

# Resources File

The readings for this module appear in the following order below:

- 1 Holly, M. 1997 *Keeping professional journals*, Geelong: Deakin University Press (extract pp 5-9) (© Deakin University 1997; except for the purposes of research and study, reproduction and/or transmission of this content is prohibited except by permission of the copyright holder.)
- 2 Brauner, C. 1974 'The first probe' in L. Smith (ed.) *Four evaluation examples: anthropological, economic, narrative and portrayal*, AERA Monograph Series on Curriculum Evaluation. Chicago: Rand McNally (extract pp 79-81)
- 3 Stake, R. 1995 *The art of case study research*, London: Sage (extract 1-15)
- 4 Prosser, J. (ed.) 1999 *School culture*, London: Paul Chapman (extract pp 84-86)
- 5 Kemmis, S. and Robottom, I. 1981 'Principles of procedure in curriculum evaluation' in *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 13, 2 (extract 28-32)

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## The journal

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### Introduction

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I'd rather learn from one bird how to sing than to teach ten thousand stars how not to dance.

E. E. CUMMINGS

Keeping a journal is a humbling process. You rely on your senses, your impressions, and you purposely record your experiences as vividly, as playfully, and as creatively as you can. It is a learning process in which you are both the learner and the one who teaches.

A journal is not merely a flow of impressions, it records impressions set in a context of descriptions of circumstances, others, the self, motives, thoughts, and feelings. Taken further, it can be used as a tool for analysis and introspection. It is a chronicle of events as they happen, a dialogue with the facts (objective) and interpretations (subjective), and perhaps most important, it provides a basis for developing an awareness of the difference between facts and interpretations. A journal becomes a dialogue with oneself over time. To review journal entries is to return to events and their interpretation with the perspective of time. Over time, patterns and relationships emerge that were previously isolated events 'just lived'. Time provides perspective and momentum, and enables deeper levels of insight to take place.

### Logs, diaries, and journals

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Personal documents have been written since the beginning of written language. In fact, recorded history is in many ways a journal - someone's impressions, thoughts, ideas, and not as obviously someone's feelings about events. There are basically three types of personal documentation: logs, diaries, and journals. Often books, historical and literary, are reconstructed accounts from such documents.

#### Logs

The ship's log is probably the most recognised type of log. The term originally referred to a bulky piece of unshaped lumber that was used to measure the ship's motion and speed through the water. Knowing how fast the ship was moving through the water was only part of computing the progress of the ship - currents and winds were also important determinants. Actual speed was established via the log. Log books were

the official records of the ship's voyage: speeds, distances, wind speeds, direction travelled, fuel used, weather, and other navigational facts. Normal and unusual happenings were recorded for each 24-hour period. Though the log books' were kept in formal sober language, dramatic stories of casualties and emergencies are implicit in the logs. Courts of law accept log entries as evidence, and during wartime, commanders of naval vessels use log books to record their operations and progress. Events and circumstances at sea can then be reconstructed by historians.

The log is used now to refer to 'a regularly kept record of performance' (*Merriam-Webster Dictionary* 1974) and is used by social scientists, writers, airline pilots, teachers, medical practitioners, and others to record certain types of information. Just as the ship's log was a description of conditions and happenings, today's log is a recording of facts pertaining to specific occurrences. Some teachers find it useful, for example, to keep a log on an individual child's behaviour and progress in school. In this way, they can begin to see patterns in the learning style of the child. Only after keeping the log over a period of time do key patterns become clear. When teachers go over their lesson-plan books and record what they actually do during the week, they are keeping a log of the class's curricular progress.

### **Diaries**

While logs are concerned predominantly with factual information (most recorders in logs would agree on what happened, i.e. the speed of the ship; the stories completed in literature class; interruptions, whether a sudden wind or intercom announcement), diaries are usually a more personal and interpretive form of writing. Diaries are often less structured in the form that experiences are included and depicted. The way events are described is often dictated by the writer's thoughts and feelings about them: factual information is included in a way that supports the writer's perspective at the time. There is less concern for 'objectivity' and more attention to the way the experiences 'felt'. In many diaries there is a 'let it out' nature, a capturing of impressions lived, rather than a careful documentation and thoughtful reconstruction of events and circumstances. Depending on the purposes and moods of the writer, diary entries can be factual, emotional, thoughtful, or impressionistic.

In general, diaries are open ended: anything that can be verbalised can be included. At times, the writer has a specific topic in mind to write about; at other times, thoughts flow unrestrictedly onto the page. The degree of structure framing the writing depends entirely on the writer, whereas in a log, some structure is usually planned beforehand. Diary entries can be as structured as those of a log, though log entries are rarely as free flowing as diary entries. In a log, the writer's feelings about the events he or she is describing are of little or no value to the reader, and in fact, inclusion of the writer's thoughts and feelings can call into question the objectivity of the recording.

Because diary writing is interpretive, descriptive in multiple dimensions, unstructured, sometimes factual, and often all of these, it can be difficult to analyse. When the anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski's diaries were published after his death (under

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the title *A Diary in the Strict Sense of the Term*) academic anthropologists were shocked at his confessions, which seemed to many unashamedly racist and sexist. It is not easy to separate thoughts from feelings from facts and, as the writer, to extricate yourself from your writing. This is not true of the log (or of the ethnographic monograph), which is written with other readers in mind. The diary isn't usually offered for judgment or another person's interpretations. There is less opportunity for multiple perspectives since few of us let others read our diaries. But because they are personal, even if others do read our diaries, their 'help' may not be so helpful. Few of us have friends who are willing or perhaps even capable of pouring over our personal statements and questions for any length of time.

These seeming constraints - the open nature of entries, and the personal interpretations we lend to them - are also sources of the diary's potential use and strength. Who helps us 'absorb' (Liske, personal communication, 1982) those aspects of our working days that we must? Who listens with a quiet heart (non judgmentally) to our thoughts and feelings about what we see and hear, what we do and what happens to us at work? What do we do to remove ourselves from the motion of, the action of, teaching? nursing? social work? In what ways do we enable ourselves to reflect on our lives as professionals? Recording in our diaries allows us to do these things. It removes us from the motion of doing and transports us to the reflective act of pondering on paper, while at the same time, it captures some of the action of working to come back to with the perspective that time brings.

