

THE CASE STUDY AS RESEARCH METHOD

Case study research provides us with understanding of a complex issue or objects and can extend background of what is already known through previously carried out research. Case studies typically examine the interplay of all variables in order to provide complete understanding of an event or situation as it could be possible. This type of comprehensive understanding is got at through a process known as thick description which involves in-depth description of the entity being evaluated, the circumstances under which it is used, the characteristics of the people involved in it, and the nature of the community where it is located. Thick description also involves interpreting the meaning of demographic and descriptive data such as cultural norms and mores, community values, ingrained attitudes, and motives. Unlike quantitative methods of research, like the survey focused on the questions of who, what, where, how much, and how many, and archival analysis, which often places the participant in some form of historical content, case studies are the preferred strategy when how or why questions are asked. Similar, case study is the preferred method for the researcher when he has little control over the events, and when there is a contemporary focus within a real life context. In addition, unlike more specifically directed experiments, case studies require a problem that looks for a holistic understanding of the event or situation in question using inductive logic-reasoning from specific to more general terms. Unlike more statistically-based studies where the main objective is searching for quantifiable data, the goal of a case study is to offer new variables and questions to be under further research.

Case studies can be single or multiple-case designs, where a multiple design must follow a replication rather than sampling logic. When no other cases are available for replication, the researcher is limited to single-case design. There are several examples of the use of case methodology which can be listed as follows: exploratory, explanatory and descriptive case studies. Each of those three approaches

can be either single or multiple case studies. In exploratory case studies, fieldwork and data collection may be undertaken before determining research questions and hypotheses. This type of study has been considered as a prelude to some social research. Explanatory case studies are suitable for doing casual studies which are considered to be very complex and multivariate ones and where analysis could be made by using pattern-matching techniques. Descriptive cases require that the investigator should start with a descriptive theory or face the possibility that the problems to be happened during the project.

Case study investigator should be able to operate as a senior investigator during the course of data collection. There should be a period of training which starts from examining problem definition and case study design development. The training would cover such aspects needed to be known as the reason for the study, the type of evidence being sought and what variations might be expected. This can take the form of discussion rather than formal lectures.

A case study protocol contains more than the survey instrument, it should also contain procedures and general rules that should be followed in using the instrument. A typical protocol should have the following sections: an overview of the case study project (objectives, issues, topics to be investigated), field procedures (credentials and access to sites, sources of information), case study questions (specific questions that the investigator must keep in mind during data collection), a guide for case study report (outline, format for the narrative).

Case studies are complex because they generally involve multiple sources of data, may include multiple cases within a study and produce large amounts of data for analysis. Researchers from many disciplines use the case study method to build upon theory, to produce new theory, to dispute or challenge theory, to explain a situation, to provide a basis to apply solutions to situations, to explore or to describe an object or phenomenon. The advantages of the case study method are its applicability to real-life, contemporary, human situations and its public accessibility through written reports. Case study results directly to the common reader's everyday experience and facilitates an understanding of complex real-life situation.