DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 344 887 SP 033 809

AUTHOR Kleinfeld, Judith
TITLE **Can Cases Carry Pedagogical Content Knowledge? Yes, But We've Got Signs of a "Matthew Effect."**
PUB DATE Apr 92
NOTE 33p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (San Francisco, CA, April 20-24, 1992).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS English Instruction; *English Teacher Education; Graduate Students; Higher Education; High Schools; High School Students; *Knowledge Level; *Literature Appreciation; *Methods Courses; Secondary Education; Teacher Education Programs; *Teaching Methods; Teaching Models
IDENTIFIERS *Case Method (Teaching Technique); Content Learning; *Expert Novice Problem Solving; Hamlet; Pedagogic Drama; Shakespeare (William)

ABSTRACT

Teacher educators have come to appreciate that the teaching of difficult subjects combines knowledge of content and knowledge of generic teaching methods. A study was conducted, therefore, to explore the potential of cases to carry pedagogical content knowledge. A case was developed describing how an expert teacher goes about teaching "Hamlet" to diverse high school students. The case was taught to two groups of methods students (N=35) enrolled in a graduate level certification program. Originally, data indicated that the study was a failure. Many students were unenthusiastic about studying Shakespeare in a methods course. But further data analysis indicated significant development in education students' understanding of students' problems in reading Shakespeare and of purposes and issues in teaching a literary classic. Most students transferred their understandings to the teaching of other literary classics. The results also suggest that students need prior subject background to benefit from cases of pedagogical content knowledge. This case was developed in serial form. The classic Part A--Problem; Part B--Appraisal format of the Harvard Business School cases is appended. (LL)

Can Cases Carry Pedagogical Content Knowledge?
Yes, But We've Got Signs of a "Matthew Effect"

Judith Kleinfeld
Professor of Psychology
College of Liberal Arts
University of Alaska
Fairbanks, Alaska 99775
April, 1992

Can Cases Carry Pedagogical Content Knowledge?

Yes, But We've Got Signs of a "Matthew Effect."

ABSTRACT

To explore the potential of cases in carrying pedagogical content knowledge, I developed a case showing how an expert teacher goes about teaching *Hamlet* to diverse high school students. I taught the case to two groups of methods students (N = 35) enrolled in a graduate level certification program.

I originally thought that the case was a failure. Many students were unenthusiastic at studying Shakespeare in a methods course. But the data analysis showed significant development in education students' understanding of students' problems in reading Shakespeare, their knowledge of alternative teaching strategies and materials, and their understanding of purposes and issues in teaching a literary classic. Most students transfered their understandings to the teaching of other literary classics. The results suggest a "Matthew Effect"--students need prior subject background to benefit from cases of pedagogical content knowledge.

The teaching of *Hamlet* has come to symbolize the quintessential task of pedagogy--- how to make difficult yet significant content accessible to students from disparate backgrounds. Albert Shanker (1992), for example, titles a column on motivation, "Can Pizza Hook Them on *Hamlet*?"

Since Shulman's (1987) seminal article on "pedagogical content knowledge," teacher educators have come to appreciate that the teaching of difficult subjects requires more than knowledge of content, on the one hand, and knowledge of generic teaching methods, on the other. The very nature of expertise in teaching consists of knowing how to teach specific content. Pedagogical content knowledge refers to knowing what about this content is important to teach, what difficulties and misunderstandings students are likely to have, what specific curriculum materials might be useful, and how this particular content can be well presented and represented.

This paper tells the story of my efforts to use case methods to develop pedagogical content knowledge in prospective teachers. Specifically, I created a serialized case designed to show education students how an expert teacher goes about teaching *Hamlet* to diverse students. This case is intended to do much more than describe the methods the teacher uses. The case is intended to show education students how an expert teacher constructs and thinks through the pedagogical problems central to teaching a literary classic. Thus, I assessed not only what students learned about the teaching of *Hamlet* but also whether they were able to transfer these understandings to a closely related task, the teaching of *Julius Caesar*, and to a more distant task, the teaching of a poem "Theme for English 3B", by the African-American poet Langston Hughes.

Case methods should be especially suitable to developing both pedagogical content knowledge and the ability to construct and think about teaching problems. Cases emphasize grounded classroom

experience, narrative rather than propositional knowledge, and the formulation of problems and alternative strategies to address them (Sykes & Bird, 1992; Merseth, 1991). Teacher educators developing cases, however. find that cases appear easier to create in pedagogical areas with an ethical or interpersonal dimension than in subject areas. Casebooks stress matters of classroom management, evaluation, cross-cultural relationships, or teachers' role problems (Silverman, Welty, & Lyon, 1992; Greenwood & Parkay, 1989; Shulman & Colbert, 1987; Kleinfeld, 1990). With a very few exceptions (Barnett, 1991; Sato, 1991), teacher educators have not developed cases which address the problem at the heart of teaching: how to teach difficult but important content to diverse students.