**Journals**

Journal writing can include the structured, descriptive, and objective notes of the log and the free-flowing impressionistic meanderings of the diary. That is, it can serve the purposes of both logs and diaries. It is a more difficult and perhaps more demanding document to keep - indeed, it is more complex. Its advantages are also greater: it combines purposes and it extends into other uses. The contents of a journal are more comprehensive than those of either a log or a diary. It is a reconstruction of experience and, like the diary, has both objective and subjective dimensions, but unlike most diaries, there is a consciousness of this differentiation. Indeed, this consciousness may well become a dominant theme within the journal, as it pursues the interplay of what appears to be objective and what seems subjective.

In a journal, the writer can carry on a dialogue between and among various dimensions of experience. What happened? What are the facts? What was my role? What feelings and senses surrounded events? What did I do? What did I feel about what I did? Why? What was the setting? The flow of events? And later, what were the important elements of the event? What preceded it? Followed it? What might I be aware of if the situation recurs? This dialogue, traversing back and forth between objective and subjective views, allows the writer to become increasingly more accepting and perhaps less judgmental as the flow of events takes form. Independent actions take on added meaning.

A **research journal** (or section of a journal) is a tool for focusing on a specific topic. Many researchers keep detailed journals of their research. They document their ideas and collect data, or evidence, along the way. They use their journal as documentation for both formative (throughout the project) and summative (at the conclusion of the project) analysis and evaluation. Yet, even in science, such notebooks and journals may be less well-organised and dry than you might think. In their study of Charles Darwin, Desmond and Moore (1992) draw on his extensive range of notebooks, journals and diaries, which record the most personal feelings, emerging thoughts and ideas and objective observations.

Important considerations in keeping a research journal are to keep comprehensive, descriptive documentation, to record procedures and interactions (including verbal information), and to keep analytical and interpretive notes. The analytical and interpretive notes should be recognised as such, for they should lead to reconstruction of the project from objective and subjective dimensions. The research, your purposes and procedures will, of course, dictate the content and methods of writing in the research journal.

### **Writing to reflect**

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Writing to reflect involves a cyclical pattern of reflection: first, reflecting on experiences before or as you write; and then, reflecting on the journal entries themselves at some later stage, which may provide material for further reflection and writing, and so on.

Many of us find it difficult, even painful, to return to diary and journal writing after the event. Perhaps part of the reason is because we see our emotions and relive our experiences, often without the benefit of the context within which those events took place. We may wonder how we could have been so distressed over seemingly trivial events, but when given the flow of circumstances, our behaviour seems natural. It is the piecing together of the flow that enables acceptance and *then* analysis and change, as a result of changes in perception. In my experience, once I see a more holistic or comprehensive picture, the tendency to become defensive, to ward off dissonance between my image of myself and my behaviour, diminishes. I interpret the world through my perceptions, which are influenced by my motivations. If I see only the facts of a situation, or I reflect only on my thoughts and feelings about it, it is easy for me to close off the very interactive aspects of the situation that might enable me to understand it. My thoughts close off before I have enough evidence to explore my experiences.

The tendency to judge - to dichotomise good and bad, success and failure-seems to be strongest when we feel vulnerable or threatened and when the complexity of our circumstances outstrips our ability to understand them. We simplify our experiences until later when we can view them less defensively and more comprehensively. But, in a time of rapid technological change and an emphasis on

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'higher productivity', it becomes hard to differentiate what is important from what *is not* important. And perhaps the more hurried we are, the less likely is reflection and the more likely 'stress' or 'burnout' and closed-off or premature perceptions.

Keeping a regular journal may seem at first an imposition, yet something else that has to be done in an overcrowded life, but you may find its effect is quite different. Taking time out for reflective writing and dialogue is an attractive alternative to running at our current speed or speeding up and 'burning out'. Through the journalkeeping process, we can become more sensitive observers, more penetrating in our inquiry into 'what it all means', and more focused on our roles and directions in life.

According to Progoff (1975), there are two ways to record in a log, diary, or journal: (1) write close to the time of experiences; or (2) reflect back over the day or few days, as soon as possible, perhaps early in the morning or at night in the quiet - or you can do both, by jotting down ideas in snatches as they occur to you and expanding on them later. You might wish to record key words or phrases for later expansion. Writing soon after the experience is sometimes preferable, though not always possible. And sometimes it is harder to 'selectively remember' our experiences the closer we are to them - on these occasions, it is easier to recall events more comprehensively' with the distance of time. So we might use a combination of writing as close to the time as possible *and* some time later so that multiple views could emerge. A quiet place is desirable for keeping a log or diary. The journal writer needs to reflect quietly, to go back and reconstruct or recapture the setting, thoughts, and feelings at the time - the flow of events. Once these flows are felt, other events, behaviours, or ideas that 'fit' with them will become increasingly evident. The journal holds experiences as a puzzle frame holds its integral pieces. The writer begins to recognise the pieces that fit together and, like a detective, sees the picture evolve. Clues lead to new clues, partial perspectives to more comprehensive perspectives.

### 3. The First Probe

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**Charles J. Brauner**

*University of British Columbia*

Rain and mystery opened and closed the pre-session workshop for students entering architecture at the University of British Columbia. Foul weather and wonder about what was to come provided the only obvious threads linking three weeks of activities that ran from foraging to feast, Spartanism to splendor, privation to saturation. Shrouded in rumors as thick as the clouds overhead, 55 students from all over Canada and several distant countries gathered together for the first time in mid-August on a dock opposite Vancouver's Stanley Park. As college graduates with a common interest in architecture, they had no trouble combining into spontaneous conversation groups.

