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3.0 What types of case study are used in classes?

Abstract: There are principally eight different types of case study each of which are examined in closer detail in this chapter. Students may find themselves reviewing different cases in different ways according to their structure and design, their learning objectives, and the specific subject themes that are being covered in their course. An understanding of the different types of case will enable students to adapt their preparation for class discussion. Some types of case can be found in greater frequency in certain specific areas of subject matter, so this chapter considers how different cases are structured and formatted in different subject modules on management programmes. For example, it is unlikely that a case used in a Finance and Accounting module will be structured in the same way as a case study prepared for a Leadership and Change Management module. This chapter explores the structures, content and styles of different types of cases used for different learning contexts.

There are principally eight different types of case study each of which are examined in closer detail in this chapter. You may find yourself reviewing different cases in different ways according to their structure and design, their learning objectives, and the specific subject themes that are being covered in your course. An understanding of the different types of case will enable you to adapt your preparation for class discussion. Some types of case can be found in greater frequency in certain specific areas of subject matter, so it is worth considering this as you look at how different cases are structured and formatted in different subject modules on your programme. For example, it is unlikely that a case used in a Finance and Accounting module will be structured in the same way as a case study prepared for a Leadership and Change Management module. Before an author submits a case to The Case Centre case writers are required to determine what type of case they are writing by subject matter as part of their case submission process, and these are the categories of subject matter that case writers normally have to choose between:

- Economics, Politics and Business Environment
- Entrepreneurship
- Ethics and Social Responsibility
- Finance, Accounting and Control
- Human Resource Management / Organisational Behaviour
- Knowledge, Information and Communications Systems Management
- Marketing
- Production and Operations Management
- Strategy and General Management

Interestingly, the Case Centre have introduced a more recent requirement for case writers to consider which of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) are also addressed by the case study, which demonstrates a growing global awareness for cases to reflect these important SDG themes.

The next sections of this chapter compare each of the eight most commonly considered types of case study, by design and content.

3.1 Situation Case

“The student is asked to make an analysis of the information embodied in the case and to delineate the significant relationships existing among the various items of data. This often involves the question ‘why did things go wrong and how could this have been avoided?’”¹

One of the most traditional and popular forms of case has been the situation case, which tends to include a description of a situation or a sequence of events and activities for which there is likely to be more than one probable set of responses and subsequent outcomes. These situation case studies remain the most popular type of case in management education, and are frequently found in Strategy, Marketing, Human Resource and Operations Management programmes.

This classic case approach often invites you to step into the shoes of the key protagonist within the story and to consider the various options available as the situation unfolds.

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One example of a situation case is: ‘**Leadership for Sustainable Healthcare,**’ which is listed as a case study derived from *published sources* and which clearly reflects some level of *general experience*. It was written by Stefi Barna, Emma Thompson and Aditya Vyas of Medact (United Kingdom) and was produced as part of an Erasmus+ funded programme involving Medical Peace Work (www.medicalpeacework.org). You will find a copy of the full version of this case towards the end of this chapter in section 3.10, and the case is also available as a free case at www.thecasecentre.org. You will note from the layout of the text that, as this case is derived from published sources, there are weblinks that the authors have used to support your journey through the case without distracting from the general narrative (storytelling) structure, and these are listed in a table in the middle of the case. Whilst listed by the authors as a *Specialist Management* case study, the situation described within the case covers

¹ Heath, 2015, p11

a range of different topics including Healthcare management; Sustainability; Sustainable healthcare; Climate change; Carbon reduction; Triple bottom line; Health leadership; Service improvement; Nursing; Medicine; Nephrology; General practice; and Psychiatry.

The authors consider that the case could be used in two ways. This case has been written in a manner that allows it to be used both for specialist clinical healthcare related subjects and for general leadership and management practice. Clearly the themes of sustainability and sustainable healthcare management are highly attractive in today's context. It is worth noting that the global health system is a significant contributor to greenhouse gas emissions, waste and pollution and as such, healthcare is among the most energy-intensive – and therefore carbon-intensive – business sectors. In Europe, evidence suggests that the carbon footprint of the healthcare sector accounts for at least 5% of the EU's carbon emissions.

The situation follows the case of a junior hospital nurse who investigates the possibilities for increased healthcare efficiencies that will result in reduced costs, better patient care and less waste. The case ends with a number of questions which could be used to inform the direction of a classroom discussion. If you wanted to explore the case study, and have little or no clinical experience, then it is proposed that you could review Mr William's story from the case and for each encounter he has with the health system, to identify the areas where waste could have been reduced and patient care improved.

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3.2 Complex Case

I've occasionally heard the case study compared to a jigsaw puzzle. When you are given the case, it is as if you are handed a box of jigsaw pieces and your job is to start putting the pieces together to form the image that displays the situation that is requiring analysis and review. Now imagine if you were handed a box with lots of extra peripheral pieces and even some pieces that didn't necessarily relate to the picture at all. Now you have a **complex case**.

These complex cases were traditionally produced as very large paper-based case studies, frequently used particularly in postgraduate study or for executive programmes. In complex cases, the case content incorporates data highly relevant to the case situation intermixed with less significant data, or even some data that may be irrelevant. The principle purpose behind this form of case is to challenge you to make judgements regarding the quality of the data and to extract the relevant data from the less relevant data before then considering a response to the challenges set

by the case objectives. It is quite common for students to challenge the usefulness of these types of lengthy paper-based cases today which is justifiable to a certain degree, but don't forget the internet presents similar challenges for businesses today, when analysts need to search for relevant evidence from the vast quantities of less relevant data available online. Sometimes today's case writers generate complex cases by creating a case narrative that signposts you to online resources from which you can then exercise your own judgement to determine the relevant data from less relevant online data. The complex nature and purpose of the case study remains the same, but the context is shifted from the paper to the screen.