I had another purpose in trying to use case methods to develop pedagogical content knowledge in the teaching of *Hamlet*. I wanted to use this case to strengthen education students' subject matter knowledge itself. Many education students have quite weak content knowledge when they enter teaching (Feiman-Nemser & Parker, 1990; Ball, 1988; McDiarmid, 1989). Cases of pedagogical content knowledge, I thought, might give students in education courses the opportunity to learn content that they had missed earlier in their education but might have to teach. If courses in Colleges of Liberal Arts and Sciences were not getting the job done, perhaps we teacher educators should do it. Education courses could emphasize the study of important and representative content as well as methods of teaching it. Such a content emphasis could raise the intellectual rigor and tone of Schools of Education.

The results of this study were not at all what I expected. Indeed when I began to write this paper, I gave it the sub-title, "An Instructional Failure." I had not yet analyzed my quantitative data on what students had learned about teaching *Hamlet* and other literary classics. But on the basis of my own classroom observations as I taught the case and students' comments, I figured the answer was clear: The students had not liked studying the *Hamlet* case and had not learned much.

Much to my surprise, after doing the quantitative data analysis, I had to throw away my first paper. The quantitative analysis told a very different story. Most students gained considerable pedagogical content knowledge from studying this case of teaching *Hamlet* and were able to transfer that knowledge to the teaching of other literary classics. Why had my own intuitive conclusions been in error?

Further data analysis raised the possibility that I had failed to take into account the importance of students' background knowledge. Students with some literature background, primarily English majors. seemed better able to learn from such a case. Many education students had never read *Hamlet* or any other Shakespearian play, found the play boring and inaccessible, and did not expect to have to study such a difficult play in an education methods course. These reactions had shaped my sense of what had happened.

In developing cases to carry pedagogical content knowledge, educators need to consider:

1) **How weak the content knowledge of many education students actually is.** For students who had never read *Hamlet*, reading and thinking about the play in an education class did not give them the knowledge or confidence they needed to teach it.

2) **How little students may enjoy studying difficult content and thinking about how to teach it.** Although graduate students in a certification program, many found the play inaccessible and boring.

3) **How little depth of knowledge and self-confidence professors of education may have in leading class discussions about the teaching of subject matter.** Despite preparation, I was not a Shakespeare specialist and was unprepared to lead a subtle discussion of what is important in this play.

4) **How strong students' expectations are as to what should be studied in methods courses.** Students expected to study such topics as whole-language instruction and the writing process. These important topics, in their judgment, got short shrift, and instead they had to spend a week primarily reading one difficult play and thinking about how to teach it.

Cases can carry pedagogical content knowledge, but we need to give close attention to the teacher, the students, and the setting where these cases are discussed. Such cases may best be used with students who already have some knowledge of the content, such as experienced teachers or subject majors. Cases of pedagogical content knowledge may be far more suitable for in inservice education programs, faculty development programs, and subject-specific methods courses than in general methods courses. Using such cases in laboratory courses for teachers attached to core subjects in Colleges of Arts and Sciences may be an especially fruitful way to develop teachers' content knowledge together with their pedagogical content knowledge.

Developing a Case of Pedagogical Content Knowledge

To develop a case of teaching Shakespeare, I asked an English teacher with a reputation for making Shakespearian plays accessible and interesting to students without strong academic backgrounds whether she would be interested in collaborating on a case of her teaching.

This teacher, whom I shall call Mrs. Henderson, her pseudonym in the case, valued the recognition from the local university and was pleased at receiving $500 in compensation. Mrs. Henderson possessed two skills which I have found extremely valuable in collaborating with teachers on the development of cases about their teaching. First, she could make explicit her tacit knowledge and enjoyed thinking about why she did what she did. Second, Mrs. Henderson knew how to write and had an ear for student language.

A teacher writing about her own teaching, however, may miss a great deal. In order to provide an outsider's perspective, I observed her class during much of the month that she taught *Hamlet* and provided her with detailed field notes and questions about what she was doing.

Once a week, we discussed these issues. Mrs. Henderson "hooked" her students, for example, by introducing *Hamlet* as the ultimate soap opera with a plot that included adultery, stepparents, jealousy, and callousness toward women. The students, especially the girls in the class, were enthralled. I raised questions with Mrs. Henderson about the value of the soap opera analogy---whether this representation of Hamlet was intellectually valid, whether boys as well as girls found it appealing, and whether it drew students' attention too much to the plot. When students evaluated Mrs. Henderson's teaching of *Hamlet*, we found that students focused on the plot and had not thought much about the themes of the play. Such issues became part of the case.

