



Australian Association for Environmental Education
NSW Chapter

Australian Association for Environmental Education NSW

Write It Up!

Professional Learning Series Training Workshop

Using the *Write It Up!* guide to write
Sustainability Education Case Studies



Course outline

Module Number	Topic	Session Time
Introduction	Defining Sustainability Education Case Studies	10.00 – 10.30
Module 1	Plan and Research	10.30 – 11.15
	Morning tea	11.15 – 11.30
Module 1	Plan and Research (continued)	11.30 – 12.15
Module 2	Organise and Analyse	12.15 – 1.00
	Lunch	1.00 – 1.30
Module 3	Write and Edit	1.30 – 2.30
Module 4	Publish and Evaluate	2.30 – 3.00
	Finish	3.00pm



Workshop outcomes

1. To encourage sustainability education practitioners to share their experiences through writing
2. To facilitate collaborative learning opportunities
3. To provide skills to effectively plan, research, analyse, write and publish a case study
4. To develop an outline and plan for your case study





What is a case study?

“A case study is a story told in a structured way.

Case studies are frequently used to examine complex issues in real-life applications.

They are ideally suited for understanding phenomena that require a holistic view, where cause and effect relationships are likely influenced by a number of factors.”

CIDA, 2007

The AAEE “Write it Up!” guide has been developed to encourage sustainability practitioners to write up their stories to enable wider understanding of good practice in sustainability education.



What is sustainability education?

Good practice characteristics...

- **Interdisciplinary and holistic:** education for sustainability is embedded in your whole program, not dealt with as a separate subject or issue.
- **Values-driven:** accepted social norms, as well as the values and principles that underpin sustainability are made explicit so they can be examined, debated, tested and applied.
- **Critical thinking and problem solving:** are encouraged, leading to confidence in addressing the dilemmas and challenges of sustainable development.
- **Multi-method:** a range of different learning models are employed. Teaching is not just about passing on knowledge; learners and educators work together to acquire knowledge, solve problems and shape their physical and social environments.
- **Participatory decision-making:** learners participate in decisions on how they are to learn.
- **Locally relevant:** local as well as global issues are addressed, using the learners' own language. Languages and cultures say things differently.

To better understand Sustainability Education review pgs 2 and 22 of the *Write it Up!* guide.



Should I write a case study?

And if so why....

Before writing your case study ask yourself:

- What exactly is this case study about?
- Does it demonstrate sustainability education?
- Why would someone else be interested?



Well-written case studies have many benefits:

- Helping the project team review their experiences and draw out lessons
- Allowing others to share in and learn from your experience
- Creating opportunities to promote the good work of an organisation



Module 1

Plan and Research



Getting your project team together to properly plan the case study will help:

- Determine who will be involved in developing the case study
- Ensure the team is clear on what they want to achieve and how they will achieve it
- Clarify lines of communication within the team and with other stakeholders
- Identify project scope, and develop some idea of amount of time / resources needed
- Ensure everyone knows what their tasks are and can be accountable for their contributions
- Identify the target audience – what will interest them and how they will use the case study
- Work out how the case study will be written and published
- Strengthen the commitment of participants to continue with the project

Similar benefits will be gained if you are developing your case study on your own



The artistry of planning

Crucial steps in planning and research:

1. Define the case study
2. Develop a research strategy
3. Develop an action plan
4. Continually evaluate your progress





Step 1 – Define the case study

What is the story you want to tell? Consider:

- Background and context (political, social, economic, legal, environmental)
- Purpose
- Challenges
- Learning processes employed
- Key events (plot)
- Stakeholders (characters)
- Costs and benefits
- Resources
- Outcomes
- Lessons learnt

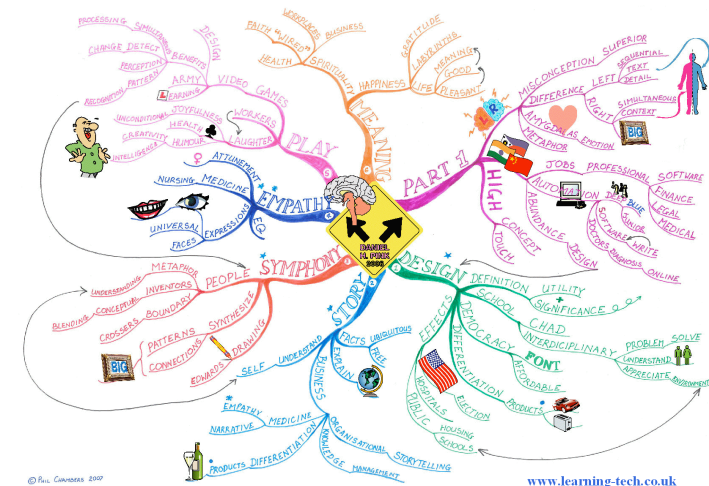




Activity 1 – Creating a mind map

A mind map can be a useful tool for defining your case study.