When the six members of staff arrived, a sense of relief rippled through the crowd as they quieted to hear where they were going. But they were not told. Disappointed, they loaded their camping equipment onto one of the boats and divided into two parties for boarding. All the way out to Horseshoe Bay and up Howe Sound they speculated. After two hours of sailing through thickening fog they no longer knew whether they were traveling north or south. When the boats dropped anchor at a small island a few miles off Britannia Beach they had no idea where they were. Small boats took them to Defense Island in groups of six. Densely forested and guarded by an Indian mask carved in a drift log at the landing, the island was deserted. Three-quarters of a mile long and one quarter mile wide, with a backbone of rock that ran its length, the island seemed to offer a minimum challenge. By the time the last boat landed, two girls and the main party had a fire going in the opening on the crest. At noon everyone stood around waiting to be fed. Wet, having nothing but what they

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wore and carried in their pockets, but reassured by seeing the staff similarly unequipped, they did not take alarm when the boats sounded their horns and pulled away.

After a half hour of exploration, John Gaitanakis, a codirector, called the students together and explained that the boat would return in 48 hours. Meanwhile, there was no food, no shelter, and no equipment. The time was theirs to use as they saw fit. The first reaction was disbelief. Having found an axe and some nails on a relief tour, a small group insisted other necessities only awaited discovery. The fact that two five-gallon coffee urns of water had been brought ashore from the boats convinced others that food was there for the finding. A general unwillingness to accept the likelihood of deprivation sent everyone on an hour of fruitless searching. Reassembling with nothing new to report, they conjured up their first fears of famine. They all knew that man could do quite well without food so long as he had water, and fresh water was plentiful both from rain and springs. Nevertheless, half a dozen individuals insisted they would succumb to nausea and disability at the very least. Those most fearful set out to forage for edibles. We warned them that a recent red tide had made the shellfish temporarily poisonous; however, the gloom from this blow did not persist. Soon half the group was busy gathering salal berries and toasting sea kelp, the only edibles to be found. By mid-afternoon a dozen self-selected groups were busy building shelters and gathering wood for night fires. By this time, the shelter parties had coalesced into personality groups of three to five, and they remained intact as living units for the rest of the time on the island. Confronted with the basic choice of whether to improve and inhabit existing shelters from half-formed caves to semitunnels formed by overturned trees or to cut and interweave cedar branches, the majority shied away from using the existing natural cover. However, their finished dwellings distinguished them far less than the characteristics that drew them into alliance. To the staff they became known as the hoarders, the sharers, the defilers, the isolates, the raiders, the includers, the excluders, the worriers, the trusters, and the grumblers. Those who found no common cause in personality, location, habitat, or conversation remained around the fire on the crest. Since this cluster-by-default was three times as large as any of the separate living units, their clearing served as a commons ground. A more barren commons would be hard to imagine.

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Once fire and rude shelter were assured, the group found absolutely nothing to do but pass time. No game of matchsticks or burning twigs was too trivial. There was not even enough common concern for anyone to do more than note that one of the groups had made off with half the reserve water supply. Efforts to open discussion on why they were there or what they might do proved so fruitless that the dozen who started the talks could not sustain them for half an hour. In the evening a longer chat on "What is architecture" was started. The downpour and darkness were punctuated only by massive tree trunks and widely spaced fires; boredom dictated the effort at conversation. The only thing that sparked interest was the makeup of the staff—two members of the architecture faculty, a visitor from Outward Bound, a specialist in contemporary dance, a sociologist, and an educational philosopher. The thing that seemed to impress the students most was that the staff saw fit to share their discomfort on equal terms, though they had foreknowledge of what was to come. Again, all question about future events went unanswered. When it became clear no profitable discussion would develop, the staff withdrew to the semishelter of a huge cedar tree and bedded down around a fire.

Only four things distinguished the second day: wetter and colder participants, the end of the berries, the building of a raft, the appearance of a boat, and underground fires that threatened to burn the island down. What had been planned as a minimal existence experience turned out to be a "nonexistence." The hope had been that by being freed of cooking, eating, preparation, and clean up—and thus denied the opportunity to lavish time on such mindless occupations—the students might try to make something special of their stay. Instead they spent all their time on the mindless activities left them: buttressing shelters, improving fireplaces, gathering wood. Beyond that, they were determined simply to sit out their time like convicts awaiting parole. Some spent hours just cleaning their fingernails. Even the making of the raft was undertaken with half an eye to floating somewhere to get food. When a boat came in a group tried to signal their need for supplies. Informed that just three weeks before the Provincial Department of Correction had put some hard cases ashore for survival training, those on the boat did not linger. Surviving their fast in good health but low spirits, the groups greeted the last night with huge fires. The flies burned through the ground cover of rotten needles and

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branches, igniting the dry mulch that coated the ground to a depth of 12 feet in places. A group in a cave on a rock ledge burned themselves out entirely when a covering tree went up in flames and took two more trees with it. Three other groups had runaway fires during the night, and the *"Lord of the Flies"* bunch who took the communal water supply had to use more than 40 buckets of water to damp underground fires that, they insisted, they had under control at all times. When it was time to leave, the staff spent three hours doing nothing but uprooting underground fires that had been left as extinguished. If it had not been for heavy and continuous rain, the island would have become an inferno.

By far the most interesting thing to be seen during the island experience was the students' behavior toward food when it arrived. Before taking us off, the captain of the Columbia landed oranges, apples, and bread. The "marooned" were told that there was enough for each to have a piece of fruit and two slices of bread. The *"Lord of the Flies"* group was the first to the food, followed by several kindred parties. They raided the stores like seasoned pirates. Half the loaves of bread disappeared inside jackets, only because pockets were filled to bursting with fruit. Eight people got more than half the supplies for 61 people. The pattern of resentment among those who went without was remarkable. No one could be heard blaming the gluttons, though they were known to most. The captain became the villain for landing so little provisions, and there was general resentment that they had not been given a feast. Finally annoyance focused on the staff for not anticipating the raiders and deterring them. This settled down to a criticism of a more general nature. Somehow the staff had failed to make the experience meaningful. What happened with the food became symbolic of that failure.

