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ARTICLE

Behind the scenes of the case: a report on building an active teaching methodology

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Abstract

This article presents a proposal for an active methodology developed in the classroom. The article reports on planning experience, construction, and applying a case methodology developed by students from the Management of Forms of Accommodation course in the Undergraduate Program in Tourism at Paraiba Federal University (UFPB) in Brazil. The case methodology allowed students to be immersed in an environment of debate, analysis, and decision-making, foreseeing obstacles and situation-problems they would have to deal with in their working lives. This case elaboration experience was divided into three phases: (1) direct participant observation in loco, with the immersion of the students at the location that is the object of the study; (2) direct participant observation in the classroom, after the immersion, to build the case methodology; (3) group interview for the validation of the case elaboration experience and adaptations if needed (Post-case). The result of this work was positively evaluated by the students and indicated the need to intensify the use of active methodologies in the classroom. With this in mind, it is hoped that this study will inspire new experiences on the part of professors to stimulate the involvement of students with teaching cases.

Keywords: Active Methodologies. Case Methodology. Management of Forms of Accommodation.

Bastidores do caso: relato de uma experiência de construção de uma metodologia ativa de ensino

Resumo

O objetivo deste artigo é apresentar uma proposta de metodologia ativa desenvolvida em sala de aula. Para tanto, traz o relato da experiência de planejamento, construção e aplicação de um Método do Caso desenvolvido por discentes da disciplina Gestão de Meios de Hospedagem no curso de graduação em Turismo da Universidade Federal da Paraíba (UFPB). O método de caso viabiliza a imersão dos discentes em um ambiente de debate, análise e tomada de decisões, antevendo obstáculos e situações-problema, com as quais eles precisarão lidar na vida profissional. A experiência de elaboração do caso dividiu-se em três momentos: (1) observação direta participante *in loco*, com a imersão dos discentes na localidade objeto de estudo; (2) observação direta participante em sala de aula, após a imersão, para a construção do Método do Caso; (3) entrevista em grupo para validação da experiência de elaboração do caso e necessidades de adaptações (pós-caso). O resultado deste trabalho foi positivamente avaliado pelos discentes e sinaliza a necessidade de intensificar o uso de metodologias ativas em sala de aula. A esse respeito, espera-se que este estudo possa inspirar novas experiências por parte dos docentes, de forma a estimular o envolvimento dos discentes com os casos de ensino.

Palavras-chave: Metodologias ativas. Método do Caso. Gestão de Meios de Hospedagem.

El caso entre bastidores: relato de una experiencia de construcción de una metodología activa de enseñanza

Resumen

El objetivo de este artículo es presentar una propuesta de metodología activa desarrollada en el aula. Para ello, el artículo da cuenta de la experiencia de planificación, construcción y aplicación de un método del caso, desarrollado por los alumnos de la asignatura Gestión de Medios de Hospedaje, en el grado de Turismo de la Universidad Federal da Paraíba (UFPB). El método del caso viabiliza la inmersión de los alumnos en un ambiente de discusión y decisiones, anticipando obstáculos y situaciones problema que tendrán que afrontar en su vida profesional. Esta experiencia de elaboración del caso se dividió en tres momentos: (1) observación directa participante *in loco*, con la inmersión de los alumnos en la localidad de estudio; (2) observación participante en la clase, después de la inmersión para construcción del método del caso, (3) entrevista en grupo para validación de la experiencia de elaboración del caso y necesidades de adaptaciones (poscaso). El resultado del trabajo fue evaluado positivamente por los alumnos y señala la necesidad de intensificación del uso de metodologías activas en la clase. En este sentido, se espera que la investigación pueda inspirar nuevas experiencias de parte de los profesores para motivar la participación de los alumnos en casos de enseñanza

Palabras clave: Metodologías activas. Método del caso. Gestión de medios de hospedaje.

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INTRODUCTION

Education is a target for criticism, government plans, macro and micro programs, initiatives, and research worldwide. It passes through governments, eras, and models, undergoes societal changes, and is sometimes subject to discontinuity and a lack of investment or public and private interest. However, it is continuously renewed to meet the fluid dynamics of learning. In this dimension, it is worth mentioning the challenges higher education faces in making learning possible for a constantly changing audience, overloaded with information and stimuli and sometimes with a childlike capacity for interpretation and analysis.

In this context, in which inter-, multi-, and transdisciplinary approaches are increasingly necessary, the learning methodology based on the Case Method stands out. This is an active teaching methodology in which a credible or fictitious problem involves organizational issues and representations of reality that require decision-making and involve the learner as a participant in the situation (Ellet, 2008; Araújo, Rejowski & Leal, 2012; Leal, Medeiros, & Ferreira, 2018). However, the construction of the Case Method involves various precautions and certain complexities, which require proper methodology to ensure the engagement, commitment, and learning of those involved.