- Review the Tom Thumb Lagoon case study
- As a group, create a mind map for the Tom Thumb Lagoon project
- Don't censor, just let all the ideas come and identify connections between them
- Consider background and context, project purpose, challenges, learning processes, key events, stakeholders, costs and benefits, resources, outcomes and lessons learnt.





Activity 2 – Mind-map your case study

Create a mind map for your case study. Consider the following:

- What is the case study about?
- How does it demonstrate sustainability education?
- What was the challenge that needed to be addressed?
- Why would someone else be interested?
- What lessons can you share?





Step 2 – Develop a research strategy

What research will you need to undertake?

- Who needs to be involved in preparing the case study?
- What qualitative and quantitative data do you need?
- How will you collect the data and source stories from participants?



How can we effectively undertake this research?



Participatory Action Research (PAR)

Action research is a cyclical or spiral method of planning, taking action, observing, evaluating (including self-evaluation) and critically reflecting before planning again

Participatory means that the research is not “on” people but “with” them – people are treated as partners in the process of learning

Action means there is a questioning process rather than starting out with the answer

- PAR may involve establishing an interest group and deciding how to go about the research – you will all grow in knowledge, ownership and skill
- You should record the continual learning of the PAR process as you go





Methods for data collection

Data and personal stories for your case study can be collected from:

- **Journals** – provide critical reflection of a project and can show how assumptions are tested, challenged, confirmed or changed
- **Documentation and archival records** – memos, studies, agendas, reports, letters, project design and evaluation documents
- **Graphical records** – charts, maps, photos, designs and survey data
- **Media reports** – newspapers, internet, television and newsletters
- **Direct observation** – of project events, participants and the environment
- **Focus groups and interviews** – invite participants to tell the story they think is most important; establish links between actual practice and good practice



Activity 3 – Develop your research strategy

What research needs to be undertaken for your case study?

- Who needs to be involved and consulted?
- Are there any challenges that need to be overcome? E.g. sensitive issues that cannot be made public, concerns about reputation etc
- What data do you need?
- How will you collect the data?
- How will you source stories from participants?
- What were the main lessons learnt?

If you cannot answer these questions identify who can



Step 3 - Develop an action plan – the 3 W's

- **What** needs to be done?
- **Who** will do it?
- **When** will they do it by?

Example action plan – Tom Thumb Lagoon case study

Activity	Steps	Who	When	Comments
Establish case study working group	Contact Friends of Tom Thumb, CVA, council, CMA, schools	GF	June 07	Letters to be sent out
Identify key issues	Mind-mapping workshop	SN	July 07	Need facilitator
Research and data collection	Conduct focus group Hold interviews Review photos	SD JN SN	August 07	
Organise and analyse data and stories	Review all data Select stories and quotes	GF SN	September 07	



Activity 4 – Develop an action plan

- Review your mind map and research strategy (Activities 2 & 3)
- Develop an action plan based on the information you documented
- Remember to cover the key points of What, Who and When
- Complete the action plan table in your participant workbook

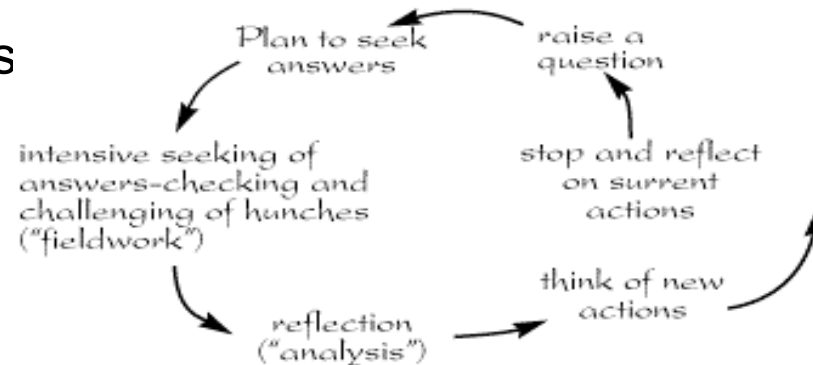




Step 4 - Evaluate and document your progress

Action research involves a continual cycle of reflection.