When the boat landed everyone at Britannia Beach, there was a station wagon waiting with enough bread, sliced meat, fruit, cookies, and candy bars for all - or so it seemed. Again the mighty eight plundered the stores. They made sandwiches with more than an inch of meat-not one, but four and six apiece. Even so, the meat and the bread held out. Everyone, except one girl who could hardly eat, overate. The raiders took whole packages of 10 chocolate bars or 36 cookies against future uncertainties. Again, nothing was said. Interesting in itself, what makes it significant is that, except for the girl, no one had suffered severe hunger past

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the slight pangs of the second day. There was a general feeling of having been physically cleansed.

The unanimous overeating and the special greed of a few seemed more a ritual atonement for failure or a common urge to make up for the empty hours by stuffing their bodies. Overeating by both students and staff remained a characteristic of the group throughout the workshop. A mystery in itself, this hangover from the island cloaked an even deeper feeling. Before going on this trip, several students had known the forest on intimate working terms. Others from cities and foreign countries had heard of it in terms of mixed awe and grandeur. Yet the woods-wise had been as unable to face the challenge of the forest island as the forest un-familiars. Both had been equally helpless against what neither group had expected to encounter - time. Having brought almost nothing ashore, they found themselves stranded with even less than they imagined. Had they been truly marooned, desperation would have given them common cause that would have filled every moment. Denied even that last resort, they encountered themselves as truly useless. Each one was, harrowingly, alone - only for two days, but that mystery became the yeast that leavened all that followed. However slight, all had suffered a common adversity. However profound, all had faced a common humiliation. In just 48 hours the props of a quarter century of customary daily activity had been knocked flat. They were ready for a new beginning. It was, as it turned out, a workshop of beginnings.

The Art Of  
**Case Study**  
Research

**Robert E. Stake**

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*The Unique Case*

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## The Unique Case

*Intrinsic and instrumental study \_ Selection of cases \_ Producing  
generalizations \_ Emphasis on interpretation*

For the most part, the cases of interest in education and social service are people and programs. Each one is similar to other persons and programs in many ways and unique in many ways. We are interested in them for both their uniqueness and commonality. We seek to understand them. We would like to hear their stories.<sup>1</sup> We may have reservations about some things the people (I will call them *actors*) tell us, just as they will question some of the things we will tell about them. But we enter the scene with a sincere interest in learning how they function in their ordinary pursuits and milieus and with a willingness to put aside many presumptions while we learn.

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<sup>1</sup> Much of our gathering of data from other people will take the form of stories they tell and much of what we can convey to our readers will preserve that form. One of the choices each of us will make in presenting the case is how much we will use a story form. John Van Maanen's (1988) book, *Tales of the Field*, although recent, is already being treated as a classic.

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The case could be a child. It could be a classroom of children or a particular mobilization of professionals to study a childhood condition. The case is one among others. In any given study, we will concentrate on the one. The time we spend concentrating on the one may be a day or a year, but while we so concentrate we are engaged in case study.

Custom has it that not everything is a case. A child may be a case.<sup>2</sup> A teacher may be a case. But her teaching lacks the specificity, the boundedness, to be called a case. An innovative program may be a case. All the schools in Sweden can be a case. But a relationship among schools, the reasons for innovative teaching, or the policies of school reform are less commonly considered a case. These topics are generalities rather than specifics. The case is a specific, a complex, functioning thing.

Louis Smith, one of the first educational ethnographers, helped define the case as "a bounded system," drawing attention to it as an object rather than a process.<sup>3</sup> Let us use the Greek symbol  $\theta$  (theta) to represent the case, thinking all the while that  $\theta$  has a boundary and working parts. In our work in social sciences and human services,  $\theta$  is likely to be purposive, even having a "self." The case is an integrated system. The parts do not have to be working well, the purposes may be irrational, but it is a system. Thus people and programs clearly are prospective cases. Events and processes fit the definition less well, and studies of them are less likely to capitalize on the methods discussed in this book.

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<sup>2</sup> We cannot make precise definitions of cases or case studies because practices already exist for case study in many disciplines. I could be more precise and title this book *Naturalistic Case Study* or *Case Fieldwork in Education*, but conflicting precedents exist for any label. It is important for us to recognize that others will not use the words or the methods as we do.

<sup>3</sup> More about definition of the case can be found in my chapter entitled "Seeking Sweet Water" (Stake, 1988; see also Stake, 1994). There I emphasized learning all of the case out to its boundaries, tracking its issues, pursuing its' patterns of complexity.

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#### **Intrinsic and Instrumental Study**

It is not unusual for the choice of case to be no "choice" at all. Sometimes, we are given \_\_, even obligated to take it as the object to study. It happens when a teacher decides to study a student having difficulty, when we get curious about a particular agency, or when we take the responsibility of evaluating a program. The case is given. We are interested in it, not because by studying it we learn about other cases or about some general problem, but because we need to learn about that particular case. We have an intrinsic interest in the case, and we may call our work *intrinsic case study*.

In a different situation, we will have a research question, a puzzlement, a need for general understanding, and feel that we may get insight into the question by studying a particular case. For example, Swedish precollege teachers have a year to begin using a new student marking system passed by the Parliament. How will that work? The system is to have a criterion-reference orientation<sup>4</sup>; will that orientation change the way teachers teach? We may choose a teacher to study, looking broadly at how she teaches but paying particular attention to how she marks student work and whether or not it affects her teaching. This use of case study is to understand something else. Case study here is instrumental to accomplishing something other than understanding this particular teacher, and we may call our inquiry *instrumental case study*.

In the same situation, we may feel that we should choose several teachers to study rather than just one. Or we might choose to use schools as our cases and choose several schools. Each case study is instrumental to learning about the effects of the marking regulations but there will be important coordination between the individual

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<sup>4</sup> A criterion reference orientation focuses attention on the quality of student performance on tasks chosen because they are important in and of themselves, such as following instructions for assembling an appliance or locating a place on a map. It contrasts with a norm-reference orientation which treats tasks more as bases for ranking students as to a particular ability, such as spelling or map reading ability.