In order to fill this gap, this study presents a proposal for an active methodology developed in the classroom, specifically with the application of the Case Method, which relies on the students' protagonism. To this end, the article reports on the experience of planning, building, and applying a Case Method in the subject Management of Accommodation Facilities in the Tourism degree course at the Federal University of Paraíba (UFPB), a public university in northeast Brazil.

The initial proposal was to encourage students to look at the subject from a different perspective by carrying out a laboratory that could challenge them to build a specific teaching case for a small hotel. In other words, the construction of the case, by promoting a micro-representation of a reality, promoted the immersion of students in an environment of debate, analysis, and decision-making, anticipating obstacles and problem situations they will need to deal with in their professional lives.

Our Case Method was implemented in 2019, just before the COVID-19 pandemic. Only the post-termination interview took place in early 2020, when social distancing measures were in place nationwide, requiring adjustments to the initial planning. The methodology described in this article mentions the adaptations that had to be implemented to build a Case Method with student leadership and with the proposal to encourage other teachers to reproduce such experiments in their classes. In addition, this initiative also meets the demands of extension activities, which have been incorporated as curricular components in various undergraduate courses in the country.

The article is divided into six sections, including "Introduction" and "Final Considerations". The second section offers a theoretical discussion of active methodologies and the place the Case Method occupies. Next, the methodological procedures for building the Case Method are detailed. Sections four and five present the results of the experience of its construction and application. Section six presents a brief discussion of the results. Based on the experiences reported, the paper's conclusions reflect learning actions with the potential to improve teaching practices.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Case Method, also known as the Teaching Case or Problem Case, originated in law courses at Harvard Business School (United States) and has been used for over 100 years (Roesch, 2007; Iizuka, 2008; Leal, Medeiros, & Ferreira, 2018). Over the decades, it has gained followers worldwide, being adapted and replicated in various areas of knowledge and courses, where its benefits have been observed (Trejo-Pech & White, 2017). Among the universities that have adopted the Case Method for teaching are the University of Western Ontario in Canada and the École des Hautes Études Commerciales (HEC Montreal). Some of the pioneering Brazilian universities to adopt the Case Method are the São Paulo School of Business Administration of the Getulio Vargas Foundation (FGV EAESP) and the Institute of Graduate Studies and Research in Administration of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (COOPEAD/UFRJ) in the 1970s (Iizuka, 2008; Radi Afsouran et al., 2018).

According to Morais and Souza (2021) and Meller-da-Silva and Lapedra (2021), the area of Administration leads the production of cases in the Brazilian context, followed by Accounting Sciences and Tourism. The research by Meller-da-Silva and Lapedra (2021) identified the teaching cases with the most downloads, resulting in a predominance in Human Resources. Out of these cases, only three deal with tourism and hospitality companies.

The teaching case for the Administration course is a learning method with narratives that describe an organizational scenario, with the primary objective of providing knowledge, skills, and attitudes to act in a managerial way (Wei et al., 2020). Thus, according to Foster (2019), the writing of the case is detached from scientific production and is based on a narrative with literary and journalistic elements to bring the student one or more problems to be solved.

The richness of teaching cases is discussed from the perspective of the "learning in action" process, in line with Bhardwaj, Modh, and Srinivasan (2019), in the context of Administrative Sciences. Thus, organizational problems are seen as an opportunity to convey learning through a source of actual data so that students can mitigate the issues encountered while studying organizational problems and build knowledge.

According to Sandberg (2000), many values of action learning can be perceived by students through the Case Method, such as engagement in the decision-making process, trust between group partners, empathy between students, and the need to investigate the problem.

For Roesch (2007), this method not only seeks to build stories but to develop students' skills such as decision-making, problem-solving, and macro and micro analysis of the conflict situation; in addition, "[...] teaching cases are also used to complement lectures" (Roesch, 2007, p. 216). For Alberton and Silva (2018), the Case Method's main educational objective is the development of skills that enable the practical application of the knowledge acquired in the class subject, the ability to associate theory and praxis, the construction of systemic thinking, as well as the experience of a problem situation in professional life or an organization. Furthermore, "[...] by using teaching cases, students learn not just from the teacher, but from each other, by bringing their collective experiences to bear on the problem" (Morais & Souza, 2021, p. 398).

