

CASE STUDY

Education 4th Semester Paper - 404

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**QUALITATIVE METHOD – CASE
STUDY**

Introduction

To graduate students and researchers unfamiliar with case study methodology, there is often misunderstanding about what a case study is and how it, as a form of qualitative research.

Case study is a form of qualitative descriptive research that is used to look at individuals, a small group of participants, or a group as a whole. This qualitative method of study emphasizes detailed contextual analysis of a limited number of events or conditions and their relationships. Researchers have used the case study research method for many years across a variety of disciplines.

Case Study - Defined

- It is a systematic inquiry into an event or a set of related events which aims to describe and explain the phenomenon of interest.
- It refers to the collection and presentation of detailed information about a particular participant or small group, frequently including the accounts of subjects themselves.
- It is an in depth study of a particular situation rather than a sweeping statistical survey.

When is a case study appropriate?

According to Yin (2003), a case study can be considered when:

- a. the focus of the study is to answer “how” and “why” questions
- b. you cannot manipulate the behavior of those involved in the study
- c. you want to cover contextual conditions because you believe they are relevant to the phenomenon under study
- d. the boundaries are not clear between the phenomenon and context

What may be revealed?

- Through case study, a researcher can closely examine the data within a specific context.
- Through case study, a researcher can examine contemporary real-life situations and provide the basis for the application of ideas and extension of methods.
- Through case study, a researcher can test theoretical models by using them in real world situations.
- A case study may not answer a question completely, but it will give some indications and allow further elaboration and hypothesis creation on a subject.

Why use a case study?

- Case studies are a great way to improve a learning experience, because they get the learner involved, and encourage immediate use of newly acquired skills.
- They differ from lectures or assigned readings, because they require participation and deliberate application of a broad range of skills.
- Case studies help researchers make the difference between knowing what to do. and knowing how, when, and why to do it.

Case Study Applications

- Utilization of the case study as a teaching method.
- Practical application and testing of scholarly knowledge.
- Provides an approximation of various professional environments (i.e. classroom, board room, courtroom, or hospital).
- Incorporates the idea that students can learn from one another "by engaging with each other and with each other's ideas, by asserting something and then having it questioned, challenged and thrown back at them so that they can reflect on what they hear, and then refine what they say". (Boehrer 1990)

Designs of Case Study

To obtain as complete a picture of the participant as possible, case study researchers can employ a variety of a variety of case study designs. Some common designs include single-case and multiple-case design.

- ❑ **Single-case design** – It is where events are limited to a single occurrence. However, the drawback of this design is its inability to provide a generalizing conclusion, in particular when the events are rare.
- ❑ **Multiple-case design** - It can be adopted with real-life events that show numerous sources of evidence through replication rather than sampling logic.

Types of Case Study

1. **Explanatory** - This type of case study would be used if you were seeking to answer a question that sought to explain the presumed causal links in real-life interventions that are too complex for the survey or experimental strategies.

Example: Joia (2002). Analysing a web-based e-commerce learning community: A case study in Brazil. Internet Research, 12, 305-317.

2. **Exploratory** – It is a type of case study that is used to explore those situations in which the intervention being evaluated has no clear, single set of outcomes.

Example: Lotzkar & Bottorff (2001). An observational study of the development of a nurse-patient relationship. Clinical Nursing Research, 10, 275-294

Types of Case Study

3. Descriptive - This type of case study is used to describe an intervention or phenomenon and the real-life context in which it occurred.

Example: Tolson, Fleming, & Schartau (2002). Coping with menstruation: Understanding the needs of women with Parkinson's disease. Journal of Advanced Nursing, 40, 513-521.

4. Multiple Case Study - It enables the researcher to explore differences within and between cases.

Example: Campbell & Ahrens (1998). Innovative community services for rape victims: An application of multiple case study methodology. American Journal of Community Psychology, 26, 537-571.

Types of Case Study

5. **Intrinsic** - The term 'intrinsic' suggests that researchers who have a genuine interest in the case should use this approach when the intent is to better understand the case. It is not undertaken primarily because the case represents other cases or because it illustrates a particular trait or problem, but because in all its particularity and ordinariness, the case itself is of interest.

Example: Hellström, Nolan, & Lundh (2005). "We do things together" A case study of "couplehood" in dementia. Dementia, 4 (1), 7-22.

6. **Instrumental** – It is used to accomplish something other than understanding a particular situation. It provides insight into an issue or helps to refine a theory.

Example: Luck, Jackson, & Usher (2007). STAMP: Components of observable behaviour that indicate potential for patient violence in emergency departments. Journal of Advanced Nursing, 59, 11-19.

Types of Case Study

7. **Collective** – It is similar in nature and description to multiple case studies.