In order to show education students how an expert teacher formulated teaching problems, I decided to develop the case in serial form. The first part of the case showed Mrs. Henderson thinking about a critical problem she saw in the teaching of *Hamlet* The following part of the case showed how Mrs. Henderson addressed the problem. This case format followed the classic "Part A--Problem; Part B--Appraisal" format of Harvard Business School cases.

The following memorandum I wrote to Ms. Henderson about the first instructional decision---the classic problem of what literary work to select and on what grounds to make this decision--presents an example of how we collaborated on the case.

> Part A: What Should I Teach: Julius Caesar versus Hamlet?

As I understand our discussion, you first thought about teaching Julius Caesar, which is the standard Shakespearian play for this age group and is included in your literature textbook. You decided against it because you didn't think that the themes resonated with adolescents' experience and concerns. You considered teaching *Hamlet*, even though other teachers had told you that *Julius Caesar* was better because it was shorter and had fast action. You thought also about the cost of buying *Hamlet* and how much more students liked a short paperback rather than the heavy text.

When you write Part A, take the students through the problem you posed for yourself. Then end the first part of the case with the decision: Which play should Ms. Henderson choose?

Working in this way, we developed a serialized case organized around such problems as what literature to teach, how to hook the students on difficult literature, how to deal with the difficult language in Shakespearian plays, how to maintain students' interest through a long and involved play, whether and what films to use, how to evaluate what students had learned, and how to deal with practical problems, like cancellation of your classes at the end of the school year. The final case had 14 parts, each 1-3 pages long.

The last part of the case presented students' views on Mrs. Henderson's teaching. The survey, developed with the help of student informants, tested the assumption that Mrs. Henderson taught *Hamlet* with great skill. The results of the survey, as well as my own classroom observations concerning students' rapt attention, confirmed Ms. Henderson's reputation as a master teacher. Of the 25 students, 22 were positive about studying the play and the remaining three students said it was "OK." Students liked *Hamlet* far more than any other work of literature they had

read that year, including Black Boy and Brave New World. When asked whether they wanted to read another Shakespeare play next year, 19 said "yes" and the others said "maybe."

The student survey became part of the case because it provided as well a critical perspective on Mrs. Henderson's teaching. Students liked some of the methods she had used---like paraphrasing tedious portions of the play---but didn't like others--such as acting out scenes. Many education students had never thought about paraphrasing as a method of progressing quickly through less important passages. Most education students had also assumed that high school students would enjoy acting out scenes and at first planned to teach *Hamlet* exclusively by having students read parts aloud and act out scenes.

The Education Program and Students

I taught the *Hamlet* case twice to different classes of graduate students enrolled in the Teachers for Alaska Program at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. Some students were recent college graduates while others were returning to become certified after pursuing other careers. In this program, all students receive some methods instruction in the language arts, science, mathematics, and social studies since beginning teachers often teach outside their college majors and certification fields. Of the students, 11 had majored in English or language arts and the remaining 24 had majored in mathematics, science, or other fields.

In addition to studying the *Hamlet* case, education students also studied a case of teaching Alaska Native oral narratives. Mrs. Henderson taught both *Hamlet* and Alaska Native oral narratives in the same period, to give students a multicultural perspective on literature. I taught cases from different cultural traditions as well, although this paper reports primarily on the *Hamlet* case.

Measuring What Students Learned and Teaching the Case

In order to see what students learned from this case, I asked them to write papers responding to a series of questions about the teaching of *Hamlet* and other literary classics before they had read and discussed the case and after our class discussion. I asked them, for example, whether they would choose to teach Shakespeare or a work of adolescent fiction; what problems they anticipated in teaching Hamlet, and what would be their instructional purposes, methods, and means of evaluation.

To assess whether students could transfer what they had learned from the case of *Hamlet* to the teaching of other classics, I asked them about how they would go about teaching a closely related play, *Julius Caesar* and a more distant teaching task, the poem "Theme for English 3 B" by Langston Hughes. The students had copies of all three works, plot summaries of both plays, and relevant pages from the Teacher's Guide.

In addition, I asked students to complete an anonymous survey discussing their reactions to the case.

Since I was experienced in case teaching, I did not expect problems in leading the case discussion (Kleinfeld, 1990b; Kleinfeld, 1992). But the class discussion was much less animated than I had ever experienced in teaching a case. Some students, I began to suspect, had not read *Hamlet* at all. Many students seemed unable to talk about the issues and themes of the play and a few complained that they had found the play boring. While I had intended the discussion to center first on Hamlet as a work of literature, not only pedagogical questions, I found it difficult to get into the substance and subtleties of the play. While I had done more than usual preparation for the class, I was not a Shakespeare scholar and found it difficult to lead a sophisticated discussion when we veered away from pedagogy.