According to Machado and Callado (2008), Radi Afsouran et al. (2018), Januário, Pinho, Gonçalves, and Araújo (2020), Morais and Souza (2021) and Meller-da-Silva and Lapedra (2021), the Case Method aims to integrate theory and practice, systematically understand the organization's practices, and encourage students to reflect on a situation and interpret it. This method develops students' ability to act as negotiators, decision-makers, and problem solvers, increasing their role in a more active learning process.

It also enables students to develop skills through the analysis and discussion of the case, supporting the decision-making process and allowing students to take risks within a controlled risk environment, free to make mistakes, in addition to replacing the memorization skill required in traditional expository models with the ability to make inferences and decisions, as well as stimulating involvement and participation (Ellet, 2008; Alberton & Silva, 2018; Meller-da-Silva & Lapedra, 2021).

Spricigo (2014) and Soares, Souza, Azevedo, and Araújo (2019) ensure that, as far as teaching is concerned, students' opinions and arguments are valued by the teacher, who is interested in the quality of the arguments developed throughout the process and not in a single answer reached by the students. In other words, it is the construction process that matters. In this vein, the student takes on the manager role and solves the problems according to the information presented in the case. The solutions can be diverse since there is no single answer. The dichotomy of right or wrong loses value in the case, whose core is discussing the best possible outcome in the context (Ikeda, Veludo-de-Oliveira, & Campomar, 2005).

Thus, according to Guess (2014), the teacher or researcher must identify an organizational problem that is considered the *case's core* to develop the case. This problem must be associated with the theories of the disciplines of the courses in which it is intended to be used, but interdisciplinarity is welcome.

Then comes the stage of gathering information and developing the case, which can be based on primary or secondary data found in articles, interviews, or news, prepared by the author himself, or originated from other sources (Kugler, Gogineni, and Garavalia, 2019). After that, the teacher can present the problem in more depth and, by leading the student's imagination to the present, demonstrate possible solutions and their impacts, as Tian (2019) points out.

The fact is that, according to Wang (2021), one of the leading national and international researchers of the Case Method, there is a consensus that there is no standard way of writing the case, but rather *central objectives*, such as engaging students in a methodological proposal that stimulates their action and imagination, making learning meaningful and action-based.

One of the purposes of including the Case Method in the subject of Accommodation Facilities Management was to encourage the countless possibilities of active methodologies in bachelor's degree subjects in Tourism, removing from the teacher the role of the *centralizer of information* (Gaeta & Masetto, 2013), with the aim of "teaching students to learn to take initiatives" (Masetto, 2015, p. 21).

METHOD

This research was inherently qualitative, with the aim of presenting a proposal for an active methodology developed in class involving fourteen undergraduate Tourism students, a tutor selected through an internal call for proposals from the UFPB Pro-Rectory for Undergraduate Studies (PRG), and the subject teacher. It was divided into three stages: (1) direct participant observation on-site, with the students immersed in the location under study; (2) direct participant observation in the classroom, for the construction of the teaching case; (3) group interview, to validate the experience of preparing the case and the need to adapt it to the format, due to the distancing measures due to COVID-19. Both the systematic observations and the group interview followed the guidelines of Yin (2016). The stages are outlined below.

The first stage was visiting two small hotels in the coastline town of Galinhos, in the nearby state of Rio Grande do Norte, northeastern Brazil. The immersion lasted two days, with the students staying in the inns, interviewing the owners and staff, and producing a photographic collection of the two businesses and the locality. All the procedures were carried out with the consent of the owners and under the supervision of the teacher and the tutor. It should be noted that both lodging establishments locked all their bedrooms to avoid involving guests in the process. The students fully occupied the bedrooms, so the teacher and tutor stayed in another resort to not influence, induce, or intimidate the immersion experience. Joint participation between the two groups was encouraged to exchange information and avoid competitiveness. Although the lodging establishments were alike, the students' observations and analyses were unique.

To support the use of the case, we invested in systematic observation, recorded in a field notebook. The observation took place at two different times, as indicated by Yin (2016, p. 129): "[...] another way to reduce bias and lack of representativeness is to make the observations on multiple occasions".

The second stage consisted of guiding and assisting the students in building the case step by step. The monitor's role in this process was fundamental in solving doubts, assisting the teacher, and avoiding competitiveness between the groups. Finally, the third stage took place after the end of the course in 2020, and due to a period of social isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic, the interviews were conducted online.

Out of the fourteen students who took part in stages one and two, only six participated in the third stage. The selection met the following criteria: students must have taken part in different working groups and had to be outstanding group leaders. Because there were two groups, more than one student stood out as a leader. The six students were also chosen because, after the end of the course, it became impossible to bring everyone together via online meetings despite all the attempts.