- Plan and research
- Take action
- Analyse outcomes
- Reflect on possible improvements
- Take action
- Analyse outcomes
- Reflect.....





Module 2

Organise and Analyse



Having completed your research, what criteria can be used to decide which information will be included?

We will consider five questions:

1. What are the significant issues?
2. What happened (process) and who was involved (participants)?
3. What sustainability education principles or practices are showcased?
4. What were the achievements and outcomes?
5. What lessons were learnt?



1. What are the significant issues?

Take time to look at what you've discovered and make sense of it

- Look at the parts individually and then consider the project as a whole. How does it all fit together?
- What's jumping out of the data for attention?
- Critically reflect on your assumptions and values – can the data be interpreted differently? Engage others in the analysis in order to gain different insights and interpretations

Individual activity

- Return to your mind map and circle points that you believe are significant



2. What happened and who was involved?

Your case study should tell a story so you need to clearly identify what happened (the plot) and who was involved (the characters)

- Consider the process from start to finish as well as any proposed future activities
- Outline who was involved – who were the stakeholders, what was their role, level of involvement and expectations

Small group activity - review the Tom Thumb Lagoon case study

Group 1: How does it outline the process (the plot)?

Group 2: Can you easily identify who was involved (the characters)?

Group 3: List three ways in which the case study could be improved



3. What sustainability education characteristics does your project demonstrate?

Is your project:

- **Interdisciplinary and holistic**
- **Values-driven**
- **Locally relevant**

Does it involve:

- **Critical thinking and problem solving**
- **Multi-method approaches**
- **Participatory decision-making**

Review the Tom Thumb Lagoon case study

- Document the sustainability education practices this project showcases. Are there any that are missing?
- Refer to the characteristics and principles on pages 2 and 22 of the *Write it Up!* guide for further information.



4. What were the achievements and outcomes?

- Carefully consider what you achieved with your project
- Document the outcomes clearly and from a number of perspectives
- Consider whether your outcomes link to your original aims
- Link your outcomes to sustainability education characteristics and principles

Tom Thumb Lagoon case study outcomes

Between 2001 and 2006, volunteers:

- Planted 6121 native plants and controlled weeds over 21.3 ha
- Collected 661 kg of rubbish
- Coordinated 2072 volunteer person days
- Partnered with youth organisations, government and businesses

Question: Do these outcomes match the projects original aims?



5. What lessons were learnt?

- What worked, what didn't and why?
- What challenges were overcome?
- With the benefit of hindsight, what would you do differently?
- What advice can you give to other sustainability practitioners?

Small group activity - Review the Tom Thumb Lagoon case study

- Are the lessons learnt clearly identified? If so, what are they?
- How could the lessons learnt in this project be communicated without endangering the reputation of the project and its stakeholders?



PAUSE AND REFLECT

Take time to think through and discuss your case study with your team:

- What have you learnt?
- Have you begun to clarify your purpose?
- Have you gathered and analysed your data?
- Are you achieving your original aims?
- What is the next step?





Module 3

Write and Edit



Case study writing style

- Readers love a good story! - your case study should *tell the story* of a great sustainability education project
- Use short-story writing techniques, present your case study in an engaging and compelling style
- Use as much dialogue as possible (straight narrative is boring)
- Gain the reader's attention with an interesting first paragraph – start with a bang!
- The more specific the case study, the more effective it will be
- Give yourself a tight deadline
- Keep your audience in mind and consider how and where your case study will be published



Case study writing process

Writing is best done in stages:

- Discuss, read, research and make notes
- Create an outline (list the main headings and subheadings)
- Write the first draft
- Get a peer review (have someone else read it)
- Revise the draft based on feedback
- Check the accuracy with stakeholders
- Edit and do a final proof read
- Check final version with stakeholders





Engaging your audience

- To make the story personal, use the perspective of participants, including personal lessons, achievements, insights and transformation
- Begin at the end, then explain how the project participants got to that point
- Build the case study use extracts from journals and news clippings
- Compare and contrast the similarities and difference over time
- Use the language of fiction - write lively descriptions, delve into dramatic events, describe your characters and set the scene.
- Use quotes, illustrations, callouts and other graphical layout techniques to make the case study more readable
- Directly question the reader - draw them into the narrative