When I read over the student surveys, I found little enjoyment of the case discussion or sense that much had been learned. One

student began with a teacher-pleasing comment on the case and then confessed that her lovely remarks were "blarney":

> To the point, Judy, it's all new to us. The case study helped, class discussion was not an effective use of time. It will take a while to mentally sort, synthesize, and file the abundant material.

Disappointed, I decided to revise the case and try it again with a new group of methods students. The case discussion was bogging down, I decided, partly because this case, in its serialized form, was too long and repetitive. I scrapped most parts of the case and taught only the crucial parts---the decisions concerning what to teach, how to hook the students, how to deal with the difficult language, and how to evaluate what had been accomplished. Since I felt uneasy at my own knowledge of Shakespeare, this time I invited a Shakespeare scholar, one of the most popular professors on campus, to lead us all in a discussion of *Hamlet*.

My second attempt at teaching the case did not go much better. The education students were so unsure of their knowledge of the play and so fearful of looking foolish in front of the Shakespeare scholar (as I myself was) that she had a hard time leading a useful discussion. As before, many students had never read Shakespeare, found the play inaccessible, and had modest interest in talking about *Hamlet* or how to teach it. When I showed two film versions of *Hamlet* in class, intending to compare the different interpretive treatments and suitability for high school sophomores, my education graduate students competed to take the Hollywood version of the play home to watch. No one wanted to take home the classic BBC film version.

In their evaluations of the teacher education program at the end of the semester, a few students voiced disappointment that they had not had more exposure to important topical issues like whole

language instruction and said that too much time had been spent on the *Hamlet* case.

What Students Learned

Most students had written their first papers on teaching *Hamlet*, *Julius Caesar*, and the Langston Hughes poem with a word processing program. After discussing the *Hamlet* case, they were asked to respond to the questions again and told that their second paper would be graded. Most students revised their earlier papers simply by inserting or adding sentences with their word processing programs, which made changes in their thinking relatively transparent.

Coding the Papers

I analyzed changes in the students' thinking with the following codes:

1. **Number of Issues Considered in Choosing a Literary Work** In discussing the case, we brought up alternative reasons for selecting particular works of literature, such as cultural literacy, cultural relevance, and personal passions. At least 7 different issues could have been identified.

2. **Number of Problems Identified in Helping Students Understand *Hamlet*** In discussing the case, we considered such problems as how to present the play in a class where some students could barely read and others were advanced readers and how to handle classroom problems that arose with this content, such as students' jokes about homosexuality around the word "fop." At least 7 different problems could have been identified.

3. **Number of Methods Used in Teaching *Hamlet*** The expert teacher's success in part resulted from the variety of well-chosen methods, such as acting out scenes, paraphrasing difficult sections, having students memorize key soliloquies, and so forth. At least 6 different methods could have been identified.

4. **Number of Purposes in Teaching Shakespeare** In discussing the case, we emphasized alternative purposes and how the purposes shaped both the instructional strategies and methods of evaluation. Students could have identified at least 7 different purposes.

Results

Given students' lack of enthusiasm, I had thought students had not learned much from the case. I was wrong. The English majors showed significant growth in identifying important issues in teaching *Hamlet* (t=3.63, p=.002); identifying important problems (t=4.98 p =.000); identifying appropriate methods (t=4.54; p =.001); and identifying important purposes (t=2.12, p=.03). The non-English majors also showed growth in identifying issues (t=3.18, p=.002); identifying problems (t=4.91, p=.000); identifying methods (t=6.06 p=.000); and identifying purposes (t=2.88 p=.004).

While both groups showed growth, the English majors tended to start out with more pedagogical content knowledge and to gain more (Table 1). In this small sample, however, the difference between majors only reached statistical significance (p=.01) on the variable "identifying important problems."

Of the English majors, 64 percent showed high transfer to the closely related task of teaching *Julius Caesar* and the other 36 percent showed some transfer (Table 2). The non-English majors again showed a trend of less transfer, although the difference did not reach statistical significance. In teaching the Langston Hughes poem, significantly more English majors demonstrated transfer than non-English majors (x^2=7.57 p <.05). Transfer to the more distant teaching task, a poem by an African-American author, occured far less among both groups.

These results raise the possibility of a classic "Matthew Effect" in cases carrying pedagogical content knowledge---"For the man who has will always be given more, till he has enough and to spare" (Matthew 25:29). The students who gained more from the case already had consi erable background in literature. I suspect the results would be more striking if I had been able to categorize students by whether or not they had ever read Shakespeare, rather than whether or not they were English or language majors. Some English majors, I discovered, had never encountered Shakespeare.

The following student shows the kind of development I found among literature majors. When asked whether she would choose to teach *Hamlet*, *Julius Caesar*, or a work of adolescent fiction prior to studying the case, she wrote:

> I would teach *Macbeth* because the Polanski film of it is exciting, well-done and accurate, and I think it would get students excited about the material. I do feel that it is important to expose students to Shakespeare as he does play such an important role in English literature.