It is important to note that the interview took place remotely after the end of the course so that the students would not feel intimidated by the assessment of the curricular component. The interview lasted around two hours, following a semi-structured script with eight questions covering: a) knowledge of the case methodology; b) previous experience; c) training for preparing the case; d) benefits and transformations of the case in their learning; e) difficulties in building the case; f) experience of collecting data; g) relevance of the case to the course and learning; and finally h) experience of building cases in local companies.

The purpose of the group interview was to obtain feedback on the application of the method, i.e., validation. The post-case study was intended to examine the experience behind the scenes of the construction, the relationship between the members, the difficulties in the development, the individual and group experience, and the tutor-teacher relationship. The students were given a voice to express their concerns, experiences, and obstacles in creating the project. The questions were developed jointly with the tutor, who also participated in the online interview.

RESULTS

Given the specificities of the Tourism degree course and the intention of not just applying a ready-made case but building one, this article seeks to portray the building of a teaching case as part of the Accommodation Facilities Management curricular component. The aim is to make up for the lack of cases in Tourism, Hospitality, and Lodging areas and apply an active methodology beyond the conventional blackboard or PowerPoint slides.

Furthermore, after a brief survey of the course teachers, we observed that only a few used teaching cases in their classes. In fact, none of them had adopted the construction of a Teaching Case as a learning tool in their course or specific subjects. As such, the decision to apply this methodology is characterized as unprecedented and innovative in the Tourism undergraduate course at our university. Faria and Figueiredo (2013, p. 179) emphasize this fact: "In Brazil, teaching cases are still little used, and the volume of publications of Brazilian cases is small, but the demand for this pedagogical resource has been growing enormously."

The curricular component Accommodation Facilities Management ran for fifteen weeks, totaling sixty class hours. There were two main strands to the course. In the first, the teacher worked on the theoretical basis of knowledge (eight weeks). In the second phase (seven weeks), the activities included a technical visit to a local lodging establishment (hotel category, one day); immersion in a coastal town in Rio Grande do Norte (two days); case construction in the classroom (five weeks) and presentations of the cases by the students (two days).

Initially, three ready-made cases were presented to familiarize students with teaching cases that dealt with different themes: one in Food and Beverage Management and two in Lodging (small hotels and hotel chains). The cases were inserted in the international context and provided information on issues involving menus, infrastructure, revenue management, marketing, running hotel chains, and guest loyalty programs. The cases discussed in class were many students' first contact with this universe. Although well received, they brought a reality (international context) and a scenario far removed from the students' experience. For this reason, when planning our own case, we tried to bring the students as close as possible to the scenario and the problem.

The one-day technical visit took place at a four-star waterfront hotel in the Manaíra district of João Pessoa (Paraíba state capital) so that the students could understand the physical and organizational structure, the job descriptions, the hierarchy, and the responsibilities of each hotel sector. The technical visit contributed to the dynamics and understanding of hospitality management and generated participatory discussion. This first visit made it possible to understand the hotel business systematically, providing students with a learning experience that would not have been possible in a traditional class. Another purpose of the technical visit was to introduce the students to the core work of the curricular component.

Afterward, the immersion was scheduled. Two small lodgings were selected in the small town of Galinhos, 273 kilometers from the city of João Pessoa (Paraíba state capital), with the following purposes: a) to allow the students to be immersed in the accommodation, experiencing each other's reality for a weekend; b) to facilitate immersion by distancing the students from the routine of the town where they lived; c) to encourage group work, since the students were together for the whole time (travel and accommodation); d) choosing a small municipality (less than 3,000 inhabitants, according to IBGE data) with little tourism, both to maintain students focused on the immersion and from the perspective of constructing the case problem in the local context; and e) presenting a new municipality to all the students, generating first impressions. This last aspect was fully met since none of the students knew the town and, therefore, had no previous impressions of it.

BUILDING THE TEACHING CASE

Once they had received guidance on planning for the semester concerning the Accommodation Facilities Management subject, students were given guidance on the field trip planned for a weekend. The teacher also made the selected texts on the Case Method available for the students beforehand. At the first meeting, the idea was to divide the class into four groups with the same number of participants since sixteen students had enrolled in the course (after two dropouts, fourteen students eventually completed it).

Very common in undergraduate Tourism courses, field practice aims to bring students closer together and mature them since this situational confrontation can develop their confidence in professional practice, according to Kiyotani, Araújo, and Oliveira (2022). For these researchers, "Interactions and the need for dialogue with real conflicts make students more aware of the impacts of tourism in a given location [...] critical growth is made possible through encounters with reality" (Kiyotani et al., 2022, p. 9).

