Abstract

The increasing use of case studies in management, as the desire to build theory from qualitative data, has highlighted a gap between existing proposals and the criteria for rigorous case studies. Our contribution helps to close this gap by providing guidelines and the practical application of the quality principles. It assists management researchers working in these paradigms to build theory from qualitative data. This paper aims to specify a set of methodological stages to conduct case studies. It presents a graphical representation of these stages, describes how it assists management researchers to build theory from data gathered in the field, and outlines its value for achieving sound management research. Several cases published in CEDE within the last 21 issues are selected in order to illustrate these processes. Our major contribution to research methodology is to specify a set of guidelines for conducting case studies and being explicit in how to apply a series of quality criteria for evaluating case studies in practice. Our proposal not only help to conduct the research, but also documents the links between the research topics (in the conceptual framework), data (observations and interpretations in the field), the data analysis (coding using the concepts in the conceptual framework, and emergent themes) and the theory and knowledge accumulated through the research process. Our proposal adds to the tools that management researchers can follow to produce sound research. We have illustrated this paper with several case studies in order to know their epistemological approach, and to evaluate their quality level by applying the commented principles.

Keywords
Case studies, qualitative research, methodology.