Reviewer’s report

Title: The case study approach

Version: 3 Date: 19 March 2011

Reviewer: Willem Herbert van Harten

Reviewer’s report:

Dear editor and authors,

The paper titled "The case study approach" is much improved compared to the first submission related to structure, information in boxes and accessibility. One issue is however remaining related both to the introduction and purpose of the paper. I would not agree that "case studies are relatively underused in HSR"; for instance in organisational improvement, quality and safety management I would content that they are rather used to frequently, although often in view of the inability to use alternative methods. Therefore my earlier remark was that the paper would especially gain interest if it would also explore the question "when to use case studies or under what conditions or circumstances case studies are likely to be of added value compared to using more rigorous designs".

The authors have indeed raised this question in the introduction under "aim", but do not address the issue in the text, either under one of the headings nor in the conclusion.

Adding this in the text and conclusions, would add to the value of the paper considerably as most of the information is not so much innovative but rather renewed and comprehensively presented based on recent cases.

I would advise the editor to consider this a compulsory revision, and feel that the authors should be given the opportunity to improve their paper accordingly in a last round.

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:

see earlier statement