The case construction stages were as follows: a) explaining the method to the students, a phase which included the participation of the tutor; b) providing material for reading and discussion; c) accompanying the undergraduates during the weeks leading up to the field trip and explaining the data collection procedures; d) field trip to the town of Galinhos and accommodation in the two selected inns; e) meeting with the students in the town to monitor the collection of information and answer questions; f) return to the classroom and monitoring during the following four weeks to build the cases, with guidance from the teacher and the monitor; g) lecture with a teacher from another higher education institution on the use of the Case Method; h) presentation of the cases by the four groups in the course; and finally, i) feedback on the teaching cases.

Galinhos is a peninsula with less than three thousand inhabitants and one of the state's 24 coastal municipalities, 161km from the capital of Rio Grande do Norte. Its main economic activities are fishing, salt production, and Tourism (Matias et al., 2021). After arriving in the town, the teacher divided the groups into the two inns. Two groups stayed at Pousada Aratuá (Figure 1) and two at Pousada Blue Kite (Figure 2). The teacher and the monitor stayed in another lodging, freeing the students to investigate, interview, perceive, write texts, and make images of the places. The teacher followed the whole process, trying not to intervene or give an opinion to let the students' curiosity and critical and creative sense emerge. The undergraduates presented their initial surveys, results, and difficulties at the first meeting on Saturday night in one of the guesthouses. The notes and recordings continued for two days and were combined with visits to the local tourist attractions and insertions in the community. At the end of the weekend, the team (students, teacher, and monitor) returned home.

Figure 1
Front of Pousada Aratuá overlooking the river of the same name



Source: Authors' database.

After these days of immersion, a lecture was organized with an external guest to discuss the Case Method methodology. During the presentation, the students could express their doubts about the cases they were working on, such as how to carry them out and their importance for the academy and the establishments studied. The lecture was aligned with the entire discussion on the construction of the cases of the two selected lodging establishments, and the guest speaker presented a model of application.

Finally, the cases were presented by the four groups in stages. Each week, one stage was completed and presented. Each group handed in the script required for evaluation; finally, there was an oral presentation on the finished case. There were four meetings over four weeks (the last one was for the oral presentation), during which the groups discussed the points they had analyzed and corrected. All images, drawings, and observations were copyrighted, and secondary data was only accepted if from official government agencies. At this stage, the role of the monitor was essential to align the process, solve doubts, and finalize the case.

Four cases were built: two groups focused on Blue Kyte Pousada & Hostel and two on Pousada Aratuá. It is noteworthy that the Blue Kyte Pousada closed down less than a year after this fieldwork. Pousada Aratuá, on the other hand, continues to operate to this day.

Figure 2
Façade of Blue Kyte Pousada & Hostel



Source: Authors' database.

At the course's conclusion and the term's end, feedback was given to the class, which responded positively to the active methodology. In general, the students reported satisfaction and gratitude in the overall context of the Accommodation Facilities Management course. One of the cases was published in a national event. The students used the following case construction model (Box 1):

Box 1
Model structure for building teaching cases, according to Araújo (2019)

Introduction	• Situate the reader about the organization (general data such as location, products and/or services offered, without going into too much detail). • Talk about the protagonist (name, position, role). • Critical moment (when the need for the manager to make a decision is perceived). • **Problem situation: the entity goes through a conflict that requires the protagonist to make a decision (no details)**.
History of the organization	• Chronological and detailed explanation of the entity's history (how it came into being, branch, foundation, size, turnover, number of employees, sector of the economy, etc.). • The context of the entity and the market (market data for the segment in which it operates). • Report relevant organizational moments (crises, mergers, periods of growth, disruption, challenges, changes), mainly linked to the decision.
Topic 1 Topic 2 Topic 3	• The choice of topics is linked to the definition of relevant information and/or data that broadens the reader's vision in relation to understanding the problem and assisting in decision-making, bringing the reader closer to alternative answers and solutions (which establishes a causal relationship between the various possibilities for solving the problem).
The problem	• Manager's reflections on problems and solutions, narrating some attempts, if any, to resolve the problems.