After studying the case, her response showed far greater pedagogical content knowledge concerning *Hamlet*:

> I would teach *Hamlet* because its themes of death, suicide, revenge, women s issues, and betrayal are very relevant to today's teenagers. Its varied and action-packed plot would possibly draw these students in. It is important in the history of literature...To a lesser extent I believe in the argument of cultural literacy, that it is important to expose students to Shakespeare so that they will understand references to him and his work. I also like the Mel Gibson and Derek Jacobi films and believe they would be useful teaching tools.

When this student was asked what problems she thought students would experience in studying *Hamlet* she first replied:

> I think the major problems are 1) the archaic language and 2) the play form---I love to watch plays but I find them extremely boring to read

When asked about expected problems after studying the case, she had a much more complex view:

> I expect the problems I would encounter would be:
>
> a. students' difficulty comprehending the archaic language
>
> b. students' varying abilities to comprehend the language
>
> c. long length of the play
>
> d. complexities in plot, characters, and themes, and
>
> e. the play form of the work (not understanding division into acts and scenes)

When asked about selecting literature, some non-English majors voiced great hesitancy about teaching Shakespeare at all. As one said:

> It would be a crime for me to attempt to teach Shakespeare when I understand so little of his work. It's comparable to me teaching calculus to a class after I failed out of freshman calculus in college. Instead I would choose to teach a work of adolescent fiction such as *A Separate Peace* ...If I had a greater understanding of the work of Shakespeare, perhaps I would teach his work and be able to relate the material to the students.

After the week spent reading Hamlet and studying the case, he showed some growth in confidence but still would not teach Shakespeare if he could avoid it:

> If I had to teach a work of Shakespeare I would chose *Julius Caesar* because the central theme appears to focus on power which is the core idea of my college major, political science...If I had the choice I would decide to not teach Shakespeare and in its place I would teach a work of adolescent fiction...I find the ideas in Shakespeare to be too obscured underneath the archaic language and technique for myself, let alone a class of students that I am to teach.

When asked about problems he anticipated, this student replied:

> If I chose to teach *Hamlet*, the major problem would be to get the kids to understand the antiquated English and poetic style in which the play is written. If that problem could be overcome, which I personally have not, than (sic) the difficulty would be to have the students analyze the thoughts and actions of the characters...

After studying the case, he showed some growth but not great progress:

> The following obstacles would have to be faced in order to successfully teach *Hamlet*:
>
> * To get the students to overcome the antiquated english (sic)
>
> * To get the students familiar with reading a play
>
> * To get the students to understand the complex psychological issues addressed in the play.

Those students with little knowledge of literature often did not have the content foundation to transfer concepts learned in studying *Hamlet* to another literary work. As one said with delightful straightforwardness:

> I did not change the aspects of teaching *Julius Caesar* because I don't know enough about the piece of work to really know how I'd go about teaching it. Nor did I change the approach to "Theme for English B" since I was satisfied that this is probably the way I'd go about teaching it.

Can Cases Carry Pedagogical Content Knowledge? What I Have Learned

In developing this case of *Hamlet*, I had three ambitions. First, I wanted to use education courses to compensate for prospective teachers' limitations in content knowledge. Since many students came to education courses without understanding the content they needed to teach, I hoped to use the education courses to give them the opportunity to learn or re-learn subjects they had missed. Second, I wanted to develop education students' pedagogical content knowledge in a difficult but representative pedagogical task, the teaching of *Hamlet* Third, I wanted to see if education students could transfer the pedagogical content knowledge developed in studying one literary classic to the teaching of other literary classics. If students show little transfer, the task for teacher educators is formidable indeed.

Like another Shakespearian character, Macbeth, I was too ambitious. For students without any substantial knowledge of literature, a methods course was the wrong context to develop such content knowledge. Many students found reading Shakespeare very difficult and did not want to do so. Further, I myself did not have the scholarly background necessary to develop their content knowledge in sophisticated ways.

But as a carrier of pedagogical content knowledge, the *Hamlet* case was quite effective---indeed far more effective than I had realized from students' unenthusiastic response. The *Hamlet* case succeeded in increasing students' understanding of sound rationales for selecting literature, their ability to anticipate students' problems and perspectives, their repertoire of pedagogical methods and curriculum alternatives, and their general understanding of fundamental purposes in the teaching of literature. Further, most students were able to transfer this knowledge to the teaching of a closely related pedagogical task and about half were able to transfer some knowledge to a more distant task.

In short, teacher educators can develop cases which carry pedagogical content knowledge. But we must also ask: In what settings should such cases be taught? A general methods course, my experience suggests, is not an appropriate setting. Cases of pedagogical content knowledge might be quite successful with practicing teachers, who have some knowledge of content but whose knowledge needs to be deepened, as Barnett (1991) has done in California and Sato (1991) in Japan. Cases of pedagogical content knowledge may be quite appropriate in university faculty development programs where the case is discussed by subject area specialists, as Hutchings (undated) is doing.