## THE ART OF CASE STUDY RESEARCH

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studies. We may call the work *collective case study*. I am making the distinction between these three kinds of case study not because it will be useful to sort case studies into these three categories (often we cannot decide) but because the methods we will use will be different, depending on intrinsic and instrumental interests. The more the intrinsic interest in the case, the more we will restrain our curiosities and special interests and the more we will try to discern and pursue issues critical to \_

### **Selection of Cases**

It may be useful to try to select cases which are typical or representative of other cases, but a sample of one or a sample of just a few is unlikely to be a strong representation of others. Case study research is not sampling research. We do not study a case primarily to understand other cases. Our first obligation is to understand this one case. In intrinsic case study, the case is pre-selected. In instrumental case study, some cases would do a better job than others. Sometimes a "typical" case works well but often an unusual case helps illustrate matters we overlook in typical cases. How shall cases be selected?

The first criterion should be to maximize what we can learn. Given our purposes, which cases are likely to lead us to understandings, to assertions, perhaps even to modifying of generalizations? Our time and access for fieldwork are almost always limited. If we can, we need to pick cases which are easy to get to and hospitable to our inquiry, perhaps for which a prospective informant can be identified and with actors (the people studied) willing to comment on certain draft materials. Of course we need to carefully consider the uniqueness and contexts of the alternative selections, for these may aid or restrict our learnings. But many of us caseworkers feel that good instrumental case study does not depend on being able to defend the typicality of \_.

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A collective case study may be designed with more concern for representation but, again, the representation of a small sample is difficult to defend. The relevant characteristics are likely to be numerous so that only a few combinations can be included. In our case study of Harper School, it was 1 of 6 schools in almost 500. How was it chosen?

It was not expected that schools could turn students achievement around in a single year, especially with the strategy being one of decentralization, that is, reducing the authority and services of the Chicago Superintendent of Schools, empowering Local School Councils to act as a one-school board. The main Question to be considered was “After one year of operation of the system-wide reform plan, what is the evidence that the plan is being implemented at the individual school sites?” The contract called for and the resources permitted no more than six schools to be studied, two secondary and four elementary, each for about two weeks. The principal criterion in selection of schools was less “What schools represent the totality of Chicago?” but, rather, “What group of schools will help us understand the problems facing school reform in Chicago?”

For that criterion, a diverse group of schools was needed. In addition to grade level, needed diversity was sought in academic program; nature of community – including racial, ethnic, and economic mix; size of school; history of involvement in innovation; anticipated levels of success in implementing school reform; recency of appointment of the principal; and location in the city.

Quickly, we had more characteristics than we could manage. For illustration, let us take just three characteristics: impoverishment of neighborhood, racial mix, and tenure of the principal. Since 95% of the schools were nearly all or all African-American, our racial category was AA or Hispanic or Other, with the Other very small and dropped. These three characteristics we then treated as binary, giving us a 2 X 2 X 2 matrix, eight cells in all. We could have sorted the elementary schools into these eight clusters, then randomly have selected four of the cells and then one school

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from each cell. But one school does not represent its cell and the other five characteristics would have been ignored. We saw no way to formally represent the eight-plus characteristics with so small a sample.

So we started the other way round. We said “Do we know of a school trying to deal with reform problems in an interesting way – a school which would be accessible to our evaluation team?” Several came to mind and we picked one of them and noted its characteristics: middle-class Black neighborhood, aggressive and long-lasting principal, South side, back-to-basics curriculum, and so forth. Then we looked for a school also interesting and accessible but with dissimilar characteristics. Noting the characteristics of the two, we looked for two others not known to be interesting or accessible but balancing the first two so that the group of four would have variety. We even looked for ones where we thought we would not be welcome, wanting to weigh the trade-off between obstacles to observation and loss of representation. We did not expect to represent all the schools this way, but we had confidence that we would find common problems of complying with decentralization and reform procedures and that we could learn a lot about the quality of initial stages of reform in just four schools.

Any best possible selection of four elementary schools from a balanced design would not give us compelling representation for the city as a whole and certainly not a statistical basis for generalizing about interactions between academic activity and site characteristics. Several desirable types had to be omitted. Even for collective case studies, selection by sampling of attributes should not be the highest priority. Balance and variety are important; opportunity to learn is of primary importance.

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Not all cases will work out well. It is important to make some early assessments of progress to *see* if the case should be dropped and another selected. We are often amazed at how much our readers will recognize as relevant to their own cases, even though in many ways the studied cases are different. Yes, urban teachers often reject examples from rural schools, and vice versa - but much less likely after they have read the studies. Most find a commonality of process and situation. It startles us all to find our own perplexities in the lives of others.

### **Producing Generalizations**

Case study seems a poor basis for generalization. Only a single case or just a few cases will be studied, but these will be studied at length. Certain activities or problems or responses will come up again and again. Thus, for \_\_, certain generalizations will be drawn. Perhaps the case is a child, a child repeatedly facing a certain difficulty such as being unable to let others take the initiative in group work. That itself is a generalization. After further observation, it becomes apparent that the interference seldom occurs with older or more dominant children. Increasingly the generalization is refined, not a new generalization but a modified generalization. This is common in research. Seldom is an entirely new understanding reached but refinement of understanding is. Generalizations about a case or a few cases in a particular situation might not be thought of as generalizations and may need some label such as *petite generalizations*, but they are generalizations that regularly occur all along the way in case study.

*Grand generalizations* also can be modified by case study. Readers may have the view that district business manager consistently "represent" problems of parents in a simplistic form. But case study may reveal a certain business manager regularly *elaborates* the complexity of parent problems presented to her office, stressing the necessity for the staff to anticipate particular complexities.

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Thus by counter-example, this case study invites a modification of the generalization, acknowledging a variability in office manager perceptions and styles, perhaps without changing the typification. A positive example is likely neither to establish a generalization nor to modify one, but may increase the confidence that readers have in their (or the researcher's) generalization. We do not choose case study designs to optimize production of generalizations. More traditional comparative and correlational studies do this better, but valid modification of generalization can occur in case study. I will discuss our procedures for increasing the validity of such rethinking in Chapter 7 "Triangulation."