3.3 Decision-Making Case

As a detective, my dad would often find himself in court cases where decisions needed to be taken based on the evidence that had been revealed from the investigations. In a similar way, case studies that provide descriptions of situations will often lead you to a point where the protagonist from the case is required to make a decision. The classic **decision-making** case study would normally provide at least two or three likely and feasible approaches to a certain issue facing the organisation. Your challenge is to exercise judgement to determine the most appropriate option, whilst considering the merits and pitfalls of each of the other options, and hence to present a balanced argument, when considering how an organisation should respond to the decisions raised within the case.

“Of the cases you read, the most frequent type of scenario will probably be a decision. That reflects the real world in which organizations constantly make decisions. In a business course that uses cases, you're therefore very likely to have to write about decision scenario cases.” Harvard, US²

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One example of a decision case is: '**The Seat Belts in School Buses Controversy**,' which is listed as a *field research* case study. It was written by Professor John Phillimore and Alan Tapper from Curtin University in Australia and was produced as part of the Case Program of the Australia and New Zealand School of Government (ANZSOG). You will find a copy of the full version of this case towards the end of this chapter in section 3.10, and the case is also available as a free case at www.thecasecentre.org. You will note from the layout of the case that there are references that the authors have used to support the case's development, and these are also listed at the end of the case. Whilst listed by the authors as a *Strategy and General Management* case study, the situation described within the case covers a range of different topics including Cost-benefit analysis; Delivery of services; Health and safety; Implementation/evaluation; Infrastructure; Transport; Utilities; Issues management; Ministerial relationships;

² Ellet, 2018, p131

Political environment; Moral panic; Public transport; Road safety; Road transport; and Strategic communication.

The authors consider that the case could be viewed in two parts, the first being the political story up to the decision by the Australian Government of whether to make seat belts compulsory, and the second being its implementation process. The case study explores a number of points including:

- The key decisions during the policy making process
- The role of each of the relevant stakeholders in influencing policy
- The role of evidence in public debate and public service advice
- The challenges for public sector managers and their political leaders in judging 'public value.'

As you read through the case here are two questions you might consider:

- Should the government bow to public and media pressure to decide to make seat belts compulsory?
- Assuming that seatbelts do become compulsory, how should the implementation process be handled?

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3.4 Quantitative (Exercise) Case

Many types of decision cases involve people, opinions, and data. Those with larger data sets, tend to require far more in-depth analysis and number crunching. These **quantitative cases** are often referred to as exercise cases and tend to prove very effective in subject areas, such as Accounting, Finance, Business planning and Big Data Analytics. They normally require you to undertake some form of exercise (treatment) with the data to determine a set of outcomes. For example, this might be drawing data from the narrative to form a *profit and loss* statement or a *balance sheet* for an organisation. These types of exercises might provide a single 'right or wrong' answer, but this isn't normally the end goal of the case. Having completed the *number-crunching* exercises, the next step is to exercise judgement to determine what these details tell you about the organisation in the context of the situation it is facing.

In some examples *exercise cases* will contain lots of data provided in an ad-hoc fashion throughout the case text, and in other examples an exercise case might contain all of its numerical data in nicely ordered and tabulated exhibits included at the end of the case narrative. In both examples, your challenge is to identify and extract the relevant data and consider how it should be re-ordered in order to

undertake the necessary analysis to achieve the objectives (or questions) of the case.

“Push the numbers, play with the numbers and you may get a much better feel for the whole situation.... One has to be careful however not to get lost in detailed numerical analysis with little reflection about what these numbers actually mean.” Richard Ivey School of Business, Canada³

3.5 Background Case

By contrast, a more descriptive case can lack both plot, people, and the need for decision making. These types of cases, often referred to as **background cases**, tend to be more popular as scene-setters, when looking to develop a broader understanding around a particular theme. For example, the tutor may wish to run a module, which explores a number of strategic decisions made by different motor manufacturers, and so they may have selected appropriate cases from a range of different companies. The background case can serve as a popular prerequisite with which to explore an overview of the motor industry - its trends, themes, mergers and acquisitions over time. These exploratory background cases enable all the class participants to come to a certain point of knowledge and awareness, through macro environmental and economic analysis, from which to then begin exploring individual organisational cases.

3.6 Incident Case

The **incident case** is a highly popular short, often single-issue, case that the tutor can bring into a lecture or class discussion. These types of cases tend to require no pre-planning on the part of the students and can often serve as a useful breakout exercise, to change the pace of study in what might otherwise be a lengthy lecture session. They tend to allow the learner to apply a single concept or approach in a specific context, and can be useful tools for discovery, application and reflection.

“Although used less widely than the most conventional situation case, short case incidents can be a useful teaching vehicle. They can be introduced into a class to illustrate a lecture point or provide the basis for an exercise. One attraction of the incident is its brevity, it can be issued at any time and read in a few seconds” The Case Centre, UK⁴

³ Mauffette-Leenders et al, 2007

⁴ Heath, 2015, p29

Sometimes these cases are referred to as *caselets* or *compact* cases, and they tend to be little more than 1-2 pages in length. They are useful cases for tutors to draw from when working with students who are less familiar or confident with the case method, as they normally require little preparation and tend not to be over-complex, as one *compact case* tutor explains:

“Compact Cases are a specialized form of teaching case study. Typically used in business schools, a Compact Case is a teaching case of fewer than 1000 words in length. Designed to be read in 15 minutes or less.” Westfield State University, US.⁵

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One example of an incident case is: ‘**James Walker and the Line Manager,**’ which is a short incident case study based on general experience. You will find a copy of the full version of this case towards the end of this chapter in section 3.10. As you read this case you will instantly be aware that this is a much shorter case than others provided in this book and can be read and assimilated in a few minutes. Whilst the case does not include any specific dates, there is an obvious chronology structure, so it is relatively straight forward to plot the timeline for this narrative. There are four different perspectives that could be considered: Bryan, James, the other team members and their clients. The situation described within this short case explores a line management dilemma between a relatively new recruit (who has been on the team for 18 months) and his line manager. The case could be used for a HRM, Coaching and Mentoring, Leadership or Organisational Behaviour programme.

