disadvantages of case-based instruction become apparent. Several perspectives of case methodology, planning and implementation are examined to further describe this methodology. In conclusion, the use of discussion-starters is explained.

This is to explain how a modified case method is being used to teach concepts of school administration to educators entering public school administration. While traditional methods may be effective in covering many aspects of educational leadership, the case method offers an interesting alternative. The case method approach can be modified to include discussion-starters for limited use with graduate classes in educational administration. Complete narratives or scenarios are not given. The discussion-starters contain just the question or dilemma of the selected issues in educational leadership. This is to facilitate in-class use of the problem description without prior reading assignments and study. Strategies for implementation of this teaching technique are discussed in a later section of this paper.

A distinction between case study and the case method is made by Kowalski (2001). He defines the former as a general description of a situation while the latter has specific reference to using the case study as a teaching paradigm. The term case study itself means different things to different people. Also, some confusion arises when terms such as case history (commonly a medical term) and case work (commonly a social work term) are used.

Malouf (1995) defines a case study simply as a situation or event to be analyzed. But case studies are more than just the case material. Merseth points out that the "cases and the discussions of them are complementary and are both important" (Merseth, 1991a, p.5). The case study, unlike the lived experience, can be held still for repeated examination (Florio-Ruane and

Clark, 1990.) It can approximate the immediacy of actual experience while providing a sample of the complexity of the subject in question or dilemma.

When Sykes and Bird (1992) surveyed a variety of cases, descriptions of case teaching and arguments about cases in teacher education, five categories emerged that speak to the diversity of theory and practice surrounding the case idea:

- textbook cases;
- casebooks;
- conversations and videotapes;
- subject-specific cases; and
- context-specific cases.

They found a number of dimensions, in cases, including the medium, the genre, the length, and whether the case is actual or contrived. They see the task ahead for case method users as the "creation and use of rich and interesting case materials in a variety of settings for a variety of purposes" (Sykes and Bird, 1992, p. 509.)

Doyle (1990) states that the use of case methods in teacher education depends on one's understanding of teaching and the learning to teach process. He stresses the importance of theoretical knowledge about teaching when defining, selecting, designing and classifying cases; "only with this theoretical knowledge can an instance be designated a case of something" (Doyle, 1990, p. 14.)

Malouf's (1993) view of the case study yields the following advantages:

1. involvement and interaction by students;
2. material can be covered in depth and detail;

3. application of knowledge and skills is possible; and

4. most closely resembles reality.

Two disadvantages that he found were: "stereotyped" answers might be produced; and the additional time required for reading of the case study itself.

Merseth (1991a) offers the following advantages of the case study method; cases:

1. help students develop skills of critical analysis and problem solving;
2. encourage reflective practice and deliberate action;
3. bring reality into the arena of theory;
4. involve students in their own learning; and
5. promote the creation of a community of learners.

While this discussion seems to show the advantages of using the case method to outweigh the disadvantages, Welty (1989), cautions that the added burden of preparation for case study use should be a major factor in deciding to use this strategy.

Welty (1989) cites cognitive psychologists in suggesting the theory that active, experiential learning is the most effective. He uses discussion-based teaching (a variation of the case method) and reports that is an excellent way to provide experiential learning. He also states that the discussion method can be one of many techniques that can be mastered by college teachers to be used at the proper time to maximize learning. Some of his implementation strategies include watching experienced discussion method users; having colleagues sit in on classes to provide feedback and joining with colleagues to share ideas and talk out important teaching issues.

Tillman (1995) offers some reflections

on how she uses the case method with pre-service teachers enrolled in a class designed to teach diverse student populations. Tillman (1995) analyzed the four broad areas of decision-making developed by Sykes (1989.) She recommends case method teachers consider:

1. conceptual structure of the subject matter;
2. pedagogical structure;
3. cognitive structure; and
4. social structure.

Tillman (1995) developed a fifth area that she calls student feedback. She gains insights about students' perception to aid her in course refinement. She further recommends that educators examine their own decision-making processes to acquire more informed conversations within their institutions and the profession. She stresses the extensive research and preparation necessary to each case discussion.

Kowalski (2001) views the case method as a tool to: bridge theory with practice; develop skills such as critical thinking, problem solving, decision-making; and practice reflection as an administrator. His case studies on educational administration are quite intricate, with multiple foci and "provide a novel set of variables affecting the choices available" to students (Kowalski, 2001, p. 8). Following each case there are three components: "The Challenge, Key Issues/Questions and Suggested Readings" (Kowalski, 2001, p.10). Kowalski (2001) offers an innovative goal for the use of his cases; to help his students become proficient at filtering information.

Merseth (1991b) agrees with Welty's (1989) advice to instructors planning to use the case method. In order to produce the necessary outline of concepts and sub-

concepts, the planners should answer the key question, "Why did I assign the case?" Merseth (1991b) adds to this advice and cautions that not only the case material must be planned but consideration must be given to the discussion process itself. She suggests observation of experienced case method users, employing videotaped lessons and establishing a faculty discussion group.

Merseth (1991a) mentions a veteran case instructor's rule of 20-20-10; twenty hours of preparation for the first time a case is taught, twenty hours for the second time and ten for each additional time the case is used. Tillman (1995), while not mentioning the actual time spent, acknowledges that using the case method pedagogy was far more complex than she realized initially. She cites a *mélange* of questions and concerns that arose as she prepared the cases.

Malouf (1993) has experienced the need to spend eight hours of preparation for every one hour of traditional presentation. He has been able to reduce the planning time to five hours using organizational principles applied from seminar development. Whatever the correct number of hours for planning purposes, it is clear that the case method will require more preparation than traditional formats.

