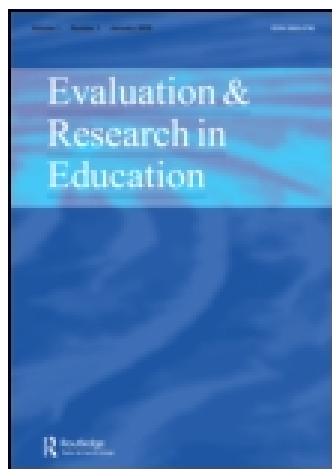


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Case study research: design and methods

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Overall, this text provides an easily accessible analysis of both traditional and systematic literature reviews. The early chapters provide generic study skill information, which could benefit both undergraduates and postgraduates. The later chapters could stand alone as useful resources for researchers focusing on either systematic or traditional literature reviews or both of these as the authors suggest. Throughout this text, the authors have successfully provided many practical, relevant recommendations that would benefit researchers currently developing a literature review.

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Case study research: design and methods, 4th ed., by Robert Yin, Thousand Oaks, CA, Sage, 2009, 240 pp., £24.99 (paperback), ISBN: 978-1-412-96099-1

Case study research is said to allow for in-depth review of new or unclear phenomena whilst 'retaining the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events' (p. 4). It is suggestions such as these that have seen the simple case study become recognised as more than merely a research method, but as a design in its own right (Hartley, 2004). Twenty-five years in its evolution, Robert Yin's *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, in its fourth edition, consists of six chapters, each relating to his pictographic representation of case studies as a linear but iterative process. The first of these begins by addressing the often ignored definition of what a case is and concludes via a walkthrough of where and when a case study is appropriate. Following this the text then explores the design of a case study (identifying the crucial units of observations), collecting evidence, analysis and finally the reporting of findings.

Each of the chapters begins with an abstract clearly illustrating the points covered in the following text. This allows for retention of key information at a glance and the selection of sections that can be bypassed if necessary. In response to the many cries that case study work fails to be sufficiently rigorous or generalisable, Yin offers four critical conditions: construct validity, internal validity, external validity and reliability, which if fulfilled provide rigorous data, that is, particularisable to a given context. This is supported throughout the text as more than 50 exemplar case studies are used to illustrate the desired learning within each chapter.

Whilst the case study is often seen as synonymous with the qualitative turn, this research design is one that targets no particular data collection method. With the increasing trend of mixed methods use in research as of late (Creswell, 2009), Yin's latest edition incorporates hierarchical linear and structural equation models of

quantitative analysis; a move which reinforces the text's position that case studies are a design that can embrace both research traditions. This is then again supported via expert case examples, highlighting the complementary nature of case studies to other research designs.

The book has seen significant developments following previous reviews, one of which has seen the practical exercises updated with the growth of the field. However, whilst the writer suggests that this edition is in fact 'Harder' (p. 10), the example cases, which have been updated in accordance, sometimes appear too short to provide accurate meaning and could be extended to ensure that the desired message is conveyed. That being said, the sheer number of examples given means that specific features if looked for can be found.

What is most notable about this text is the manner in which it is communicated. The highly structured and evidence-laden chapters are delivered in a style which feels more like conversation than scripture. In addition, the author includes personal insights within the research process, providing a window into his understanding of the topic and the development of the book from his perspective. For this reason the text is highly recommendable to undergraduates or novice case study practitioners as well as academics well versed in the research process.

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Educational research and inquiry: qualitative and quantitative approaches, edited by Dimitra Hartas, London, Continuum, 2010, 458 pp., £34.99 (paperback), ISBN: 978-1-4411-7871-8

Educational Research and Inquiry: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches is aimed at those who are embarking on research in the field of education and who are seeking guidance in the early stages of a research career. The editor encourages a view of research as an iterative process and a journey into the field of education. The book covers 'quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods approaches' in the context of epistemology and theory of educational research (Hartas, 2010, p. 1).

The book is structured according to the phases of a research project. The first two stages deal with the landscape of educational research and the starting point of a research programme – how to formulate the question. The editor attempts to 'bury the hatchet' of paradigm wars by using mixed methods approaches. The second phase deals with research methodology and research design and subsequently the