Despite its brevity the case study explores a number of points including:

- Managing competing challenges between teamworking and the development of strong consultant-client relationships.
- The likely impact of working with colleagues from different cultural backgrounds.
- The role of each of the stakeholders in managing the performance of the company.

As you read through the case here are three questions you might consider:

⁵ Morris, 2022, p1

- What are the challenges facing Bryan as he prepares for a conversation with James?
- How might James' current work practices have been informed by his former work experiences prior to joining St Stephens Solutions?
- What other reasons might James' colleagues have for raising concerns about his performance and how might Bryan investigate these prior to speaking with James?

<Box ends>

3.7 Darkside Cases

More recently there has been a growing body of case researchers contributing to what has become known as the *dark side of business*. The rationale for these cases is based on the following premise:

“Case libraries are almost exclusively devoted to “best practice” cases or difficult decisions by basically well-managed firms. When we want to talk to our students about the more typical cases, let alone the really scandalous practices of the worst firms, the cupboard is almost entirely bare. It’s almost impossible to even find a reasonably rich case on a labor/management conflict.”⁶

The ***dark side case series*** emerged from the Critical Management Studies Interest Group (CMSIG) at the Academy of Management and has grown to become a regular annual competition. As the name implies this is a great place to go to when exploring some of the more complex, ethical and often scandalous elements of business and management. The Darkside Competition was established to build interest and participation in case writing, to develop new cases for teaching based on a broad range of themes including the integration of socio-political issues with organizational dynamics, with a specific focus on organisational and management problems within capitalist systems. Many of these cases draw insights from business ethics and explore the notion that so-called ‘ideal-type’ cases also need to recognise the wider social, political and economic factors that shape managerial decisions. Whilst originating in the US, this network has grown to attract cases from across the world including New Zealand, Canada, France and South Africa. Further details about this can be found in the final section of this book. For example, the *darkside case competition winners* in 2022 was derived from authors based at Wilfrid Laurier University and from Lazaridis School of Business & Economics, both located in Canada (and the winners from 2021 were located in business schools in Brazil).

3.8 Live cases

⁶ Adler, University of S California, quoted in Raufflet and Mills, 2017, p4

Finally, the live case is a very different type of case to those previously described that presents a very vivid and real challenge to students, often through introducing real people to bring their own organisational issues to the class:

“We find that the live case approach is an effective form of Work Integrated Learning, offering large numbers of students an authentic learning experience. We recommend this approach to universities seeking to offer large cohorts of students a workplace learning experience that is less time and resource dependent than internships.” Tasmanian School of Business and Economics, Australia⁷

“Experiential projects such as this make for richer teaching experiences for the faculty as well as receiving positive feedback from a majority of the students. In addition, [live cases enabled] the opportunity to observe students handling difficult tasks involving both project management and communication skills.” Western New England College, US⁸

These types of cases are highly popular for Leadership, Change Management and Consultancy class groups. The success of these fast-emerging approaches to the case method have been evidenced across the world from the US to New Zealand, and more recently there has been a growth in this type of case development at business schools based in Turkey. At the heart of the live case is a business leader coming to class to present a real and current business problem, inviting you and your student peers to help find a solution or recommendation to the challenges outlined by the visit. Research has demonstrated that across cultures this type of case study provides a genuine, engaging and realistic insight as they enable you to capture a vivid real picture, in contrast to a hypothetical or distant business situation from a paper-based case. If you find your classes have become over-reliant on paper cases based on remote or distant companies that are unlikely to be the type of organisation you might find yourself working in at some point in the future, or facing problems that are alien to you and not really of direct perceivable value, then it is easy for you to start feeling disengaged by the lack of genuine applicability. By contrast, a live case fixes the context for the case on a situation that outplays itself right in front of your eyes, and which can therefore be shaped around localised agendas, cultures, traditions and approaches. Whilst all previous forms of case content are rooted in the past, live cases are often presented in the current or even future tense. Live cases are discussed further in Chapter 7.

3.9 Other Ways of Segmenting Types of Case Studies

In addition to the typologies listed above, cases can be segmented according to their source of data or by their mode of presentation. Traditionally the case study was created by field researchers who had ventured into the organisation to gain first hand experiences of the problems faced within the business. These days that can be an

⁷ Schonell and Macklin, 2019, P1197

⁸ Elam and Spotts, 2004, P60

overcomplicated or costly process, so the emergence of more desk-based cases has led to bestselling cases based on secondary (or previously published) research outnumbering field data cases. The main point here for you to note is that if you look at the bottom of the first page of most case studies, you will most likely see a footnote that informs you whether this is based on field research or desk research. If it is exclusively derived from desk-based (previously published) research, then you can be sure that there is more data out there for you to go and explore should you feel you need to venture beyond the data contained within the actual case. Often these types of cases include bibliographies of the references used to research and develop the case and these can be valuable resources for your future research.

The benefits of *field research* cases are that they undoubtedly introduce new themes and fresh insights into real organisations including explorations of how a company's culture impacts on management functions. By contrast, *desk-based* cases based on previously published resources tend to provide broader perspectives on organisations as they tend to be multi-sourced to avoid any editorial biases. As the name implies, *general experience* cases tend to be developed by case writers who have been personally involved in some way within the organisation to which they are writing. As they reflect on their own general experiences, they can provide a single, deep dive into a particular organisational context but it is worth bearing in mind that they may be only presenting one perspective (their own) into the organisation rather than drawing broader insights from multiple stakeholders from within the organisation.