(Continue)

Teaching notes	**Summary** • Tell us what the case story is about. • Explain the issues surrounding the case and their relationship to the character, subtly informing the reader which areas the problem intends to address and which it intends to explore. • In which courses and subjects it can be applied (extract from "Educational Objectives"). • Briefly state your teaching objectives (extract from "Educational Objectives"). • Data sources (extract from "Data Source").
	Data Sources • Explain how, with whom, when, and where the data was extracted, stating whether it was authorized for publication or whether fictitious names were used for entities and protagonists or characters.
	Educational Objectives • Mention, both in general and specific terms, what skills and abilities the student will be able to develop when reading or studying the case (establishing a link with the problematization). • Suggestions for discussing the case (reading time, brief explanations before reading, choice between individual or group reading, etc.). • In which courses and subjects the case could be applied.
	Questions • Indication of questions for classroom discussion.
	Analysis of the questions • Analysis of possible alternative decisions or solutions to the organizational situation addressed in the text.
	Register of Bibliographical References
	Note: If the company has already solved the problem, explain how in the teaching notes.

Source: Araújo (2019).

STUDENTS' ACCOUNTS OF THEIR EXPERIENCES

Out of the fourteen students who completed the course, six (42.85%) were selected for the interviews. We decided to list them randomly (students 1 to 6) to avoid identification. Of the six interviewees, four already had another degree. Due to the social distancing caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the interviews were conducted online and recorded, following a semi-structured script with eight questions, shown in Box 2.

Box 2
Group interview questions

1	What do you know about the Case Method?
2	Have you or your group ever worked or discussed teaching cases in your degree program?
3	What was your experience building the case? How was the training (orientation) for you?
4	What benefits and changes has this experience brought you in the Accommodation Facilities Management discipline?
5	What difficulties did you and your group encounter when building the case?
6	How do you or the group rate the experience of traveling to Galinhos to collect the case data?
7	What is the relevance and importance of the Case Method for your course and your learning?
8	If the case had been built by a local company, would it have been different?

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Concerning the first research question, the aim is to identify the students' level of understanding of the Case Method, as can be seen in the students' answers below:

> When I talked about a case, only successful cases came to mind. And to think of building a case? Before, we would only answer: Where did they get it right or where can they improve? [...] We went to research, went after the problem, and studied it in more depth (Student 2).
>
> I understood that, in order to make a case, you have to start from a problem; in order to create it, we had to go to the field, we had to witness a problem, and build the case from there... everything revolves around a specific problem (Student 1).
>
> I was able to understand that this methodology is useful, it was useful for us to broaden our vision because a case that we only read about, we have a different understanding of what we are formulating the case [...] for me, especially, it was enriching, and I was able to absorb the content more by creating a case study than if I had interpreted a ready-made one, for me the experience was richer than if I had only read it (Student 6).

It was noticeable that the students, until then, had not understood the case as a construction, but only in a passive way, as spectators. They were used to answering standardized questions in cases with already delimited problems and a watertight format. One of the interviewees reported that they had only worked with case analysis in another course subject (Tourism Marketing). For Roesch (2007), building a case means analyzing a situation in depth. However, how can one analyze a situation in depth if the actor is a non-participating external element? The students' assertion corroborates Roesch's opinion (2007, p. 231) that "Perhaps the learning is greater for those who write the case than for those who analyze it; that is why I believe that the practice of getting students to write cases in the form of curricular work should be encouraged.".

The idea of elaborating and constructing a problem based on an on-site experience, as a participant observer, had a different tone for the students:

> I knew from scratch what the case was [...] the construction and having a better grounding in what it was and how to work [...] a matter of case studies only (Student 1).
>
> I didn't know I could, nowadays we know [...] I didn't realize that an undergraduate student could do something like this [...] I thought it was something after graduating and we saw that it is possible. I could see that it's not just reading a text, having a half-hearted discussion, and answering a couple of questions at the end of the text (Student 2).

This statement reinforces what Machado and Callado (2008, p. 4) say: "[...] one of the great pedagogical benefits of the case study method lies in its ability to generate a high degree of student involvement in the learning process".

Regarding the previous experience with the Case Method, the interviewees expressed themselves as follows:

> For me, the first experience was in this subject (Student 4).
>
> I remember we worked on an airline in transportation systems with teacher A (Student 2).
>
> We studied some cases in the Tourism and Tourist Area subjects (Student 6).
>
> I had already worked with cases in another subject [...], and we discussed it in another subject, but as a construction, it was new to us (Student 6).

The testimonies emphasize the perplexity of facing something new, which they had no basis for, and the challenge of carrying out an activity unlike any other in the course. The interviews show that the activity demanded time and investment from the groups, who worked together to create the teaching case. The testimonies reinforce what Araújo et al. (2012, p. 112) state: "In Tourism, the case method can also help students get closer to various real and complex situations that they will face in their professional career.".

