

A case study of (innovative) practice

A.N. Other*

All papers are required to have an abstract. This short paragraph should state the main themes of the paper, provide some context to the research being described, mention the methods used, and go on to summarise some of the main conclusions. For case studies, adequate detail should be provided that potential readers can judge whether the case being described is of relevance and interest to them.

Introduction

This short section should explain what the paper is for. Case studies are pieces of research where the aim is to describe (with the purpose of illuminating or educating) rather than to make general claims.

Background

The background section is particularly important for case studies. It might be structured in two or more sub-sections. The first should refer to published research in order to identify the research context for this paper. The second should explain why the case study was carried out – for example, to illustrate a point made in the first section, to challenge a belief advocated in the referenced research or to develop a deeper understanding of one of the issues raised. The section should go on to outline the characteristics of the case in some detail, so that readers can make an informed judgement about what conclusions (if any) might be relevant to their working practice.

Methodology

Most case studies are qualitative, but this is not always true. In addition, many case studies use a combination of methods – such as observations, interviews, documents (ready made, such as policies, or created, such as reflective journals, online discussion contributions or assessment submissions). Particular care should be taken to point out how the case might be typical (or not), how ethical issues (such as confidentiality, informed consent, whether ethical approval was sought) have limited the research and what theoretical or political perspectives have shaped the way that the study was undertaken. In addition, any methods used to carry out the analysis should be referenced.

Results

The results section might be largely descriptive, using excerpts of data (quotes, photographs, screen shots, etc.) to illustrate or exemplify points made. It might be structured chronologically or thematically, depending on the purpose of the paper.

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Discussion

The discussion section is where the author(s) should explore what they think is the meaning of what has been described. In particular, its relationship to the wider research context (sub-section one of the background) should be re-visited.

Conclusions

The conclusion should re-state why this case was considered worth studying, in light of previous research. The main lessons learnt from carrying out the study should be summarised. In addition, any weakness in the study should be pointed out and the implications of this for practice or for other pieces of research work should be made clear.

References

These should be listed in the standard format:

Author, A. & Author, B. (Date) Title of article, *Title of journal*, Volume, page start – page end.

Author, A. (Date) *Title of book* (Place of publication, Publishing company).

Author, A. (Date) Title of chapter, in A. Editor A. (Ed) *Title of book* (Place of publication, Publishing company).

Author, A. (Date) *Title of technical report or other document* (Place of publication, Institution or other producing organisation).

Where references include online elements, cite them in the following format:

Organisation (n.d. – short for No Date) Available online: www.URL, last accessed date.

Author, A. (Date) *Title of technical report or other document* (Place of publication, Institution or other producing organisation). Available online: www.URL, last accessed date.