Another way of segmenting types of cases is by the way in which they are presented to you. As has already been stated, the traditional approach to the case method was to provide a large, paper-based story of a management situation in a single narrative style. More recently, there has been a growth in *sequential cases* or *case series*, which provide the same type of story but through the provision of numerous smaller bite-sized chunks of data. The giveaway here is when the case study title is post-texted with the figure 'A.' In this way, you might find yourself invited to read and prepare a case: '*Smith and Jones Ltd. A*' for class discussion. This shorter-than-usual case study will then be utilised by your class for discussion after which the tutor will then provide you with *Smith and Jones Ltd. B* to prepare for a future discussion. After this, *Smith and Jones Ltd. C, D* and *E* cases may follow which, when put together, provide the unfolding of a larger story with a broad and deep collection of data sets from which to help you derive insights into management practice. Figure 3.0 provides a summary of the typical approach to delivering a sequential case.

*** Insert **Figure 3.0: The Delivery Schedule for a Sequential Case** about here ***

Given our preference for digital rather than paper-based study these days, it is perhaps not surprising that there is a growing number of video or multimedia type case studies available for case class discussion. Typical digital cases might include a single video case, a more complex multimedia case or a simulation game. The

peril with **video** cases is that you can easily switch off and become more passive in your association with the case material, so when you are watching a video case it will be very important to adopt the same approach to case preparation that was discussed in the previous chapter. Ensure you are taking notes and capturing key points as you review the video material (at least three times as part of your preparation). The more complex **multimedia case** can be developed into a multi-layered selection of case data, sometimes compared to either a *buffet meal* or *department shopping store*. The *buffet* analogy invites you to 'dip in' to take from different elements of the multi-layered case data as you make repeated 'visits to the table.' The *department store* analogy refers to the structuring of multimedia cases that can be analogous to different '*departments*' of data, '*displayed*' in different ways on different '*floors*.' Your challenge is to ensure you have successfully navigated yourself through the whole '*store*' and to be careful not to miss any crucial element of case data displayed in any of the departments, which would be needed to inform your overall case analysis. The **simulation game** is the closest the case study comes to the gamification of learning and will invite you to make real-time decisions about a particular situation from which the consequences of your choices enable you to customise your journey through the case data towards your personally-determined conclusion. Learning from these types of multimedia cases will be explored in greater detail in Chapter 6.

3.10 Examples of Case Studies

This section includes three full cases, which provide illustrations of different types of case.

The first case is called: '**Leadership for Sustainable Healthcare**,' which is an example of a typical *situation* case study. It was written by Stefi Barna, Emma Thompson and Aditya Vyas of Medact (United Kingdom), was produced as part of an Erasmus+ funded programme involving **Medical Peace Work** (www.medicalpeacework.org) and is reproduced with permission. The full case is also available as a free case at www.thecasecentre.org. Questions related to the case study can be found in section 3.1 of this chapter.

The second case is called '**The Seat Belts in School Buses Controversy**,' which is an example of a typical *decision* type case study. It was written by Professor John Phillimore and Alan Tapper from Curtin University in Australia and was produced as part of **the Case Program of the Australia and New Zealand School of Government (ANZSOG)** and is reproduced with permission. The full case is also available as a free case at www.thecasecentre.org. Questions related to the case study can be found in section 3.3 of this chapter.

The third case is called ‘**James Walker and the Line Manager**’ and is an example of a short *incident* case. Questions related to the case can be found in section 3.6 of this chapter.

3.10.1 Case Study: Leadership for Sustainable Healthcare⁹

*** Insert **Medical Peace Work logo** about here ***

I. Breaking Bad News

There was a sense of collective fatigue in the staff room of the Diabetes Centre and the early morning birdsong was punctuated by the clink of spoons in coffee cups. Sam sat down in one of the worn brown chairs by the window and picked up a newspaper. He was the newest addition to the nursing staff and eager to start the day. “Hey, have you seen this?” he grinned. “According to this article, obesity-related conditions will bankrupt the national health service by 2050!” He handed the newspaper to the nursing sister next to him. Across the room, his supervisor Rosa looked up from her newspaper. “Oh what rubbish, Sam! Put that down. There are lots of challenges. Of course chronic conditions are a concern but so is our ageing population. And so is the cost of medical technology. Our Centre is pioneering coordinated care for patients with complex needs ... but I guess *that* kind of news doesn’t sell newspapers.” Sam put the paper down and sat up straight to reply.

“Sorry, everyone,” Shirly bustled in, pushing the door open with an elbow, her hands full of papers. She was the head of the nursing team and a consummate professional. It was unlike her to be late.

Manoeuvring through the mismatched furniture she took a free seat next to Sam and arranged herself at an angle to address the whole room. Normally her laugh filled the clinic and she seemed too vivacious for the stiff neatness of her uniform. But today her face was strained, and she placed her clipboard carefully on her lap.

“Morning everybody,” she began, “before handover today, I have two things to say.” She waited for everyone to settle down and then looked around.

“Most of you know Mr Williams. Sam, I’m not sure that you’ve met him: Mr Williams is an 71-year old man with diabetes, hypertension and early stage dementia. He’s been living on his own, with support from his children who live nearby. Some of you will remember that he was finding it increasingly difficult to control his blood sugar and a couple of months ago blood glucose monitoring revealed abnormal blood sugar levels.” Rosa and Anna nodded. “We then started monitoring him with twice weekly blood tests.”

⁹ Stefi Barna, Emma Pencheon and Aditya Vyas of Medact (United Kingdom), wrote this case based on published sources and generalised experience as part of an Erasmus+ funded programme entitled medicalpeacework.org © 2016. Reproduced by permission.