One of the interviewees said that the final lecture should have been held beforehand to clear up any doubts in the process of building the teaching case:

> I remember that, at the time, our minds only became clearer with the lesson with Professor B. In that sense, the lesson with Professor B could have been right at the beginning [...], and it was very good to build this case. P3 was the period when we worked the hardest [...] It was very rewarding to build the case at that time. To this day, I treasure that case because it was one of the pieces of work I enjoyed most (Student 1).

The student's assertion endorses the position of Faria and Figueiredo (2013, p. 180): "It is important to consider the students' motivation when preparing the case."

In question five, the interviewees described the following difficulties:

> It was a love-hate relationship, but we knew how to do it. We were lost, we collected information and didn't know how to share it [...] her class was very good (Student 3).

> It was one of the best works I've made at the university [...] a really good experience (Student 4).

> The greatest difficulty was putting what you experienced down on paper. To be able to adapt all the experiences we've had, absorb them and put them down on paper. Another difficulty was gathering information; we had very little time to do this, to plan, and to study [...] (Student 6).

In the opinion of Ikeda et al. (2005), the Case Method is one of the most dynamic techniques, capable of stimulating more complex skills. Alternatively, as Ellet (2008, p. 92) asserts: "In the case method, the burden, responsibility, and privilege of learning lie primarily with the students rather than the instructor - a complete reversal of the lecture model of learning."

In response to question number four, one student pondered: "A big change was the issue of writing, I wasn't able to adapt this writing of the case because it's totally different from abstracts, reviews, articles [...] it's a different approach, I even learned to judge other cases" (Student 1).

The involvement of the students in creating the story and the persona of the protagonist of the case is quite different from the orthodox question-and-answer assignments, often without feedback. Each group was able and free to create their own story, rename the actors and enterprises, and add to it with the images and recordings they produced on-site. During participant observation, it was possible to see the enthusiasm for developing the case with their own drawings and images.

One of the students interviewed said:

> There have certainly been a lot of changes, not least because until then, I had seen things as a tourist in a lodging establishment, but when I took part in the experience to develop a case study on an atypical lodging establishment... participating in the way I actively participated and experiencing what happened, within the data collection that was our visit to Galinhos, it completely changed the way I saw things [...]. If it had been explained any other way, I wouldn't have been able to absorb the content the way I did. The content was internalized more easily than if I had just read it in a classroom (Student 6).

The opinion of interviewee 6 reinforces Faria and Figueiredo's (2013) explanation that the cases created need to be adapted to the Brazilian reality. The student in question improved and expanded his viewpoints with the immersion.

The experience led to a new possibility for an active methodology in the classroom, which was used for the first time as a practical and analytical laboratory involving the elements of lodging, hospitality, and travel.

Among the interviewees' answers to question number six, the following one stands out:

> It was a very positive experience, we had an experience in the field that we hadn't thought of doing [...] I had never thought of taking part in an experience like this [...]. The group was very good and cohesive; if the group hadn't been united, we wouldn't have been able to build the case (Student 6).

About question number seven, one of the students replied: "For the students who are going to start the course now, I believe it will be valuable to continue with this type of method because it's great; for me, it was one of the best experiences I've had at university" (Student 6). Perrenoud (2000, p. 30), in claiming that "[...] learning is not primarily about memorizing and storing information, but about restructuring your system of understanding the world", reinforces the innovative proposal to reposition the classroom with the case construction method. Understanding what a problem in a lodging establishment means is different for a student starting on a Tourism degree course when they participate, create, question, experience, and understand the routine, procedures, services, and gaps of an organization in practice. Indeed, the experience makes a more profound impression than memorizing or reading about situations students have not lived through or witnessed.

DISCUSSION

The experience of carrying out the Case Method validates and reinforces the recommendation that active methodologies be applied in the classroom. Undergraduate students need other scenarios, perspectives, and challenges that only an active methodology can offer. Chalkboards, slides, and traditional written assessments have been replaced by other dynamics that generate confrontation, questioning, and decision-making. Despite all the time devoted to planning, guidance, and drawing up guidelines, the result is positive.

Naturally, much effort is involved in organizing, planning, and working behind the scenes, as this methodology is a break from the conventional classroom. In addition, the decision to go on a field trip (involving transportation, documentation, insurance, accommodation reservations, payment, food, and itinerary) required a set of decisions and responsibilities that involved the teacher and the monitor. This issue is explained by Kiyotani et al. (2022, p.19): "[...] the teacher-educator, as an intermediary between the field and the student, emerges more strongly in the role of mediator, guide and inspirer". In the end, the result obtained is gratifying and motivating.

