

Case Study Methods for Evaluators

Rita O'Sullivan

Evaluation, Assessment, & Policy Connections
(EvAP)

School of Education,
University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill
ritao@unc.edu or 919/984-7878 (NC)

O'Sullivan AEA-CDC Case Study

Overview -

- Case Study Methods & Evaluation
- Elements of Case Study Research
- Guidelines for Implementation
- Establishing Validity & Reliability
- Strengthening Data Gathering

O'Sullivan AEA-CDC Case Study

Introductions

- Introduce yourself :
 - Let us know what you do
 - Tell us about your interest in case study methods

O'Sullivan AEA-CDC Case Study

Case Study Methods:

A research approach that
can be used to investigate
issues relevant to a bounded
system

O'Sullivan AEA-CDC Case Study

All Evaluations are Case Studies

BUT

(Not all case studies are evaluations)

Typically case study methods are used in program
evaluations to investigate essential aspects that
require detailed explanations about program
outcomes

(See Wake County Case Study p. 6)

O'Sullivan AEA-CDC Case Study

Basic/Applied Research & Evaluation Research

Basic/Applied Research

Researcher beneficiary
Human Subjects Approval
(IRB): risk assessment,
confidentiality, withdrawal
without penalty
Peers
Design is independent
Generalize results

Evaluation Research

Client/Organization
Evaluator Guidelines
no risk, confidentiality,
not necessarily withdrawal
without penalty
Client, public, & stakeholders
Design with stakeholder input
To improve program

O'Sullivan AEA-CDC Case Study

Case Study Confusion

- Using a “case” as an example
- Teaching with “case studies”
- **Case Study Methods**
(Stake, 1995, 2005; Yin, 2008)

O'Sullivan AEA-CDC Case Study

Case Study Elements

- Describe the Case
- Provide the Context for the Case
- Propose Relevant Issues with Data Gathering Strategies
- Select Samples
- Gather Data
- Summarize Finding
- Report Findings

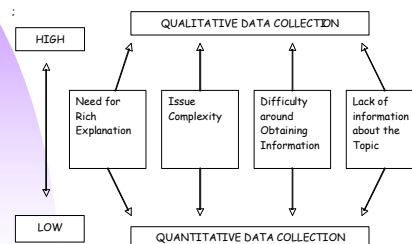
O'Sullivan AEA-CDC Case Study

Designing the Case Study

- Identify a case that might be of interest to study
- Provide the Context for the case
- Suggest two or three relevant issues

O'Sullivan AEA-CDC Case Study

Design Choices



O'Sullivan AEA-CDC Case Study

Common Qualitative Approaches

- Case Study Methods
- Phenomenology
- Ethnography
- Historiography
- Naturalistic Inquiry
- Grounded Theory
- Investigative Reporting

O'Sullivan AEA-CDC Case Study

Case Study Evaluation Crosswalk:

		WCCES Records/Reports Staff Shadowing Meeting Observations Focus Groups Interviews					
ISSUES:		1	2	3	4	5	6
I. Does Wake County Cooperative Extension Service really reflect the characteristics of a learning organization?		X	X	X			
a. To what extent do staff members perceive WCCES as a caring work environment?					X	X	X
b. In what ways, if any, do WCCES staff work collaboratively?		X	X	X	X	X	

O'Sullivan AEA-CDC Case Study

Case Study Evaluation Crosswalk:

DESIGN YOUR CASE STUDY:

ISSUES:	1	2	3	4	5	6
I.						
II.						
III.						

O'Sullivan AEA-CDC Case Study

Guide to Instrument Selection

Data Collection Strategy	Key Advantages
Knowledge tests:	Assess content knowledge
• Limited response	Can cover large amount of content domain
• Open-ended	Can assess higher order cognitive skills
• Performance Assessment	Can assess actual behaviors
Opinion Surveys:	Assess opinions
• Written	Written record of responses
• On-Site	Usually good response rates
• Mail	Can contact people from different geographic areas
• Email	Ease of survey distribution
• Web-Based	Ease of survey distribution and data summary
• Telephone	Can contact people from different geographic areas
• Group	Cost effective; Can assess degree of consensus
• Face-to-Face	Can probe for more detail; Respondents can ask questions
Attitude & Interest Surveys:	Assess degree of attitude or interest; Easy to score

O'Sullivan AEA-CDC Case Study

Types of Sampling

(searching for representativeness)
&
(the hunt for variation)

- Random
(simple, stratified, cluster, systematic)
- Purposeful
(best case/worst case; typical; etc)
- Convenience
- Snowball

O'Sullivan AEA-CDC Case Study

Multiple Case Study Sites

- Increased complexity
 - Individual site summaries
 - Cross-site summaries
- Importance of describing each context
- Essentiality of engaging site stakeholders in the process
- Making the research process transparent

O'Sullivan AEA-CDC Case Study

Response Rates

- Factors that influence response rates
 - Saliency/Importance
 - Incentives (monetary or other)
 - Use relationships
 - Interest
 - Reminders
 - Expect half again of response
 - Ease of response
- Increasing sample size will not increase response rates

O'Sullivan AEA-CDC Case Study

Ensuring Data Quality (validity & reliability)

- Sample representativeness?
- Consistent across individuals?
- Appropriate to purpose?
- Collected in a culturally appropriate manner?

O'Sullivan AEA-CDC Case Study

Summarizing Findings

- Multiple observers
- Sharing impressions
- Training data collectors
- Independent content analyses
- Member checking
- Iterative data analysis
- Gathering additional data
- Computer programs (atlas.ti, NVivo)

O'Sullivan AEA-CDC Case Study

Reporting (the importance of writing)

- Identifying Important Audiences
- Interim Reports
- Full Technical Reports
- Executive Summaries
- Monographs
- Digital Story Telling

O'Sullivan AEA-CDC Case Study

Thank you!

**Please complete your
evaluation of this session**

O'Sullivan AEA-CDC Case Study