“Mr Williams’ adherence to his antihypertensive medication was poor - basically because of his increasing forgetfulness - and as a result his blood pressure was not well controlled.”

Rosa lifted a finger to signal Shirley. “He always collected his repeat prescriptions on time, but he didn’t always remember to take them. His son told me that he has four months of medication stockpiled at home.”

“Ah, I didn’t know that,” Shirley said. She looked at her notes. “Mr Williams is also taking diuretic medication but it seems that he didn’t manage to increase his fluid intake at home. Three weeks ago he became dehydrated. I’m sorry to say that this resulted in a fall. His son found him a few hours after he fell and called an ambulance.”

There was a pause.

Shirley continued reading from her notes. “From the emergency department Mr Williams was admitted to the acute care ward and treated for dehydration. Due to some initial confusion about who the responsible physician was, two days passed before the orthopedic specialist was able to review his case.”

“On examination the ortho discovered bruising over his right hip and requested an X-ray. X-ray revealed a fractured neck of femur. Mr Williams was put on the trauma list for a hip replacement, with an operation scheduled for the following week.” Shirley looked up. “This is about two weeks ago. Is everyone with me?”

Everyone nodded. “After the operation he was transferred back to the acute ward where he made a good recovery and was admitted to the rehabilitation ward. However, during rehabilitation - for his hip - concerns were raised about a cognitive deficit - this would be related to his dementia - and a liaison psychiatric review was requested. After the review it was decided that Mr Williams would not be able to continue living alone and he was discharged to a residential home.” She looked around at the group impassively.

“Now it appears that Mr Williams has become increasingly confused and the care home staff are finding him difficult to manage. His GP has decided that access to specialist psychiatric care is necessary and has sent him for readmission.”

“So that’s why we haven’t seen him,” Rosa sighed. “That’s really a shame. He was doing so well living on his own.”

Shirley frowned. “Yes, he seems to have gone downhill very quickly. I’d like to put a group together to think about whether there is anything we could have done differently in his case. Rosa, could you look into that?” Rosa nodded.

Shirley put down her clipboard and fixed her eyes at the back of the room. “Now the second issue today is, well ...it’s also not good news.” She paused and narrowed her eyes. “Dr Mortimer and I had a meeting yesterday. Senior management seem to feel that the Diabetes Centre is no longer financially viable.” She looked around the

room. "They have initiated a sixth-month review to identify efficiency savings and if those are not found they are considering closing the Centre."

"I don't understand," Asha's voice floated across the room. "Are we losing our jobs?"

Shirly sighed. "No, I don't think it will affect the nursing staff yet. The management team are looking at other services: whether the counsellors are needed, whether we can afford the dietician's programmes, and whether we should continue to run the outreach clinic for early stage case-finding."

"What?" Rosa interjected. "But that will undermine the quality of services we've developed here! We've worked for years to build up early intervention and preventive care."

Asha leaned forward. "What does Dr Mortimer say?"

Shirly picked her words cautiously. "Dr Mortimer appreciates the management's financial concerns and can see no alternative course of action." She knew that vilifying the clinical director might take the pressure off now but would serve them no good in the long run.

Sam picked at the sharp edge of his uniform. He was the most junior nurse and the most recent addition to the team. He had been so thrilled with the job and just last week he had signed a 12-month contract for a studio flat close to the hospital. As a fresh graduate, he would probably be the first one to go.

"Has the decision already been made?" he asked. Even as he spoke his words echoed awkwardly in the room.

Shirly glanced at the wall clock. Patients would be arriving soon.

"Look everyone," she said, her voice rising slightly. "Clearly this is cause for concern and I will make time to discuss it with each of you individually. Right now however, we need to get on with the morning clinic. Remember, patients come first, so put this out of your mind for the moment."

She rummaged in her papers for the handover sheet and launched into the morning routine. "OK, in Chair 1 we're going to have Mr. Jonas... Asha, can you take him?... And we need a stock check... Sam can you do that?"

It was business as usual.

II. The Suggestion Box

But it didn't feel like business as usual. Sam couldn't put it out of his mind. It was the staff who made the Centre so wonderful but now the good cheer was reserved for the patients. The minute they turned away their faces fell. Sam had a feeling that something could be done - that something *must* be done.

“Shirly,” he called out, as she swept past the nurse’s desk. She turned partly towards him. “Ah, Sam,” she said, catching her breath, “What can I do for you?” She was, as ever, in the middle of something else.

“I’d like... I mean... ummm” he paused, and then the words rushed out before Shirly could move on. “Could I create some kind of a suggestions box? Staff might have ideas about how to cut costs in their area and we could share them.”

Shirly glanced at him in surprise. “Sure, that’s fine. It’ll be good to see what the team’s thoughts are of course and if there are any useful ideas I’ll pass them on to Dr Mortimer.” As she turned to go, she looked back at him. “It’s nice that you want to help, Sam,” she smiled and walked off.

The next day Sam wrapped a shoe box in gift paper and set it at the nurses’ station. The red and gold stripes stood out proudly next to the packs of latex gloves and disinfectant wipes. Whenever he passed the station he reminded his colleagues to submit their ideas. At the end of the week the box was stuffed and scraps of paper poked up through the rectangular opening in the top of the box.

From her desk Shirly watched Sam pull up a chair and sit down at the station’s computer. He opened the box, pulled out the folded sheets of paper, and smoothed out the creases. Then he leaned forward to read them. She turned her attention back to the towering pile of files in front of her, the interminable paperwork which made her time with patients fleetingly rare.

