

CASE STUDY IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING

PATRICIA A. BURTON

St. Joseph's College of Maine

Abstract

This paper introduces the concept of case study design by first defining the term and giving instances when case study methodology can be applied to solve a problem. It looks at the planning and execution phases, as well as the data collection process. Further, it discusses the advantages, disadvantages and limitations of case study in general and as specifically applied to solve a problem that exists within the correctional community.

Introduction

Case study design is a methodology that researchers use to examine phenomena as it occurs in the natural setting, for the purpose of identifying errors in a system, working to either establish a new theory, expand or challenge an existing theory, or to conduct bounded research. “The defining characteristics that makes case study plausible for conducting research is the fact that case study research is highly adaptable to the needs of the researcher and the nature of the research question. For example, data can be collected through interviews, focus groups, questionnaires, documents, direct observation, and participant observation” (Lohman, L., 2021). We will further explore the advantages and disadvantages of using case study methodology a little later in t his paper.

Planning a Case Study

When the decision is made to utilize case study methodology to conduct research, the planning process follows the typical steps for constructing the study framework. The first step, clearly Identifying the factor that you want to examine, is a crucial step in the planing process. You need to have a specific and real goal for your study. It may begin with seeking to answer a question, providing a focal point. The first step guides the researcher in data collection and minimizes the chance for skewed data. If multiple subjects are selected, ensure that biases do not enter the picture.

Data collection is the next logical step in the process. Unique to the case study method, is the fact that the data is collected in the subject’s natural setting, allowing the researcher to observe the contributing elements that relate to the observed functions. Conducting interviews, analyzing emails, dictating personal testimonies, and distributing questionnaires are a few of the types of data collection methods

used for garnering the qualitative data. Again, care must be taken to ensure the raw data collected does not reflect the researcher’s personal opinions.

The collects data is described and analyzed and compared with any control subject data established at the initiation of the collection process. Categorizing and using a graphic organizer to visually organize data will help with writing and presenting the findings from the case study.

Case Study Applications

There are an array of situations or instances that are suitable for the application of a case study model to evaluate them. See the table below.

Case Study methodology may be used to conduct research.

Individual	Organizational or institutional	A specific event, role, or relationship	Set of Individuals	Community	Social Group
Typically examines the role of an individual in a larger setting; entrepreneurs	Usually explores communication among an organization’s personnel and may be directly related to customer service.	A good example would be a case study of an annual sports events	Generally emphasizes comparison criteria	Ethnic Group; urban area, inner city community	Group of students with learning disabilities or some similar group.

Each of the instances listed in the table above are excellent candidates for the application of case study methodology.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Using Case Study Design for Research

The advantages of using case study design to conduct research outweigh the disadvantages. The

researcher's benefits are innumerable and include the following:

- ✓ Ability to see a relationship between phenomena, context, and people.
- ✓ Flexibility to collect data through various means.
- ✓ Ability to capture the context and lived reality of participants.
- ✓ Flexibility to be used at various points in a research project, including pilot research.
- ✓ Ability to explore deeper causes of phenomena.
- ✓ Ease of explaining results to a non-specialist audience

The few disadvantages of using case study methodology usually revolve around the collected data. It is difficult for researchers to preclude interjecting their personal biases when reporting their findings. Additionally, readers can be skeptical of the findings. Lohman stated "Case study research is susceptible to bias when the researcher's personal opinions and preferences interfere with the collection and analysis of data. For example, the researcher may think people of a certain age group will not provide quality information and may not include them when conducting interviews. Alternatively, when making observations or analyzing documents, the researcher might only look for evidence that supports their hypothesis, rather than a wide variety of data" (Lohman, L, 2021).

Still, case study methods remain one of the most viable choices for conducting research on single or multiple subjects because the study examines the situation as it occurs in real time in the natural setting.

Let's apply case study methodology to a real situation that occurs regularly within the correctional institution setting.

Applying Case Study Methodology in the Correctional Setting

A correctional setting can be considered as either a community, an organization, or a social group. That allows for a broader application of the principles of a case study and offers many choices of phenomena to study. We will focus on one single issue that affects the entire population of the institution, and consider it the problem that we want to solve. We can start with the question, "Why are there so many medical emergencies that require transport to an off-site medical facility on specific days of the weeks.?" We already have our opinion, but a case study will identify definitive reasons for the phenomena, and assist with creating preventative measures to abate the frivolous waste of state dollars.

The injuries and illnesses that are reported as requiring emergency transport can be as simple as a facial bruise resulting from a fall during a seizure. The question arises, "did the Offender suffer a such a traumatic seizure that he or she suffered a head bump that resulted in concussion? Probably not. After a nice weekend in a sanitized private room, the offender returns to the unit as if nothing happened. Nevertheless, the scenario repeatedly plays out two to three times a month because state officials do not want to deny emergency care if it is really needed. To do so could result in the Offender winning a lawsuit against the state. What seems like a insignificant problem is actually a costly issue.

Planning and execution Phase

The researcher determines the complexity of a case study. Case studies in their simplest forms consist

of answering questions about a specific event, subject, or subjects. We have the choice to study a smaller group within the correctional community. There are two sub-groups in the larger community, restricted group and unrestricted group. At this point, we can make a decision to conduct research on one of these two groups in a manner that will allow us to subsequently study the other group without starting from the planning phase.

Completing this case study will rely heavily upon reviewing past records, looking specifically for medical transport incidents off the unit. We defined the boundaries of our inquiry to include only information for the restricted community. We look for peaks in the data and cross reference it with other correlating activity on the unit, such as a scheduled weekend lock down. We will examine the influence that the unit events have on the number of emergency transports off the unit.

Analyzing Results and Making Recommendations

The results of our study indicate that there is a sharp rise in the number of emergency transports beginning in the evening on Thursdays, culminating with Friday morning transports. A window of 24-36 hours leading to the onset of scheduled weekend lock down or shakedown, shows the most emergency activity.

The recommendations to solve the problem is as follows:

- Dissolve the standing schedule of events and replace with a fluid model.
- Plan events no more than one hour in advance, on days when the unit is fully staffed. Officers tend to share too much information, so disseminate information on a need to know basis.

Advantages, Disadvantages and Limitations

An immediate advantage is the cost effectiveness of the simple case study. Also, time efficiency as well as the ease in which the study can be facilitated, are considerable factors in choosing this case

study methodology to tackle the problem.

A possible disadvantage may be the short term effectiveness due to the turnover of population and staff.

The amount of free time afforded each offender may allow them to figure out any schedule regardless of its fluidity.

The fact that few limitations exist makes the simple study worth the time and effort. The data collection process is easy, no real equipment is needed, the study can be implemented and completed in a relatively short span of time, and little to no resources are needed. Further, the sample size is at the discretion of the researcher. These factors identify the case study methodology as a superb tool to begin alleviating the detrimental effects that the discussed phenomena has on the state's correctional budget.

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