

Cohesive Assessment of Student-Authored Publishable Case Studies

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Abstract. This paper emphasizes the importance of case study research, especially student-authored case studies. Guiding students to write publishable case studies not only benefits students, but may also permit a unique type of assessment of learning. We present the characteristics of publishable case studies and their instructor manuals. Then we explain how learning and assessment can be aligned with the development of these characteristics. Finally, we provide examples of course assignments that can lead to publishable student-authored case studies.

Keywords: case research, case studies, students, publishable cases, assessment.

1. Introduction

According to Schellekens *et al.* (2021), there are three main types of assessment: Assessment of Learning, Assessment for Learning, and Assessment as Learning. Assessment of Learning (AoL) adopts a summative view of learning and focuses on measuring the performance, outcome, or result of learning activities. AoL examples include but are not limited to final exams, standardized quizzes, end-of-unit project and the report card. Assessment for Learning (AfL) is based on a formative perspective and emphasizes on-going learning processes, activities, interactions, etc. Typical AfL examples are work samples, self-assessment, low-stake quizzes, and participation tasks. Unlike AoL or AfL, Assessment as Learning (AaL) highlights the active role of students in learning and assessment. AaL explores cognitive and metacognitive activities centered in self-regulation, self-direction, and self-exploration.

Schellekens *et al.* (2021) conducted a scoping review on the notions of AoL, AfL and AaL. They strongly suggested embracing the coherence of these three perspectives to maximize student learning and the culture of assessment. We believe that the pursuit of cohesive assessment can be achieved through guiding

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students to write publishable case studies, and integrating such research and writing into course assignments.

A case study is the result of one specific type of research. Yin (2003: 13) defined a case study as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident.” The case study is arguably an essential means of staying in touch with what is happening, what works, and what no longer works in practice (Flyvbjerg, 2006). In applied fields such as business and public administration, nursing and education, for example, researchers both learn from practice and influence practice. Kaplan (1998) understood case research to be a critical method of discovering and disseminating new practices. In case research, the researchers gain (and potentially share with others) context-dependent knowledge, and context-dependent knowledge is required to allow one to progress from “rule-based beginners to virtuoso experts” (Flyvbjerg, 2006: 222). As Michael Porter noted: “We need to keep this balance between rigorous methodology-based academic work and case research [...]. We have to maintain this balance. Without this balance, we will never make progress” (Porter, 2006: 2).

Unlike experimental studies, case studies capture “information on more explanatory ‘how’, ‘what’ and ‘why’ questions, such as ‘how is the intervention being implemented and received on the ground?’” (Crowe *et al.*, 2011: 4). The analysis and discussion of a case is a mainstream method of getting students to think critically, analyze situations using conceptual models or best practices, and arrive at decisions supported by facts and evidence. Thus, serious research and the preparation of pedagogical materials go together. As a pedagogical method, the case study allows for a type of learning that is very different from that which occurs through lectures, exercises, or experimentation. “The case method enables students to learn to interpret and analyze information, consider alternatives, decide on a plan of action, and persuade others about their point of view. Students learn how to learn and to practice drilling down to the root of the cause of issues, asking questions, and listening to others’ viewpoints” (Harvard Business School, 2021).

The case study is designed to elicit questions from students, not necessarily answers or decisions. “The generation of questions... [is a] powerful learning strategy, yielding similar effects as testing on long-term retention of coherent learning content in educational contexts, and these effects emerge for factual and transfer knowledge” (Ebersbach *et al.*, 2020: 724). With the growth in case studies, researchers expressed passion about the case method in teaching management and demonstrated ways to innovate case design, implementation, reflection, effectiveness, etc. (Mu & Hatch, 2025). Moreover, researchers highlighted the role of students in developing and implementing case studies, especially in business education (Brennan & Ahmad, 2005; Finch *et al.*, 2015; Rosier, 2022). Therefore, we think that guiding students to author publishable