Name	Suggestion	Sam’s Research References
Asha	At a conference last year someone talked about changes they had made on the ward that improved patient care and saved money. I think there are some good practices we would pick up from Operation TLC.	Operation TLC http://www.globalactionplan.org.uk/
Anna	Until last year I worked in the kidney unit. They made a lot of efficiency changes and I remember hearing that the National Health Service would save £1 billion if their work was rolled out nationally!	Green Nephrology http://sustainablehealthcare.org.uk/sustainable-specialties-greening-nephrology http://www.bmj.com/content/346/bmj.f588
Rosa	I’ve been reading about new ways of dealing with anxiety and depression. Some mental health people are talking about how to avoid over-prescribing and non-pharmaceutical treatment options. Maybe there are ideas for us there?	Sustainable Psychiatry http://sustainablehealthcare.org.uk/podcasts/2015/01/3-minute-film-sustainability-mental-health

The following Friday Sam and Shirly walked to an empty Relatives Room to discuss the issues undisturbed. “I don’t have long I’m afraid,” Shirly said, checking her watch as she sat down, “We’ve got a ward round at 3 pm.” She looked at Sam expectantly.

Sam cleared his throat. He arranged two piles of paper in front of him. “The suggestions fall into two categories. First, there is a lot of information about how we run our buildings and the infrastructure of the Centre. I’ve called that ‘Estates Savings’. He pulled up a stapled collection of documents and handed it across the table. Shirley lifted her chin to read.

“For example, we could save money with better waste management or by insulating the building to save energy,” Sam began. “We could print less often, now that many of our documents are online.”

Shirly took off her reading glasses and smiled widely. “Alright, Sam. It’s true that every little bit helps. Initiatives like this can save money, but a few pennies on the pound won’t do. We’re facing much larger financial difficulties.”

“I know, I know.” Sam hurried on. “There are other suggestions and all of those savings *together* will help, but maybe not enough. That’s why, in this second pile I’ve put suggestions about the clinical side of things. Ideas for better treatment options, or prevention of illness. I’ve called this pile ‘Clinical Savings’.”

Sam handed the top packet to Shirley and watched as she skimmed the pages. “Sum this up for me,” she sighed. “What is the main suggestion?”

Sam’s eyes widened. “Well it’s about the ‘triple bottom line’. That means trying to reduce costs, improve patient care, and reduce waste and pollution, all at the same time.”

Shirly flipped the pages. “Has this been tested somewhere?”

“Well, that’s what’s so great,” Sam sat forward in his chair. “One hospital ward tried out a project to make operational savings... and they found that it improved patient experience too. It’s called TLC.” Sam leaned forward to make the acronym clear: “‘T’ for ‘turn off equipment’, ‘L’ for ‘lights’ i.e. turn them off where possible, and ‘C’ for ‘close doors and windows’. And of course TLC is also short for Tender Loving Care, which is about patients.”

Shirly shifted her position on the chair. “Go on.”

“In another clinic they improved care quality while reducing both costs and waste just by telephoning patients who had just started on a new drug to see how they were doing. Just a few simple phone calls reduced non-adherence from 16% to 9%! So patients’ health improved and that cut down on unnecessary admissions and appointments.”

Shirly glanced upwards, lips pursed.

Sam hurried on. “Some projects are getting patients to take a more active role in their own care, treating them as partners. They monitor their own blood pressure. Or they keep an eye out for the side effects of medications, and then increase or decrease their dose. Or they flag up warning signs before complications set in, if

they know what to look for.” He stopped and looked to Shirley for support. “Would these things work here?”

Shirly nodded. “They might. Its true that if we encouraged telephone and email consultations we would cut down on routine appointments which don’t add anything to the quality of the patient experience. But someone will need to go through each of the ideas systematically and get an estimate of the potential savings. And the possible risks.”

She looked at the piles of paper. “It would mean quite a transformation in how we do things but it’ll need a bit of political will. I’m not sure that there is enough here to convince Dr Mortimer.”

“Shirly,” Sam leaned forward again. “I was thinking about the patient you told us about, about Mr Williams. Shirley raised her eyebrows and sighed.

“Rosa says that as part of his case review we could see whether we could have improved outcomes while also using some of these ideas to cut costs and reduce waste. It would be a test case for these ideas.”

Shirly frowned. “Hmmm, that’s an interesting idea. Can you and Rosa put together some concrete ideas and get them to me by the end of the week?” She looked at her watch. “And now you should get back to the ward, I’m sure your patients miss you.” She winked at Sam, stood up and was out the door before Sam had gotten to his feet.

III. The Proposal

On Monday morning Sam and Rosa sat down with Sam’s packet of proposals and Mr. Williams’ voluminous case file. “How should we start?” asked Sam excitedly.

“Well,” Rosa replied, “I think we should map out all of Mr Williams’ experiences. What happened to him? Were any of his problems preventable? What was the cost of not preventing it – to his health and to the health service? What could have been done differently - to prevent his suffering and to save money?” She pulled out a fresh sheet of paper and sketched out a simple grid.

“Yes,” Sam replied. How could care be improved and waste be reduced in Mr William’s case?”

3.10.2 Case Study: The Seat Belts in School Buses Controversy¹⁰

*** Insert ANZSOG logo about here ***

On 21 October 2005, a school bus hit a truck and rolled over at Baldivis, about 50 kilometres south of Perth. The accident left 25 teenagers hurt, one critically and four seriously. The bus belonged to a private school, Mandurah Baptist College, and was fitted with sash seat belts. However, the accident was quickly interpreted as highlighting the fact that seat belts were not compulsory in school buses. A flurry of public commentary followed, much of it making the case for compulsory seat belts. The Western Australian government had to respond to this policy issue in the face of intense media and public scrutiny.