For education students, a case such as *Hamlet* would be appropriate in a methods course focused on the teaching of literature. An even more valuable approach to increasing prospective teachers' content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge would be a laboratory course on the teaching of content, using cases, connected to core subject courses in Colleges of Arts and Sciences. The University of Alaska, for example, offers a special laboratory for education majors on the teaching of biology joined to an introductory course in biology.

The results of this study underscore the fundamental problem in the preparation of teachers---the weak content knowledge of many education students. Cases of pedagogical content knowledge offers some leverage on this problem but cannot solve it. Case methods, however, can show prospective teachers how to think about the teaching of specific content in complex and sophisticated ways and this growth in understanding does transfer to other teaching tasks.

TABLE 1

Educational Students' Growth in Pedagogical Content Knowledge: Teaching *Hamlet*

	Before Case		After Case	
	English Majors	Other Majors	English Majors	Other Majors
Number of issues considered in choice of literary work	4.0	3.2	5.2**	4.1**
Number of problems identified in helping students understand *Hamlet*	3.1	3.1	5.6**	4.1**
Number of methods used in teaching *Hamlet*	3.0	2.6	4.8**	4.1**
Number of purposes in teaching Shakespeare	5.1	4.1	6.2*	5.0**
N =	11	24	11	24

*$p < .05$

**$p < .01$

TABLE 2

Education Students' Transfer of Concepts and Pedagogical Strategies from *Hamlet* Case to the Teaching fo Other Literary Works

	Teaching *Julius Caesar*		Teaching Langston Hughes Poem*	
	English Majors	Other Majors	English Majors	Other Majors
High Transfer[1]	64%	41%	27%	0%
Some Transfer[2]	36%	32%	27%	59%
No Transfer	0%	27%	46%	41%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
N =	11	22	11	22

*$p < .05$

[1]Transferred notion of identifying and representing core themes, addressing students' problems reading Shakespeare, and other fundamental concepts, in addition to instructional methods.

[2]Transferred primarily instructional methods.

References

Barnett (1991). *Case methods: A promising vehicle for expanding the pedagogical knowledge base in mathematics.* Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association, Chicago, Ill.

Ball, D. (1988). *The subject matter preparation of prospective mathematics teachers: Challenging the myths* (Research Report 88-3). East Lansing: Michigan State University, National Center for Research on Teaching.

Feiman-Nemser, S. & Parker M. (1990). *Making subject matter part of the conversation or helping beginning teachers learn to teach* (Research Report 90-3). East Lansing: Michigan State University, National Center for Research on Teaching.

Greenwood, G.E. & Parkay, F.W. (1989). *Case studies for teacher decision making*. New York: Random House.

Hutchings, P. (undated). *Cases about teaching...toward a more professional discourse*. AAHE Initiative on Teaching.

Kleinfeld, J.S. (1990a). *Case series in cross-cultural education*. Fairbanks: University of Alaska, Center for Cross-Cultural Studies.

Kleinfeld, J.S. (1990b). The special virtues of the case method in preparing teachers for minority schools. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, Winter, 43-52.

Kleinfeld, J.S. (1991). *Changes in problem solving abilities of students taught through cases*. Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association, Chicago, Ill.

Kleinfeld, J.S. (1992). Learning to think like a teacher: The study of cases. In J. Shulman (Ed.) *Case methods in teacher education*. New York: Teachers College Press.

McDiarmid, G.W. (1989). *What do prospective teachers learn in their liberal arts courses* Research Report 89-8). East Lansing: Michigan State University, National Center for Research in Teacher Education.

Merseth, K. (1991). *The case for cases*. Washington: American Association for Higher Education.

Sato, M. (1991). *Case method in Japanese teacher education: Traditions and our experiments*. Paper presented at the Japan/US Teacher Education Consortium, The Fourth Annual Meeting at Stanford University, Stanford, California.

Silverman, R., Welty, B., & Lyon, S.(1992). *Case studies for teacher problem solving*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Shanker, A. (1992, March). Can pizza hook them on Hamlet? *The New Republic*.

Shulman, J., & Colbert, J.A. (1987). *The mentor teacher casebook*. San Francisco- Far West Laboratory for Research and Development.

Shulman, L. S. (1987). Knowledge and teaching: Foundations of the new reform. *Harvard Educational Review*, 57, 1-22.

Beth Hurikawa

Hamlet Case Study

PART A: What Should Mrs. Henderson Teach?: *Julius Caesar* vs. *Hamlet*

Mrs. Henderson sat at her desk. It was December; the first semester was almost over and she was starting to plan what she would do with her sophomores during the second semester. Her major decision was whether or not to teach the prescribed sophomore Shakespeare play, *Julius Caesar.* There were many reasons to teach the play: it was already in the curriculum; it was included in the huge sophomore text; it is an important play because in it Shakespeare reflects the incredible interest the people of his time had for Roman history; it would relate to the Greek and Roman mythology the sophomores had studied the first semester.

