Introduction

It is acknowledged that change processes characterize the events of our daily lives. It is accepted, too, that the nature of change is mediated by school, community, and national contexts and that planned change is usually more desirable than its unplanned counterpart. Research generally, and specifically educational research, is usually described as a systematic and critical inquiry, aimed at improving and facilitating change in order to improve educational action. The case study represents one approach to this inquiry. Therefore its goals are similar to those of other social science-based research and include concept and hypothesis development, hypothesis testing, prediction or postdiction, and methodology testing or refinement.

Case study has its antecedents in many disciplines, including psychology, medicine, anthropology, and history. Its use in education is comparatively recent, although increasingly it is making important contributions to the field. Coupled with the recognition of its value in education are suspicions because it is believed that there is still a need to clarify further what Bassey (1999) refers to as the "epistemological and theoretical assumptions underlying case study in educational research and evaluation."

As you will discover in this KAM, perspectives on the definition of a case study vary. However, there is consensus that it involves in-depth examination of a few people, an organization, or a group over a specified time period in a natural setting. The examination may take the form of one or a combination of the following approaches: structured and intense observations, interviews, review of past records, and conversations with community members. The specific purpose of the research will affect the time required; therefore, the time period may be relatively short or relatively long.

Overall Learning Objectives for this Knowledge Area

When you have completed this KAM, you will be able to:

1. Identify, define, and critically discuss the different perspectives on case study and the methods used.

2. Present a written analysis of the impact of case study research on one or more facets of special education in which you have a professional interest.
3. Outline appropriate plans for the conduct of a relevant case study.

4. Illustrate your ability to integrate theory and practice in the conduct of a case study by implementing your case study plans (noted in part 2 above) in any aspect of special education that is relevant to your practice, and by evaluating your work and reporting on the results.

Each objective relates sequentially to one of the three components of this KAM, so remind yourself of the objective as you work on the relevant component.

**The Breadth Component**

**Case Study Methods and Context**

**Learning Outcomes**

The primary aim is to enhance your knowledge of the various types of case study methodology used in educational research. As a result, you are required to critique the different perspectives and paradigms. You need also to evaluate reported case studies that illustrate examples of different methodologies.

Reflect on and respond in writing to the following ideas, which are geared to help you to meet the Breadth requirement of this KAM.

1. What do I know about a case study? What is the source of my knowledge?

2. How do the terms "case study knowledge" and "case study methods" differ?

3. How do I explain phrases in the literature that reflect perspectives on case studies, for example, "the study of a bounded system" (Smith, cited by Stake, 1995); "the study of the instance in action" (Macdonald & Walker, 1977)?

4. Regarding case studies, what are the critical differences between the positivist paradigm (e.g., Yin, 1993) and an interpretive paradigm (e.g., Stake, 1995)?

5. What informed comments can I make about the implications for the conduct of different types of case studies?

**Learning Resources**

Learning resources for the breadth component of KAM 7 are those focusing on types of case study and the paradigms in which the methods for each are grounded.

Resources for this component may be accessed via the Walden Information Network. In addition, see the attached recommended readings and plan to add texts of your own choosing.
**Demonstration of Competence**

Utilizing the relevant readings, write a scholarly, doctoral-level paper showing a synthesis of the various case study methodologies and their relevance to specific educational contexts. Refer to overall objective 1 and ensure that your 25-30-page paper reflects higher-level thinking skills.

**The Depth Component**

**The Impact Of Case Study Research on Contemporary Special Education Issues and Change Processes**

**Learning Outcomes**

Your focus in the depth component is to identify, define, and critique the method or methods you will employ in meeting the requirements of the Application of Knowledge of this KAM. You need also to review literature relevant to the type of case study you plan to conduct and to establish its relevance. Further, you will describe your plans for implementing and reporting your case study.

Based on your readings for the Breadth component, select a methodology or methodologies relevant to your professional practice. In making your selection, you may want to reflect on ideas such as Stake’s (1995) notions of "intrinsic case study" and "instrumental case study" and relate these ideas to an aspect of special education in which you have an interest.

Think about and respond to the following questions as a means of preparing yourself to meet the requirements of this component.

1. What knowledge is essential for conducting a case study suitable for your special context?

2. What valid evidence is available relating to the impact of case studies on reform or change in special education?

3. Can a case study utilizing the positivist paradigm be helpful in special education reform? Rationalize.

4. How relevant are the following issues to your professional practice? Standards for curriculum and performance in schools, the influence that traditional assessment exerts on the lives and well-being of exceptional students, alternative forms of assessment, emphasis on instructional strategies in special education, and heavy reliance on deficit models in instruction and program planning.
5. What kind of evidence do you hope to gather in order to inform teaching and learning? For example, what are the relevant statutory requirements, and how do these relate to specific tasks and learners in your professional context? If, for example, you work with severely disabled students, you may wish to investigate the quality of interactive sessions in a multisensory environment for a specific time period. One of the tools required for this investigation is a recording frame that highlights examples of your observations.

6. Read Bassey's (1999) criteria for an educational case study. (See the recommended readings for the full reference information.)

Learning Resources

Learning resources for the Depth component of this KAM are those focusing primarily on the methodology of choice, as well as refereed journals in general education, special education, psychology, and educational research. The type of case study and the aspect of special needs that you choose will determine the scope of your learning resources. The attached recommended readings are also relevant.

Demonstration of Competence

1. Define and critique the method or methods you will use in your case study. Making reference to the issue to be investigated and its context, evaluate and rationalize your selection.

2. Prepare an annotated literature review of no fewer than 15 sources that interpret and synthesize what has been published about the special needs issue you will examine and the method(s) you will employ. You should include dissertations that either use the same case methodology or address the same or similar concerns.

3. Identify and outline the means by which you will report on the implementation and findings of your case study.

The Application Component

Case Study in Special Needs: The Report

Learning Outcomes

The aim of the application component is for you to demonstrate your ability to conduct a case study, report on the procedures and results, and write a related paper equivalent in quality to a refereed article or a conference paper. In general, such articles and papers consist of an abstract, an introduction, a methods section, a results section, a discussion section, and references.
Learning Resources

Learning resources for the application component should include those obtained from the Breadth and Depth components, your professional experiences, and other literature relevant to your finding.

In your preparation to meet the requirements of this component, you may wish to pay special attention to refereed journal articles in special education, particularly those reporting on case studies. Furthermore, you are encouraged to attend conferences relevant to your practice. For example, the Council for Exceptional Children has an annual conference in addition to regional meetings throughout the year. If you attend a conference examine the program carefully and identify case study reports. Plan to attend sessions at which the case studies will be shared. You can participate also by presenting your work as "research in progress."

Demonstration of Competence

1. Conduct the case study using the methodology previously identified.

2. Write a journal article or a conference paper that demonstrates your ability to integrate the theoretical and practical components of the KAM. The paper should reflect scholarly, doctoral-level work. In consultation with your assessor, you may decide to supplement your written work with video or audio presentations.

Recommended Readings