Example: Scheib (2003). Role stress in the professional life of the school music teacher: A collective case study. Journal of Research in Music Education, 51, 124-136

Advantages and Limitations of Case Study

- ❑ The primary advantage of case study is that it **provides much more detailed information than what is available through other methods, such as surveys.** Case studies also allow one to present data collected from multiple methods.
- ❑ **Can be lengthy** - Because they provide detailed information about the case in narrative form, it may be difficult to hold a reader's interest if too lengthy.
- ❑ **Concern that case studies lack rigor** - Case studies have been viewed in the evaluation and research fields as less rigorous than surveys or other methods. Reasons for this include the fact that qualitative research in general is still considered unscientific by some and in many cases, case study researchers have not been systematic in their data collection or have allowed bias in their findings.

Advantages and Limitations of Case Study

- ❑ **Not generalizable** - A common complaint about case studies is that it is difficult to generalize from one case to another. But case studies have also been prone to overgeneralization, which comes from selecting a few examples and assuming without evidence that they are typical or representative of the population.

Steps Involved in a Case Study

The steps involved in a case study are as follows:

1. Plan

- Identify stakeholders who will be involved.
- Brainstorm a case study topic, considering types of cases and why they are unique or of interest.
- Identify what information is needed and from whom
- Identify any documents needed for review.
- List stakeholders to be interviewed or surveyed (national, facility, and beneficiary levels) and determine sample if necessary.
- Ensure research will follow international and national ethical research standards, including review by ethical research committees.

Steps Involved in a Case Study

2. Develop Instruments

- Develop interview/survey protocols — the rules that guide the administration and implementation of the interview/survey. Put simply, these are the instructions that are followed to ensure consistency across interviews/surveys, and thus increase the reliability of the findings.
- Develop an interview guide/survey that lists the questions or issues to be explored and includes an informed consent form. Please note that you will likely need interview guides/surveys for each group of stakeholders, as questions may differ.
- Where necessary, translate guides into local languages and test translation.

Steps Involved in a Case Study

3. Train Data Collectors

- Identify and train data collectors (if necessary).

4. Collect Data

- Gather all relevant documents.
- Set up interviews/surveys with stakeholders.
- Seek informed consent of each respondent (written or documented oral).
- If the respondent has consented, conduct the interview/survey.

Steps Involved in a Case Study

5. Analyze Data

- Review all relevant documents.
- Review all interview/survey data.

6. Disseminate Findings

- Write report.
- Solicit feedback.
- Revise
- Disseminate.

What are the potential sources of information?

Case studies typically rely on multiple sources of information and methods to provide as complete a picture as possible. Information sources could include:

- Project documents
- Project reports, including quarterly reports, midterm reviews
- Monitoring visits
- Mystery client reports
- Facility assessment reports
- Interviews
- Questionnaire/survey results
- Evaluation reports
- Observation
- Others

Elements of a Case Study

A case study do not have set elements that are needed to be included. These elements will vary depending on the case or story chosen, the data collected, and the However, case studies typically describe a program or intervention put in place to address a particular problem.

Elements of a Case Study

Here are some elements that you could draw out from in order to conduct your case study:

1. **Problem.** *(It is essential to identify what the problem was.)*

- i. Identify your problem
- ii. Explain why the problem is important
- iii. How was the problem identified?
- iv. Was the problem for identifying the problem effective?

2. **Steps taken to address the problem.** *(What was done (activities/ interventions/inputs), where, by whom, for whom?)*

3. **Results.** *(What were the results of your intervention, particularly the significant or unique results?)*

Elements of a Case Study

4. **Challenges and how they were met.** *(This focuses on what challenges or difficulties you encountered and what you did to overcome them.)*

5. **Beyond Results.** *(Are the results mentioned above sustainable? Why or why not?)*

6. **Lessons learned.** *(What lessons were learned: programmatic, technical, financial, process, etc.?)*

How are Case Studies Presented?

Case studies are flexible in that they can be presented in a number of ways — there is no specific format to follow. Here is a suggested report outline that could be use in presenting a case study:

I. Introduction and Justification

II. Methodology

a. How was the process carried out? (Describe the process of selecting the case and

data collection sources, as well as how data was collected.)

b. What assumptions are there (if any)?

c. Are there any limitations with this method?

How are Case Studies Presented?

d. What instruments were used to collect data? (You may want to include some or all in the appendix.)

e. What sample(s) is/are being used?

f. Over which period of time was this data collected?

III. The Problem

IV. The Steps Taken to Address the Problem

V. The Results

VI. The Challenges and How They were Met

VII. Beyond Results

VIII. Lessons Learned

IX. Conclusion

X. Appendices