However, Mrs. Henderson could think of many reasons not to teach *Julius Caesar,* some of which were personal. Ever since she had been "taught" the play when she had been a sophomore in high school in 1968, she had hated it. She remembered it as dry and boring. She had loved the "Beware the Ides of March" part, but that had hardly been enough to sustain her interest. She had not connected at all with the politics of the play; she preferred characters who experienced personal, internal, spiritual struggles. Furthermore, Mrs. Henderson disliked the sophomore text. As much as possible, she tried to teach out of individual copies of books. She felt that, generally, high school student texts were too cookbookish; they left very little room for exploration. This was confirmed when she opened to the play in her annotated teacher's edition of the book. Not only did it have what she considered a nice tidy "kit" for the students to plow through *Julius Caesar* with, it also provided, in the margins, a nice tidy "kit" for her to use. For

example, on the cover page of the play she found what she felt was an obvious, unnecessary suggestion at the top of the page: "1. Building on Prior Knowledge." She also thought suggestion #3, having the students write a "Prereading Journal," was boring. While much of the material was useful, Mrs. Henderson felt the students would be more likely to think if they didn't have a text that did it for them. And she had always actively disliked teacher's editions of books. She knew it was snobby, but she felt that as a passionate lover of literature and as a fairly experienced teacher, she had enough intelligence and resources to teach without the step-by-step, review questions-activities-on-every-page approach offered by the textbooks.

Mrs. Henderson knew, however, that with the varied ability levels of her students, teaching *Julius Caesar* out of the prescribed text might be the only successful way to teach the play. Its step-by-step approach would be very accessible to the students who had difficulty with reading comprehension, and, after all, she could always provide enrichment activities for any students who wanted to stray away from the textbook. Use of the text did not mean marriage to it.

Mrs. Henderson sighed. After all her thinking, she knew what the bottom line was: she loved Shakespeare; she disliked *Julius Caesar*. One of her favorite Shakespeare plays was *Hamlet*. She really, in her heart of hearts, wanted to do *Hamlet* with her sophomores. But the obstacles were many. She knew her sophomores would feel intimidated by Shakespearean English, even in a relatively short play like *Julius Caesar*, and *Hamlet* is Shakespeare's longest play. Would making them deal with such a long piece make them hate Shakespeare? *Julius Caesar* was in the text; Mrs. Henderson would have to purchase copies of *Hamlet* out of her own pocket, because the school budget was zero. She could only afford 30 copies, at

$2.50 a copy, which meant that the students could only use the books in class (she had 55 sophomores). How could they possibly do the play during class time only? Furthermore, the previous summer, Mrs. Henderson had been involved in a National Endowment for the Humanities seminar at the University of Arizona: *Shakespeare and Milton* It had been an intellectually stimulating experience, but she remembered vividly two comments that had been repeated by experienced teachers concerning the teaching of *Hamlet*: it was too long to teach to sophomores, and it was too psychologically complex and bleak. Mrs. Henderson realized, however, that it was important to emphasize the positive aspects of teaching the play:

1. She had an overwhelming passion for *Hamlet*, and felt her enthusiasm would be good for the students.
2. She was familiar with sophomores and felt that they would be able to relate to Hamlet's interior struggles. In her experience, she had found that sophomores tend to be very sensitive, searching young people. Hamlet's struggle, she felt, might engage them. She also believed that the intrigue in the play would hold their attention. In the opening scene a ghost appears--Shakespeare himself was the grand master of grabbing his audience!
3. She was willing to pay for the texts herself, so money was not an issue for the school.
4. She was very familiar (she had watched it at least ten times) with the BBC production of *Hamlet*, starring Derek Jacobi as Hamlet and Patrick Stewart as Claudius. Not only is it a brilliant production, but Mrs. Henderson knew that the students would be fascinated by the appearance of Patrick Stewart, the *Star Trek: The Next Generation* star, as a character in a Shakespeare play. It also

happened that the Mel Gibson version was about to be released, and her students would have an opportunity to see it at the local theater.

5. Finally, Mrs. Henderson felt that *Hamlet* was, simply, a more important and familiar play than *Julius Caesar*, and that the students would benefit more by having contact with it.

After sitting at her desk mulling over all these conflicting ideas, Mrs. Henderson decided she would approach her principal for advice.

Beth Horikawa

Hamlet Case Study

Part B1: How Can Mrs. Henderson Hook the Students Onto *Hamlet*?