The two-day immersion can be described as very fruitful and, at the same time, very consuming, especially due to the locomotion. Even so, the immersion was providential for raising awareness and dedication to the case. The university's infrastructure was another obstacle. The organizational environment (classrooms, libraries, computer labs, and the internet) could have facilitated the involvement and production of the case. However, the students had to depend on their own means of research and consultation (maps, the town's history, official data, tourism websites, and the like). Fortunately, the publication of one of the cases as the final product of the course - "Blue Kite as an Inn or Hostel" (Matias et al., 2021) - gave the students visibility outside the university walls.

On the other hand, numerous discoveries were made. The case was a construction laboratory for the three players (students, monitor, and teacher). In this context, they had to deal with unpredictability, breakthroughs, provocations, and stimuli. The support of the owners of the selected lodging establishments must also be mentioned. Similarly, the support of the monitor, consulting, minimizing doubts, and guiding the activities in a continuous flow, was essential for the results obtained, reinforcing what Masetto (2015, p. 66) says: "[...] the monitor can facilitate the teacher-student relationship in the classroom and be a link that unites both in a cell of intellectual work". Another support for the result achieved was the external participation of the lecturer. Although the lecture took place after the visit, it managed to clarify many of the doubts of the four groups involved.

Although the discussion is not focused on teacher training and its intrinsic aspects, it should be emphasized that a fertile environment for active methodologies encompasses variables that go beyond the teachers but affect them directly, helping to break down the wall that prevents teachers from getting to know their students better (Tardiff & Lessard, 2007).

However, Perrenoud's (2000, p. 50) explanation is worth highlighting: "An experienced teacher knows that the activities he or she creates, however well conceived and prepared, do not always yield the expected results." Despite the storms, setbacks, resistance, antagonisms, or any other internal or external variables, it is always worth innovating to educate.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

After the publication of Ordinance No. 90 of the Office of the Rector of the Federal University of Paraíba (UFPB, 2020) on March 17, 2020, based on the determinations of the Ministry of Health and the World Health Organization, regular classes were suspended at the institution. They would only return in the first semester of 2022, two years after a period of social isolation caused by COVID-19. The Accommodation Facilities Management course was not offered in 2020 and 2021 and was only resumed in person in the first semester of 2022.

Although the results of the 2019/2020 class were favorable, it was impossible to project or predict what would happen afterward, especially given the post-COVID-19 academic scenario. The fluidity of the content, self-management, participatory construction, and the results achieved by the students are academic stimuli. The challenges for teachers are diverse, such as the unpredictability of the classes, working conditions, and the small number of teachers prepared to work with active methodologies. However, the results outweigh the difficulties.

Of course, running the entire course online would jeopardize the results, especially the immersion trip. However, this would not harm the active methodology as a whole, which would be adapted to the conditions of distance learning. The Case Method is recommended to be applied in more curricular components of the Tourism degree course, as it is not yet a common practice. The proposal to associate it with another component in the same semester is also valid, as it is an attempt at interdisciplinary work. The Case Method in lodging establishments can be applied similarly in various Administration and Hospitality subjects, such as Fundamentals of Administration, Hotel Management, Small Business Management, Hospitality, Topics in Tourism and Administration, and other related subjects.

The experience of building the Case Method with the students brought some lessons. The first is the need for some support for the teacher. In our case, this support was derived from the participation of the monitor, which can help the students at all stages of the work. Monitoring can be impractical and insufficient depending on the class size due to the numerous questions and doubts arising, as Iizuka (2008) endorsed. However, in the face of new technologies, the emptying of classrooms and the obsolescence of traditional teaching methods, as well as absenteeism, dropouts, and low-performance educational levels, as discussed by Machado and Callado (2008), any attempt at change is valid, conceivable and promising. The path taken in this research makes it possible to replicate the experience in other higher education institutions (HEIs) and adapt it to other courses besides Tourism.

Going back to Perrenoud (2000), the work should not be an ordeal. A good teacher has the perception of the students' commitment to what they are offering in their classes. The active methodology is not a *via crucis*; it simply moves away from the traditional method of merely transmitting information to be absorbed with little questioning or, even worse, with no reflection. Discouragement, apathy, and a certain *learning anorexia* are everyday situations with students who merely sign the attendance list in the classroom. On the other hand, bringing in a new lesson format creates resistance because what is new always frightens students who are only interested in grades. Quality education requires involvement, creativity, persistence, self-motivation, collaboration, and meaning. If, for the teacher, the activity has no meaning or reason to exist, it will not have a positive effect on the students either.

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Maria Valéria Pereira de Araújo: Conceptualization (Equal); Methodology (Equal); Validation (Equal); Supervision (Equal); Writing – original draft (Equal); Writing – revision and editing (Equal).

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