Children, safety and school buses

The Western Australian government, like all Australian state governments, manages a fleet of school buses for transporting students to and from government schools. They are commonly known as “orange buses”. The buses are privately owned, mostly by small family operators. The state government’s Public Transport Authority (PTA) regulates the operation of this fleet and pays the owners for their services. In 2005 the fleet numbered about 800 buses and was used by about 24,000 students. Most of these operated in rural areas. In addition the Education Department owned and operated a fleet of about 150 buses for use in transporting state school students to and from special events. Private schools either owned their own buses or chartered buses from the private sector.

School Bus Services, a branch of the PTA, managed school bus safety, carrying out inspections and enforcing design requirements. National standards for vehicle safety were prescribed by the Australian Design Rules (ADR), administered by the Commonwealth’s Department of Infrastructure and Transport under the *Motor Vehicle Standards Act 1989*. ADR 68, concerning occupant impact protection in buses,¹¹ required all Australian buses to have seat belts, with the exception of public transport buses, buses with fewer than 17 seats, and buses with seat heights lower than a metre. Thus it was the norm for school buses not to have seat belts. In 2005 Western Australia had a Labor government led by Premier Geoff Gallop. The PTA fell under the jurisdiction of the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, Alannah MacTiernan.

Labor had won the 2001 state election on a platform that included a promise to trial the implementation of seat belts in school buses. However, the Government refrained from action on the grounds that it was awaiting the findings of research on the matter by the Queensland transport safety authorities. A research report was expected to be published sometime in 2005.

¹⁰ Professor John Phillimore and Alan Tapper from Curtin University in Australia wrote this case study which was produced as part of the Case Program of the Australia and New Zealand School of Government (ANZSOG) and is reproduced with permission. ©2013

¹¹ See <http://www.comlaw.gov.au/Details/F2006L01454>

The generally accepted view in both government and the PTA was that seat belts in school buses were a low priority. The previous Coalition government under premier Richard Court (1993–2001) had not pursued the issue. It was widely understood that school buses had a very good safety record, and that the fitting of seat belts would be costly and not the best use of public money even from a children’s safety standpoint.

However, this view was not universal. In June 2005 a small advocacy group, the Mosquito Mums, had had a petition lodged in the Legislative Assembly with 567 signatures asking for compulsory seat belts and that no child should be allowed to stand in school buses.¹² The petition was put forward by Labor member for Mindarie, John Quigley. One of the activists, Debbie Diamantis, a British migrant, had memories of a school bus accident in Britain in which 11 children were killed, where seat belts were not being used. Quigley’s grievance speech cited two bus accidents in Queensland: one at Mount Tamborine in 1990 in which 18 tourists were killed, and another on the Gillies Highway in 1987 in which six school children died.

The Baldvis bus accident and the public response

In the first newspaper reports of the Baldvis accident the local police inspector claimed that the presence of seat belts had minimised injuries. This claim was echoed by Debbie Diamantis of the Mosquito Mums group. Murray Cowper, the Opposition spokesperson for road safety, contended that the accident showed that seat belts save lives. The school principal said the same. Labor backbencher Quigley maintained that schools should refuse to hire buses not fitted with seat belts. Rob Fry, president of the WA Council of State School Organisations, was reported as saying that all school buses should be fitted with seat belts.

On Saturday 22 October 2005, the day after the accident, the Director General of the Department of Planning and Infrastructure, Greg Martin, met up with Premier Geoff Gallop at an unrelated event. The two briefly and informally discussed the previous day’s accident and Martin advised the Premier that it was the nationally-held view that compulsory seat belts were not a high priority in light of the opportunity costs and the safety record of school buses.

The next day, 23 October, the *Sunday Times* newspaper reported Premier Gallop as saying that school buses were generally very safe and Michelle Roberts, Community Safety Minister, as claiming that seat belts were costly and not cost-effective.¹³ On the Monday following, the state’s rival newspaper, *The West Australian*, reported Alannah MacTiernan as saying that the cost of fitting seat belts could be \$50 million, with little safety gain.¹⁴

Thus the government had a clear and consistent line of argument: the number of accidents involving school buses was minimal, and the cost of retrofitting buses and replacing those which could not be retrofitted was more than \$50 million. In addition, a Queensland-based research report was due to be considered in the next month by

¹² See Hansard, 30 June 2005, 3758–59.

¹³ Flint, J. (23 October 2005). “Proof school buses need seat belts; Mothers lobby for belts”. *Sunday Times*, 1.

¹⁴ Penn, S. (24 October 2005). “Boycott buses without belts: MPs”. *The West Australian*, 8.

Australian Transport Ministers. MacTiernan said the research was expected to take the view that only buses on dangerous roads should have seatbelts and that buses without seatbelts were safer than cars with them.

However, the pressure on the government mounted.

On Tuesday 25 October, *The West Australian* reported that a school bus contractor in Busselton, Ray Gannaway, had been fighting for more than a year for PTA to allow him to get seatbelts fitted to three new buses being built for him in NSW, as the PTA were concerned that “premature allocations of buses with seatbelts may create a community expectation that if your buses are fitted with seatbelts then all buses should have seatbelts”. Mr Gannaway said that the cost would be an extra \$14,000 per bus, or the equivalent of 50 cents a seat each week over the life of the bus contract. Facing criticism from the Opposition and the WA Council of State School Organisations about “bureaucracy gone mad”, Minister MacTiernan was reported as saying that she would overturn the PTA ruling, thereby allowing Gannaway to have seat belts fitted, but defended the PTA officers.¹⁵

On the second weekend after the accident the *Sunday Times* took up the case for seat belts, running a front page and several other full-page stories on the issue. The paper reported the position of MacTiernan and the government which now was that it would work towards having a “targeted implementation plan” for some buses on identified dangerous routes.¹⁶ But in an editorial it answered the cost-benefit argument with the claim that “\$50 million is no small sum, but a price can’t be put on a child’s life”, and in any case the government had a surplus of \$1.2 billion. Seat belts could be paid for out of earmarked infrastructure spending or from revenue from stamp duty.¹⁷

Reporter Joe Spagnolo backed this up with an article entitled “Throw Out Calculator”, in which he quoted the WA Government’s Office of Road Safety as saying that seat belts in cars reduce deaths by a factor of ten.¹⁸ The paper launched a petition for compulsory seatbelts in all school buses. Fry and Diamantis were quoted in support.