The real business of case study is particularization, not generalization. We take a particular case and come to know it well, not primarily as to how it is different from others but what it is, what it does. There is emphasis on uniqueness, and that implies knowledge of others that the case is different from, but the first emphasis is on understanding the case itself.

### **Emphasis on Interpretation**

According to one highly respected writer on qualitative studies, Fred Erickson, the most distinctive characteristic of qualitative inquiry is its emphasis on interpretations.<sup>5</sup> Clearly, in designing our studies, we qualitative researchers do not confine interpretation to the identification of variables and the development of instruments before data gathering and to analysis and interpretation for the report. Rather, we emphasize placing an interpreter in the field to observe the workings of the case, one who records objectively what is happening but simultaneously examines its meaning and redirects

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<sup>5</sup> In his chapter titled "Qualitative Methods in Research on Teaching," Erickson (1986) defined qualitative work as field study where the key interpretations to be pursued were not the researcher's interpretations but those of the people being studied. We will face this ambiguity in case study work as to whose interpretations are presented and emphasized.

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observation to refine or substantiate those meanings. Initial research questions may be modified or even replaced in mid-study by the case researcher. The aim is to thoroughly understand   . If early questions are not working, if new issues become apparent, the design is changed. Malcolm Parlett and David Hamilton (1976) called it *progressive focusing*.

Interpretation is a major part of all research. I am ready to argue when someone claims there is more interpretation in qualitative research than in quantitative - but the function of the qualitative researcher during data gathering is clearly to maintain vigorous interpretation. On the basis of observations and other data, researchers draw their own conclusions. Erickson called them assertions, a form of generalization. Knowing that other interpretations exist than those of researchers, the sophisticated researcher presents one or more of those others, perhaps attributing them to a real source or to a generic source (e.g., "According to some community members, . . ."). How to arrive at assertions is an ordinary process of interpretation, perhaps for some people needing formal rules of evidence or rules of logic. We do not have adequate guides for transforming observations into assertions-yet people regularly do it. Consider the following assertion based at least in part on the observations stated first.

FORESHADOWING QUESTIONS  
FOR A PART OF ONE CASE STUDY

Is student behavior here problematic?  
What norms for student compliance are relevant?  
Is it important for teachers, administrators, and parents  
to agree on norms of discipline?  
During classroom observation, how much does research  
attention to noncompliant student behavior detract from attention  
to educational issues?

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## THE ART OF CASE STUDY RESEARCH

## OBSERVATIONS

Excerpt from an observation of a fourth-grade classroom:

“10:00. The quiz is over. The teacher says ‘We’ll go over answers today. Be sure you put your name on your paper.’ He pauses, then says almost pleadingly: ‘Who just talked out? Sharon?’ The teacher goes to the chalkboard and adds Sharon’s name to a list. ‘Today we were looking for details to the story.’ Then, ‘Do not talk to anyone.’ He indicates how the papers should be collected. ‘All tests in?’ The room is astir. ‘How many can count to three? If you can, raise your right hand’ Then, ‘I want attention up here, complete attention, up here.’ The teacher presses on, quietly, barely a decibel above the general murmur, but insistent. ‘Jimmy, Mark, everyone. Everybody, raise both hands. Kris, Eleanor, Thatcher.’ Still having failed to win Darin’s acquiescence, he goes to the board and puts a check mark after his name. ‘Sh! Sh!, Sh!’ there are five names on the board, one with a check. Now six. Finally and with requisite concentration, they identify correct answers to the quiz”

UPON REFLECTION, ASSERTIONS  
LOGGED BY THE OBSERVER

“It has been said that being ‘a student’ is the occupation of childhood. If so, it seems that a great proportion of our youngsters are ‘unemployed.’ Being a student is not what they are engaged in – at last not the way most teachers, researchers, and parents would define the term. Our children are social beings, learning beings, it is true but they are not diligent at scholastic work. What they are is ‘kids.’

“In almost any classroom one finds children in a state of purposive existence. To the extent that a teacher gives way to their vitality, they engage to a great extent in social affairs, in exhibitions, in the pursuit of curiosity. On that larger template of behavior, the teacher presses a smaller template of scholastic engagement. Even as things quiet, each pulse is only slightly

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perturbed, instantaneously ready to resume the clamor. Over time, most kids learn a great many things. They get ready for tests and ready for graduation – largely without abandoning the occupation of ‘being a kid,’ without becoming ‘a student.’

“Most teachers start by trying to keep the child quiet. Advocates of direct learning however energize the child. Believing as almost all of us do, that the authorities know best what a child should be learning, they place a conformity-demanding second template to redirect and empower group behavior. Some teachers thus succeed, for a while, in making children students. Advocates of child-centered education place a weak social template and a weak larger template on the child, hoping that personal encouragement and rich classroom environment will promote problem solving and thoughtfulness. And occasionally, for certain moments, such teacher succeeds in making children students.

“Educational theorists regularly presume these rare occasions are commonplace and that ordinary teachers regularly accomplish this student making.

“Classroom observations remind us regularly, necessarily, that seldom does student-making happen. We should not be surprised when we visit the classroom to find teachers trying to patch a little cognitive behavior on the main fabric of social engagement. Youngsters are oriented enormously to their classmates. To them the teacher too is a social being, to be manipulated socially, in good ways and bad. They consider themselves very special creatures, immersed in a social environment. They relate ideas encountered in class, regardless of how abstract, to social situations. They engage more fully in certain ideas if there is a social benefit for doing so. ‘Social Studies’ are the occupation of childhood. We shouldn’t be surprised but we often are.”

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This observer's assertions went well beyond the excerpt of observation, well beyond the observation of the fourth-grade class reported here. Yet, almost immediately upon completing this observation, he wrote the four paragraphs in his log and, later, something similar appeared in his report.

The logical path to assertions often is apparent neither to reader nor to the researchers themselves. What we describe happening in the classroom and what we assert do not have to be closely tied together. For assertions, we draw from understandings deep within us, understandings whose derivation may be some hidden mix of personal experience, scholarship, assertions of other researchers. It will be helpful to the reader when such leaps to conclusion are labeled as speculation or theory, but researchers often do not. By custom, researchers are privileged to assert what they find meaningful as a result of their inquiries. Their reports and consultations will include strictly determined findings and loosely determined assertions.

