

Conducting Practice Studies

Introduction, methods and challenges



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Methods I currently use

- Qualitative
- Multi-case, inductive research design (replication logic)
- In-depth, semi-structured interviews and documented archival data
- Interviews recorded and transcribed
- Cross-case pattern sequencing

Challenges in applying method

1. Getting the numbers right

- How many cases in enough?
- How many interviews are enough?
- Have I a sufficiently varied sample of interviewees?

2. Access

- The glory days pre-email and Internet when a doctoral student could spend hours with a VP
- Now, full Prof at a practice school has to call in favours to get access and interviews

** Too man people seeking too much information from too few people with too little time... how do we fix it?*

How have I improved application of the method

- Building up and managing practitioner networks over time and embedding myself within a sector
- Ensure scientific, focused, more robust approach at all times
- Anticipate reviewer biases against qualitative research and the case method and explicitly address concerns in methodology
- Reinforce interviews with varied other data sources

How do you convince reviewers of your method's relevance?

- Not easy!
- Example of recent paper I co-authored and that follows design/method just outlined...
- Reviewers:
 - Loved the core idea and the questions asked
 - Mostly happy with literature review and conceptual framework
 - After some refinement, content with the research design
 - Consistent problems with data presentation and method of analysis...

It is always a challenge to figure out how to present qualitative data, given the space constraints of a journal article

Convincing the reviewers (cont.)

- If your paper is good enough, you can convince 1 of 2 or 2 of 3 reviewers but there is often 1 reviewer hostile to qual/case/practice research
- Editors tend to err on the side of caution and often go with the ardent opponent
- Doing qual/case/practice research is both a lot harder to conduct and to publish
- *What can we do to improve the situation?*
- *Should we just write off the top journals?*