On the following Friday, 4 November, *The West Australian* quoted the Police Commissioner, Karl O’Callaghan, as saying that having school buses without seat belts was an “unsafe practice”. The safety of children in a crash was “paramount”. “I don’t think it is a good message to send to young people that they should put on a seat belt in the car but when they are in the bus it’s OK not to wear a seatbelt,” he remarked. Belts should be introduced gradually, including on all buses on which schoolchildren travel en masse. Gervase Chaney, the president of the Kidsafe WA board, commented that “it was astounding that the cost of installing seat belts was considered more important than children’s lives”.¹⁹ All this was strong support for the *Sunday Times’* position.

¹⁵ Jerrard, S. (25 October 2005). “Crash sparks safety row”. *The West Australian*, 3.

¹⁶ Spagnolo, J. (30 October 2005). “Gallop avoids the seat-belt outcry. Only some buses will get restraints”. *Sunday Times*, 10.

¹⁷ Editorial (30 October 2005). “Gallop is wrong on school bus seat belts”. *Sunday Times*, 1.

¹⁸ Spagnolo, J. (30 October 2005). “Throw out calculator”. *Sunday Times*, 1.

¹⁹ Morfesse, L. (4 November 2005). “Police chief wants seatbelts on school buses”. *The West Australian*, 9.

On the Saturday, however, despite a recent history of antagonism between the state government and *The West Australian*, the newspaper strongly endorsed the government's stand.²⁰ MacTiernan was supported as being "on the right track: relevant research must be taken into account and the matter thought through before a decision is made". The benefits of belts were questioned. "There is a strong case to be made that more lives would be saved and injuries avoided if more safe cycle paths were built and underpasses and guarded crossings provided at schools near busy roads."

This point was reinforced in a separate article by journalist Jessica Strutt.²¹ She reported the views of Professor Drew Richardson, the NRMA-ACT Road Safety Trust chairman, who was also professor of emergency medicine at the Australian National University. Richardson supported seat belts in buses but argued that it was a lower priority than other measures. He noted that there were 178 road fatalities in WA in 2004, none of which involved buses. "Seatbelts in school buses is about priority number six after all the things we should do to get the 178 fatalities down." On his calculations, retrofitting school buses with seat belts "would cost up to \$500 million per child's life saved." Strutt added that "WA Public Transport Authority records show that there has never been a child fatality on the State's contracted school bus system. Orange contract buses have been involved in 110 crashes over 10 years, resulting in only minor injuries to just 15 students."

A little over two weeks since the accident, the government was under strong pressure from safety and education groups and the Opposition, galvanised by a campaign from the *Sunday Times*. *The West Australian*, however, had come out in support of the government's policy position that the opportunity costs involved in adopting compulsory seat belts were not worth the benefit, given the safety record of school buses in WA and Australia, and that a Queensland research report would be presented soon which might shed more light and advice on the situation. The political question was whether it was worth holding out against the criticism, in defence of a policy position that seemed to have intellectual merit if not popularity.

²⁰ Editorial (5 November 2005). "Minister has to make best of safety money". *The West Australian*, 18.

²¹ Strutt, J. (5 November 2005). "Seatbelt money 'better spent on safe lane for school buses'". *The West Australian*, 8.

3.10.3 Case Study: James Walker and the Line Manager²²

James arrived at Johannesburg-based St. Stephens Solutions, a project management firm, 18 months ago, having previously held roles at two rival organisations, also based in South Africa. He moved to South Africa from Australia five years ago and was keen to broaden his experiences as a project manager, having initially impressed the recruitment team at St. Stephens with his recent portfolio of clients, with whom he had successfully been contracted to manage significant construction projects.

He reported to Bryan Pollard, who had been with the firm for more than ten years and who was responsible for a team of seven project managers, including James. At first, James seemed to get off to a good start, picking up new projects and working closely with Bryan and his team to develop project proposals in accordance with the client's demands. The clients seemed to take an immediate liking to James and his rapport seemed to be warm, friendly and positive. However, Bryan soon started to sense that something wasn't quite right as, one by one, the other members of his team began making comments about James' performance. James seemed to be very good at doing exactly what was requested and little more. He tended to find the simplest and most straight forward way to complete a task, rarely doing more than was asked of him, but always taking time to build his own networks and friendships with the clients. In some contexts, this would be fine, but often in Bryan's experience, projects would not go to plan and the team were frequently required to go the extra mile to complete additional work or manage other issues that hadn't initially been anticipated. One by one the team started to make comments back to Bryan suggesting James was avoiding these issues wherever possible, leaving other members of the team to pick up the extra workload. Bryan could sense that tensions were mounting among the team.

As James' line manager, Bryan knew that he would have to call James in for a conversation, but he was also aware that the clients had taken a real shine to him. He was unsure how to handle the conversation.

3.11 In Summary

In summary, this chapter has:

- introduced you to eight different types of case study, which serve different learning functions and for which some tend to favour specific subject areas.
- compared the merits and pitfalls of drawing insights from field researched cases, desk-based cases (based exclusively on previously

²² This case was originally produced by the author as an illustration of an incident case for Andrews, 2021.

published material) and cases derived from the author's general experiences.

- explored different ways that cases are presented to you, with different types of text-based formats and multimedia formats.