It is not uncommon for case study researchers to make assertions on a relatively small database, invoking the privilege and responsibility of interpretation. To draw so much attention to interpretation may be a mistake, suggesting that case study work hastens to draw conclusions. Good case study is patient, reflective, willing to see another view of   . An ethic of caution is not contradictory to an ethic of interpretation.

We tout case study as being noninterventive and empathic. In other words, we try not to disturb the ordinary activity of the case, not to test, not even to interview, if we can get the information we want by discrete observation or examination of records. We try hard to understand how the actors, the people being studied, see things. Ultimately, the interpretations of the researcher are likely to be emphasized more than the interpretations of those people studied, but the qualitative case researcher tries to preserve the *multiple realities*, the different and even contradictory views of what is happening.

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**WORKSHOP**

*After a lecture on these topics the first Umeå day, we formed small groups for discussion. The nature of "the case" and organization of study around issues appeared to be the difficult concepts. Knowing we would take them up soon again, I presented the following problem. "Suppose you are studying Skolverket (the new education coordinating agency in Stockholm). To understand the program evaluation activities (a major function of this agency), you decide to study the work of three evaluation specialists. How would you select the three?" Mats said that he would want at least two specialists based outside Stockholm. Irene hoped that at least one would be a woman. Karin noted that the functions of different evaluators would be different and that that diversity should be represented. Limin and Irene both said that the important thing was to choose ones which would help us learn most about Skolverket. Noting some additional relevant characteristics including the issues selected for the study, I said we should think about what diversity of evaluators might be valuable but ultimately select the ones to study - as Limin and Irene said - in terms of what might optimize understanding \_ (Skolverket).*

# School Culture

*edited by*

**Jon Prosser**

**P.C.P**

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*Cultural inventories*

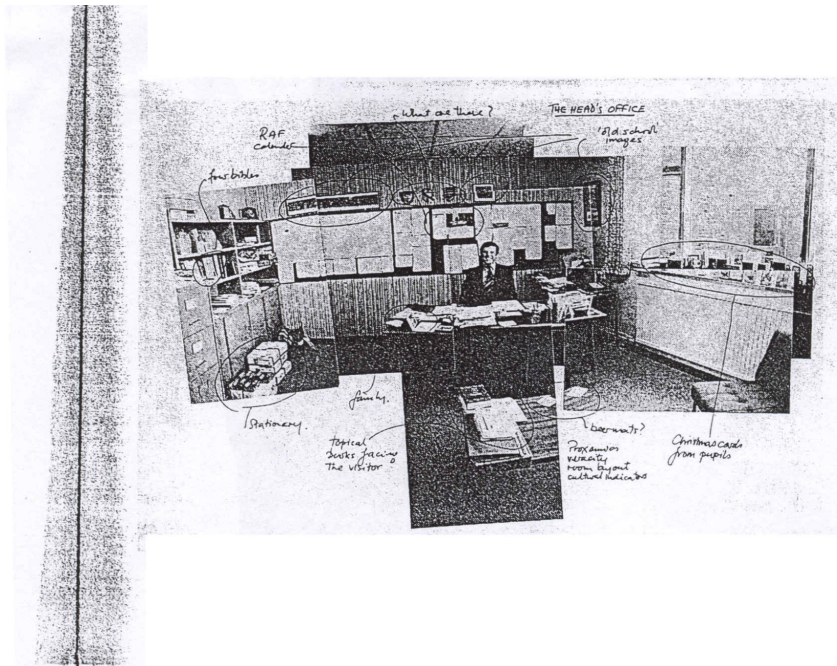
One type of proxemic data used by visual sociologists is referred to as 'cultural inventories'. Collier and Collier (1986, p. 45) explain the inventory approach:

The photographic inventory can record not only the ranges of artefacts in a home but also their relationship to each other, the style of their placement in space, all the aspects that define and express the way in which they use and order their space and possessions. Such information not only provides an insight into the present character of people's lives but can also describe acculturation and track cultural continuity and change.

The layout and content of a room is not arbitrary or capricious but provides an insight into who that person is, what they do, and how they behave in their

rooms. The layout of a headteacher's office or a teacher's classroom gives important clues to the significance of personal relationships and values, and provide insight into the culture of a school. For example in Photograph 6.1, a headteacher's values and beliefs in terms of interpersonal relationships and authority can be explored.

Evans (1974) suggests that the general layout of a headteacher's room could represent at least five degrees of authoritarianism. Alternatively, a micro-analysis of parts of the room may raise questions about the significance of particular artefacts kept there. Why, for example, are there six different types of bible on the shelf; what is the significance of the Royal Airforce memorabilia on the back wall? Cumulatively these questions provide an insight into the Head's values, beliefs and attitudes which, as many studies in leadership attest, are central to institutional culture. It is the artefacts and their spatial relationships which cultural inventories record. When analysed in the context of constituent data - information about the contexts in which the images were made - and the particular questions being asked of them, they provide important insight into the cultural patterns being sustained, in that they are an expression of cultural patterns. A content analysis, for example, of books commonly visible in headteachers' offices would enable a comparison between headteachers' rooms to be made in different schools. Alternatively specific items or artefacts or arrangements could be explored for their historical or aesthetic significance. Practitioners wishing to identify their own school's unique culture may find analysis of a cultural inventory of their headteacher's office invaluable



Photograph 6.1 The Headteacher's Office

However, as with any single set of data, emergent interpretations from cultural inventories require verification or repudiation by contrasting them with other methods or other sources of data.

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### *Principles of procedure*

#### *(a) Independence*

- (i) No participant in the project will have privileged access to the data of the evaluation.
- (ii) No participant will have a unilateral right or power of veto over the content of the report.

#### *(b) Disinterest*

- (i) The evaluator will attempt to represent, as widely as possible, the range of viewpoints encountered in the evaluation, rather than to enunciate his own perspectives or private views.