Mrs. Henderson sat with a copy of the Folger Shakespeare Library paperback *Hamlet* on her lap. She talked to herself, as she was wont to do. "O.K.--you're going to teach this play. Now the big question is--how are you going to hook all 25 third period sophomores into getting into it themselves?" Mrs. Henderson knew she had taken a risk by choosing to teach *Hamlet*. After all, it was her favorite play, but it was also very difficult. Could she get the third period sophomores--a very diverse group--to appreciate it as much as she did?

Her fifth period English 10 class, because of the scheduling at the school, consisted primarily of all the "bright" sophomores. But third was different. She thought of Jack, an African-American student, who made a practice of being bored in English class. Jack, ironically, almost always did his work and was a very bright young man. He was determined, however, to make his presence in Mrs. Henderson's class a constant reminder to the teacher that English 10--and, indeed, Mrs. Henderson herself--were the apex of boredom. Jack had a tendency to posture himself as rather macho--throwing his leg up on the desk, defiantly wearing his baseball cap in class, calling everything "stupid." Roger, Sophie and Bill had difficulty with reading comprehension. How could Mrs. Henderson possibly help them become engaged in the play? Matthew and Lila would be able to understand the language, but their energy levels were high and attention spans short, short, short. Mrs. Henderson knew it would be difficult for them to sustain interest in such a complex piece of literature. Of course, she knew she

could rely on Travis, Norbert and Linda, with their combination of discipline, high intelligence, enthusiasm and curiosity, to generate interest and lead class discussion. The other students in class were similar in one way or another to the students Mrs. Henderson had just thought about.

Mrs. Henderson also thought about the racial and ethnic diversity of her two English 10 classes--Caucasian, African-American, Hispanic, Alaskan Native. She wondered if the 400 year-old play, by a white European male about a white European male, would appeal to her students, who were proud of their individual ethnic and cultural backgrounds but who had also experienced prejudice. Would the questions raised in *Hamlet* be relevant to all of them?

The first thing she knew she would have to do would be to convince the ENTIRE class that *Hamlet* was worth studying. How was she going to do that?

Beth Horikawa

Hamlet Case Study

Part B2: Mrs. Henderson Decides How to Hook the Students

Mrs. Henderson decided that she would start by appealing to their familiarity with television and their love of action-filled movies. She had watched enough soap operas (she was not ashamed to admit she still occasionally watched "As the World Turns" and "The Bold and the Beautiful" to keep up on the comings-and-goings of the Hughes family in ATWTand the Ridge-Brooke-Taylor triad in B&B) to know that she could draw analogies between them and *Hamlet*. And she knew many of her students watched soaps--they taped them during school and rushed home to watch them before they did their homework. Mrs. Henderson also knew how hooked they were on action movies; it was Matthew who had turned her on to the thrilling, violence-filled escapades of actor-martial arts god Steven Seagal (she remembered how shocked the entire class had been when she had told Matthew she had never heard of him), and Lila, Sophie and Marie would gather at their lockers, gushing about how awesome Jean Claude Van Damme was in his latest martial arts annihilation flick.

Thus, Mrs. Henderson figured the affair, the insanity, the suggested incest, the ghost, the poison, the blood in in *Hamlet* would, perhaps, be something her students might be interested in, after all. She took the copy of the play off her lap and smiled. She had some ideas for her introduction to *Hamlet*, which would be the next day. She'd worry about the deeper issues of the play after she had convinced the class it was literature they would like.

Beth Horikawa

Hamlet Case Study

Part C1: How Can Mrs. Henderson Introduce *Hamlet* and its Language?

Mrs. Henderson was driving home. The next day she would start *Hamlet* with her sophomores. She was convinced she could get them to understand why it is such an important play to study, but she was still concerned about how she would actually start teaching the play. The format of the text and, of course, the language, were fairly new to the students. They had studied *Romeo and Juliet* in their freshman year, but it had been out of a standard sophomore anthology, loaded with ready-to-use activities and exercises, and it was not nearly as difficult or as long a play as *Hamlet*

She knew she would have to spend some time teaching the students how to read the text. In the Folger Library version, the notes were not at the bottom of the page. Instead, the text was on the right and the explanatory notes were on the left. This actually made it easier for the students to read; instead of moving their eyes down to the bottom of the page and losing their places, they could just shift their eyes to the left and then back to the right. Still, she would need to get them oriented. That issue was minor, however, compared to the issue of Shakespearean language. Should she paraphrase a lot of the play for the students in class? Should she show them the video before they read, so that they could see the action and the facial expressions that go along with the lines? She didn't really like that idea; she preferred that the students create their own images of the characters and the action. She knew she would ask the students to paraphrase, in writing, some of the major soliloquies. It would be difficult, but she strongly felt they needed to tackle the language on their

own. She knew she needed more ideas, but as she pulled into her driveway she decided to put *Hamlet* to rest for the night. She was tired.