In summary, Welty (1989) says that the "preparation for a discussion class must marry process and content" and "to find ways to help the students internalize the theory" (Welty, 1989, p.42).

When contemplating whether teaching is an art or science, Eisner (1994) gives four reasons (or senses) why teaching is an art:

1. teaching can be performed with such

- skill and grace that the experience can be characterized as aesthetic;
2. teachers, like painters, composers, actresses, and dancers, make judgments based largely on qualities that unfold during the course of action;
 3. the teacher's activity is not dominated by prescriptions or routines but is influenced by qualities and contingencies that are unpredicted; and
 4. the ends that are achieved are often created in process.

The use of the case method can expand the second sense that Eisner (1994) proposes. As the case discussions unfold, student experience and insight are merged with the qualities of the instructor and relevant knowledge base materials. He feels in this second sense that qualitative forms of intelligence are used to control pace of discussion and forward movement. The instructor must "read" the emerging qualities of the discussion and guide it to meet the ends sought or the direction he or she wishes the students to take.

Additionally, courses in educational administration lend themselves to the use of case methodology. Sykes (1989) refers to the content of some courses in educational administration courses as "open textured." He means that the "topography of such knowledge terrains are uncharted and ill-structured"(Sykes, 1989, p.9).

Sykes (1989) tries to integrate the use of case study in some part of most of the classes that he teaches. First, he finds case teaching "deceptively difficult" and that it is "not easy mastery but steady improvement" in learning how to properly use case methodology. His experiences led him to questions whether any learning actually

took place during the discussions of the cases. While the discussions were lively and engaging, he saw some discussions as "involving nothing more elevated than the swapping of opinion, leading to the tacit conclusion that one student's view is as good as another's or that 'it all depends,' with what it depends upon left unspecified" (Sykes, 1989, p.7).

While traditional methods may be effective in covering many aspects of educational leadership, the case method offers an interesting alternative. It seems that the use of cases is more difficult than one would expect. As a novice user of the case method, we have developed the following case studies as discussion-starters for limited use with graduate classes in educational administration. Complete narratives or scenarios are not given. The discussion-starters contain just the question or dilemma of the selected issues in educational leadership. This is to facilitate in-class use of the problem description without prior reading assignments and study.

One teaching strategy that has proved successful is to divide classes into small discussion groups (four to five students) who read the problems and brainstorm for solutions and then present findings to the whole class. Classes typically begin with a mini-lesson presented by the professor followed by the introduction of a relevant discussion-starter.

The problems presented by the discussion-starters may be used as adjunct aids to traditional texts or provide the basis for group discussion coverage of key areas of educational administration. The "worksheet" format of the text enables students to record notes and comments for evalua-

tion and response by the instructor.

The title of each case is designed to indicate as much as possible about the topic of the exercise. As in all case study materials, there is no one "right" answer to the questions presented. It is safe to say though that these issues will not be answered by "it all depends!" The discussions usually will take no more than 20 minutes and do require skill on the part of the instructor to control the direction, pace and ending.

Most educational administration classes contain experienced teachers preparing for leadership positions. Their expertise proves invaluable in the problem-solving process and can best be brought out by classroom discussions. In many instances, the combined wisdom of the class will provide immediate solutions to the problems, while in other situations there may appear to be no solution at all. With these concerns in mind, the following discussion-starter is provided as an example:

How can the school best meet the needs of the gifted child?

Recently, there has been a feeling on the part of a school community that considerable work is being done to meet the needs of the "special education" students, while gifted students are being ignored. After all, the argument ran, meeting the needs of students with handicaps has been well addressed by the school system due to federal law. Parents have been inquiring about the formation of classes for the gifted. Several teachers have expressed desire to teach these classes and have even offered to help formulate a curriculum and course of study.

- a. How can the school community solve this problem?
- b. Should classes for the "gifted" be established?
- c. How can the district determine which students should be included in this group? Ask the parents?
- d. Which teachers should be involved in this program? Just the ones that say they are interested?
- e. Should a separate program or a separate school be established for these youngsters?

Conclusion

This paper advocates the use of the case method to teach concepts of school administration to educators entering public school administration. To begin, the case method was defined and differentiated from other terms and purposes. Next, various methods of instructional delivery were then compared so the advantages and disadvantages of case-based instruction became apparent. Several perspectives of case methodology, planning and implementation were examined to further describe this methodology. Finally, the use of discussion-starters was explained.

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dents from Rural High Schools in California. A t-statistic was used to compare means on the HSES by Cassel and Chow (2002). First, it should be noted from the data that there were no statistically significant difference in the age of students for the two groups; or the ratio of male and female students involved.

1. Rural High School Students showed their high schools superior at the 05 level of statistical competence or better for four of the 10 part scores—STCOURT, SCSONG, PTEVAL, and SCTOWK.
2. The Rural High School Students showed their high schools to be better than the Urban High Schools by Total Score on the HSES that was significant at the 0.000 level of confidence.
3. For 6 of the 10 part scores on the HSES there was no statistical difference between the Urban and Rural High School evaluations.

HSES Profiles for Urban and Rural Schools

Figures 1 and 2 below display the HSES Evaluation Profiles for the Urban and Rural High Schools, respectively. Each of these profiles show a comparison with the HSES norm for high schools of 500 students or less (many of these schools have 2,000 students or more).

1. It should be noted that in Figure 1 only two the 10 ratings were below the average norm—STCOURT (Student Court), and PTEVAL (Parent Evaluation of School).
2. In Figure 2 it should be noted that all 10 ratings were considerably above the average based on the HSES norm data.
3. It should be noted that in Figure 1 for Urban Schools three of the 10 scores were below the median norm score of 15—STCOURT, PTEVAL, and SCPSY.

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