Case study structure

- Introduction
- Project aims
- Key issues
- Important stakeholders
- Key project activities
- Good practice principles
- Results/outcomes
- Lessons learned

**There are many different ways to structure your case study.
Examples are provided in the *Write it up!* guide.**



Activity 5 - Case study structure

Prepare an outline for your case study by writing three dot points under each of the headings in your workbook:

- Project aims
- Key issues
- Important stakeholders
- Key project activities
- Good practice principles
- Results/outcomes
- Lessons learned



Activity 6 - Writing the first paragraph

1. Return to the Tom Thumb case study and review the opening paragraph under the sub-heading “Saving the lagoon” on page 3
2. Think about how this might be improved
3. Write the first paragraph of your own case study using the tips you have just learnt
4. In ten minutes you will be asked to share your paragraph with a partner



Editing

Editing your case study is critical. Editors may take on different roles:

- As Reader
- As Researcher
- As Ethicist





As **reader**, your role is to check for:

- Readability and spelling
- Organisation
- Interest
- Purpose
- Balance and perspective (fairness)
- Grammar and punctuation





As **researcher**, your role is to check for:

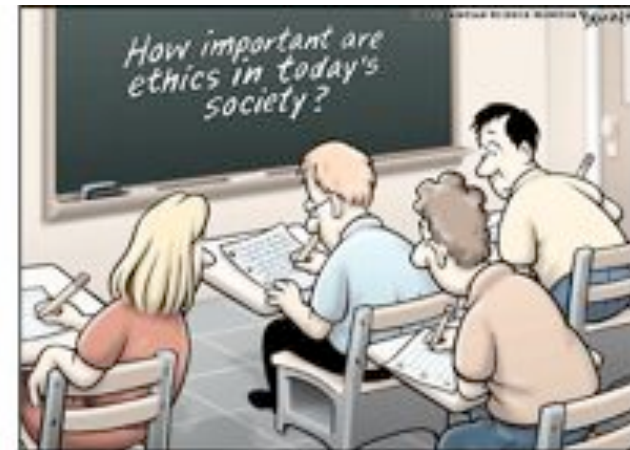
- Representation by all decision-makers (avoid bias / ensure you get the whole story)
- Professionalism
- Clarification of the narrator's role - who is speaking and with what authority
- Triangulation and cross-checking of all facts





As **ethicist**, your role is to check for:

- Consent from all stakeholders
- Appropriate attributions and acknowledgement
- Careful review and verification
- Provision of contact information
- Liability





Module 4

Publish and Evaluate



Publishing

A key reason for writing a case study is to share what you have learnt.

Publishing options include:

- Email and personal networks
- AAEE website – submit online at www.aaeensw.org.au
- Local media feature article
- Presentation to stakeholder group or colleagues
- Report on outcomes to local council
- Presentation of a paper at a conference on education, change or environment
- Professional journals
- Self-publishing
- Running workshops



Reflection

Think about how you might publish your case study.
If there's time share this with your neighbour



Publishing your case study

AAEE (NSW) is offering opportunities to publish case studies on outstanding education for sustainability projects on the AAEE NSW website.

Projects selected will be those that:

- Demonstrate principles of best practice
- Have the potential to increase the capacity of other educators

Educators wishing to publish their case study through the AAEE NSW website should: *Submit your Case Study through the AAEE NSW website at*

<http://www.aaeensw.org.au>



Evaluating

Evaluating your case study is different to evaluating your project.
You may want to find out:

- How many people read your case study?
- What organisations/groups do they represent?
- What are the major ideas they took away from it?
- Did they use the case study as a basis for a workshop or paper?
- Did it influence their ideas on education, change or sustainability issues?
- Did they share this case study with others?
- How could the case study be improved?

You can evaluate your case study before and after publication



Obtaining reader feedback



How will you obtain feedback? You may wish to use:

- A response form at the end of the case study
- A targeted request to key people in the field; include a return-addressed envelope and questionnaire or an online form
- An online survey or rating mechanism
- An invitation for readers to provide contact details when downloading the case study
- A workshop session with opportunities for discussion and feedback

The tools you use will depend on the financial and human resources available



**There are many amazing sustainability education projects across NSW.
Writing up your project can benefit us all by:**

- Helping the project team review their experiences and draw out lessons
- Allowing others to share in and learn from your experience
- Creating opportunities to promote the good work of an organisation



AAEE NSW encourages all sustainability educators to write up your project and share your experiences to inspire other educators.

So, write it up!



Australian Association for Environmental Education

NSW Chapter

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