IMPROVEMENT OF PROBLEM SOLVING SKILLS OF ENGLISH TEACHERS THROUGH CASE STUDY

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Abstract: *in recent years, EL teachers have benefited from a growing body of research that describes how problem-solving skill can help future English teachers improve their professional development. However the issue is not investigated enough in Uzbekistan. Thus, learning different ways of developing problem solving skills of future EFL teacher is very important. For that reason, we tried to research how efficient using case studies in the classroom.*

Keywords: *problem-solving, case-study, procedure, methodology, development, future teachers.*

The issues related to training future English teachers on development of problem-solving skills have been discussed in the foreign literature: Doyle W. [3] "The tasks of teaching and learning in classrooms", Clark C.M. & Peterson P.L. [2] "Teachers' Thought Processes", Calderhead J. [1] "Reflective teaching and teacher education. Teaching and Teacher Education" and others. In the local methodology the book called "English language Teaching Methodology (Theory and Practice)" by Jalolov J.J., Makhkamova G.T., Ashurov Sh.S. [4] discusses the issue of teaching problem-solving skills at the BA English language departments. The issues of developing future English teachers' problem-solving skills have been discussed also in the articles by the local educators. Besides, there is coursebook on "Methodology of teaching special subjects" by Makhkamova G.T. [5], where the effective procedure of development of problem-solving skills of future English teachers is presented. All above mentioned sources and materials greatly contributed to research the current issue and to have deep theoretical base for it, however, applying models for developing problem-solving skills of future English teachers has not been still studied. This leads the researcher to put that issue forward. The purpose of training experiment was to implement of created case-study for developing students' problem-solving skills and to approve that its implementation enforces critical thinking skills. In this stage a case is designed and conducted in the classroom. The problem-solving model guiding the case study presented in this paper consists of six stages – Understanding the problem, Structuring the problem, Seeking possible solutions, Adopt a resolution, Put into Action, and Observation or Review.

A case study lesson within the problem-solving model takes approximately 60-75 minutes and follows the three-staged model of case study process as individual preparation, small group discussion, and class discussion. Students are required to carefully read the case and analyze it individually before class under the direction of a case study guide. The guide is provided by the instructor and then the students discuss the case in groups in classroom for 30 minutes, following the six steps of problem-solving model. All groups are requested to cover all six steps with their group discussion. The instructor walks around the classroom, addressing the students' questions. Next, students will be called to the front of the classroom and write down on the whiteboard their opinions on one of the six steps of the problem-solving model, which is randomly assigned to a group by the instructor. Groups are told not to worry about the possible mismatch between their writings on one step and those of the other groups' since the mismatch problem would be addressed in the next step during class discussion. The remaining groups may be called to add their opinions to the steps that are finished first on the board by the previous six groups. This part of the work may take up to 15 minutes. Finally, after a brief, collective review of the case background information, the instructor will lead the class discussion for up to 30 minutes, covering and integrating the writings on each of the six steps on the whiteboard. Groups will be asked to explain or clarify their own writings if needed. The rest of the class will be asked for their comments about the writings, step by step, to contribute different or additional ideas, or to raise questions for either the focal group or the instructor. Then the instructor will give his feedback on the writings, ask questions on some parts of the writings, and add some critical points or perspectives missed in the writings and discussion. Of course students are free to ask any questions during the instructor's wrap-up. In the end of the class discussion, the instructor summarizes the main learning outcomes of the case and its relevance to the course topic. Finally the instructor concludes the case lesson by asking whether students have any overall questions after all the individual, group, and class discussion and briefly addressing their questions if any. Over the whole process, students are advised again and again that there is no such things as correct or standard answers to a case; instead it all depends on whether they can well justify their analyses and support their points with sufficient evidence and facts from the case and the logic of their analyses. The questionnaire used to measure effectiveness of using case study to foster and develop problem-solving skills. The questionnaire was presented to participants after they completed the problem-solving process via case study, and the students who did not participate in the teaching experience. After reading a case about a child struggling with an oral reading fluency skill deficit, all participants were asked

to respond to a series of five questions. The questions were open-ended rather than in a multiple-choice format in an effort to reduce errors due to random responses. The questionnaire included two problem identification questions and three problem analysis questions. The problem identification questions asked participants to define the presenting problem and to then provide evidence from the case to support their problem definition. The problem analysis questions asked participants to report the student's current level of performance, any factors contributing to the skill deficit, and to identify an intervention they thought would be most appropriate.

Participants' responses on the questionnaire were evaluated by using a modified scoring rubric developed by Watson [6]. The rubric helped identify if a participant had the specific problem solving skills that were being assessed. The scoring rubric assessed whether a participant accurately identified and analyzed the presenting academic skill deficit. Each item on the scoring rubric corresponded to a question on the questionnaire. Participants' responses on the questionnaire were scored using a five-point scale. One point was awarded if a question was left blank, two points were awarded if the response met the requirements for "not at all" (i.e., did not answer the question correctly), three points for "somewhat" (i.e., provided a correct and incorrect response or was almost correct but not quite on target), four points for "well" (i.e., answered the question correctly but did not go in-depth), and five points for "very well" (i.e., answered the question correctly and provided an in-depth response with more than one detail). The maximum total number of points that could be awarded was thirty. The minimum overall score on the questionnaire that participants could receive in order to be considered adequate problem solvers was 24 points. Such a score would reflect a participant receiving a score of 4 points (i.e., a response was correct but did not provide much detail) for each of the 6 items on the scoring rubric. Of the 24 total participants in the study, 15 were experimental group's participants and 9 were control group's students. Results indicated a significant main effect of case-study on participants' scores on the questionnaire. Participants scored significantly high on the questionnaire (M = 25). Students who concerned the control group scored significantly lower on the questionnaire (19) than participants in the experimental teaching via case study (25). There was not a significant difference among the scores of participants in the control and didactic instruction conditions. It was hypothesized that participants would perform significantly high on the questionnaire, and the results appeared as expected. It seems logical to assume that developing problem-solving via case study would be beneficial. This may also indicate that third year students should have the training via case study that allows them to become successful problem solvers. Data from the present study that supports this notion is that participants demonstrated acceptable levels of problem solving skills (i.e., a composite questionnaire score above 24). The results of the current study clearly indicate an improvement in problem solving skills among participants who received instruction by a case study.

The present study evaluated the problem solving skills among future English teachers. While research has examined the existing problem solving skills of the third year students and how to best teach them those skills, the idea of developing their problem-solving skills via case study models has successfully proven.

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