**Tasks and procedures**

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- (ii) The evaluator recognizes that explicit or implicit recommendations appearing in reports will not be regarded as prescriptions by programme participants. As far as possible, however, the evaluator will attempt to present recommendations from participants rather than to use the evaluation as a platform for his own preferences.

*(c) Negotiated access*

The evaluation will seek only reasonable access to relevant data sources. The evaluator will assume he can freely approach any individual involved in the project to collect data. Those approached should feel free to discuss any matters they see fit. All such discussions will be treated as privileged by the evaluator. The evaluator is bound to portray the project and the issues it raises, but the release of specific information likely to identify informants will be subject to negotiation with these informants.

*(d) Negotiation of boundaries*

- (i) The evaluation will be issues-oriented. The principles for inclusion of concerns, perspectives or information in the study or its reports are that these concerns, perspectives or items of information contribute to understanding the project, especially in so far as it is variously understood by participants in and observers of the project from their different points of view. A major task for the evaluation, therefore, is to attempt to piece these disparate perspectives together into a coherent (though not necessarily synthetic or complete) account of the project as a whole. Thus according to this principle of inclusion, the perspectives of all participants and interested observers have a right to be considered in the evaluation.
- (ii) The principle for exclusion of concerns, perspectives or information is that they can be shown to be false or unfounded, irrelevant to the project, or to unfairly disadvantage individuals or groups involved with the project.

*(e) Negotiation of accounts*

- (i) The criteria of fairness, relevance and accuracy form the basis for negotiation between the evaluator and participants in the study. Where accounts of the work of participants involvement in the project can be shown to be unfair, irrelevant or inaccurate, the report will be amended. Once draft reports have been negotiated with participants on the basis of these criteria, they will be regarded as having the endorsement of those involved in having the endorsement of those involved in the negotiations with respect to fairness, relevance and accuracy.

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- (ii) The process of negotiation of accounts will, where necessary, be phased to protect participants from the consequences of one-way information flow. Parts of a report may first be negotiated with relevant individuals who could be disadvantaged if the report were negotiated as a whole with all participants.

#### *(f) Negotiation of release*

- (i) There will be no secret reporting. Reports will be made available first to those whose work they represent. Circulation will be phased so that members of the primary audience will receive reports earliest, with other audiences receiving them later.
- (ii) The release of reports for circulation beyond the community of interests formed by members of the primary audience and the evaluator is a matter for negotiation and decision within this community of interests. Given that the reports have been endorsed as fair, relevant and accurate by the procedure of negotiation of accounts, release of reports may be delayed or restricted only if it can be shown that release of a report to secondary or other audiences would unfairly disadvantage any member of the primary audience. In this case, an amended version of the report may be prepared which would overcome this obstacle to its release, viz. a version of the report which does not, by its release, disadvantage any member of the primary audience. Any such amended version must still be acceptable to the primary audience as a fair, relevant and accurate account of the project, however.
- (iii) In keeping with the foregoing principles of procedure, the circulation of reports will be restricted unless the report has been cleared for unrestricted circulation. Restriction on circulation will be clearly indicated on the cover pages of all reports.

#### *(g) Publication*

- (i) Reports will be released for wider circulation only in the form established by the procedure of negotiation of accounts; that is, they must be 'endorsed' by the members of the primary and other audiences as fair, relevant and accurate. Any published report must first of all meet this criterion.
- (ii) The evaluator reserves the right to disavow any incomplete or summary version of the report which purports to be a report of this evaluation.
- (iii) Any report to be published should have been produced according to these principles of procedure.

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- (iv) It is the expectation of the evaluator that the sponsor of the evaluation will have right of first refusal on publication.

### *(h) Confidentiality*

- (i) The evaluator will not examine files, correspondence or other documentation without explicit authorization and will not copy from those sources without permission.
- (ii) Interviews, meetings, and written exchanges will not be considered off-the-record, but those involved are free, both before and after, to restrict aspects or parts of such exchanges, or to correct or improve their statement. Quotations, verbatim transcripts and attributed observations, judgements, conclusions or recommendations, where these are used in such a way as to identify their sources, will be used in reports only with the authorization of the informant (i.e. the authorization achieved by the procedure of negotiation of accounts). Where information is general or where the sources are sufficiently obscured so as to defy identification of specific individuals, no clearance will be sought.
- (iii) The evaluator is responsible for the confidentiality of data collected by him in the course of the evaluation.
- (iv) In general, it should be noted that these confidentiality rules cannot be used to withdraw reports from general view; once fair, relevant and accurate accounts have been released and when they are presented in ways which do not unnecessarily expose or embarrass participants, such reports should no longer be sheltered by the prohibitions of confidentiality.

### *(i) Accountability*

The evaluator cannot make all his records publicly available without breaching the evaluation's principles of procedure. Nevertheless, the evaluation and the evaluator must be accountable to sponsors, project participants and the evaluation audiences. Thus:

- (i) The evaluation will keep appropriate financial and administrative records which will be open to its immediate sponsor.
- (ii) The evaluation will be accountable to participants as outlined in these principles of procedure.
- (iii) The evaluator will work with an advisory committee of critical friends to whom the entire evaluation process and its records, files and reports will be open in principle. The primary role of this committee is to evaluate the evaluation process, check emerging interpretations against available evidence, suggest further data-

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gathering activities, and to assist with the interpretation and implementation of the principles of procedure. This advisory committee will itself be bound by these principles of procedure unless they are breached by the evaluator, in which case the advisory committee will intervene to attempt to resolve problems arising by negotiation with the evaluator and relevant others.

### *(j) Agreement to these principles of procedures*

- (i) The evaluator cannot be held responsible for breaches of these principles by others involved in the evaluation. It is the responsibility of members of the primary and other audiences of the evaluation to respect the confidentiality of reports and any restrictions on their circulation.
- (ii) In commissioning this evaluation study and in accepting the commission, the sponsor and the evaluator agree to abide by these principles of procedure.

(Kemmis and Robottom, 1981, 151-5)

### **Reference**

Kemmis, S. and Robottom, I. (1981) Principles of procedure in curriculum evaluation, *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 13 (2).