



INDEPENDENT PROJECT/DISSERTATION

Literature Review

What is a literature review and what purposes does it serve in relation to your research?

Why is it such an important component of research?

What does the process of completing a literature review involve?

WHAT IS A LITERATURE REVIEW?

A literature review is where the writer considers issues emerging from his/her research question through examining the literature on this specific point.

WHAT IS A LITERATURE REVIEW?

A literature review is an important part of the independent project (carries more marks) because it is an introduction to the research project and underpins the argument about why the project is worth doing.

It is a critical appraisal of the literature relevant to the research question.

WHAT IS A LITERATURE REVIEW?

You need to track down the LATEST information and assess it for relevance, quality, controversy and gaps.

Use of recent journal articles is EXTREMELY important.

- *Education 3-13;*
- *British Educational Research Journal;*
- *Research Papers in Education;*
- *British Journal of Educational Studies;*
- *Educational Studies;*
- *Research in Education;*
- *Teaching and Teacher Education;*
- *Early Years;*
- *The Curriculum Journal;*
- *Oxford Review of Education;*
- *Cambridge Journal of Education.*

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

You will decide on an area you want to investigate. Your work will hopefully add to the bank of knowledge. To explain this to the reader - and first of all to yourself - you need to put your problem into context. You need to say what is known about the area so that your work can be seen to be addressing questions needing answering.

WHAT IS A LITERATURE REVIEW? A DEFINITION
(RIDLEY 2012)

The literature review is the part of the thesis where there is extensive reference to related research in the field; it is where you make connections between the source texts that you draw on, and where you position yourself and your own work amongst these sources.

It is your opportunity to engage in a written dialogue with other researchers in your field and at the same time show that you have read, understood and responded to the relevant body of knowledge underpinning your research.

RIDLEY (2012)

- Provides a historical background for your research
- Gives an overview of the current context in which your research is situated by referring to contemporary debates, issues and questions in the field.
- Includes a discussion of relevant theories and concepts which underpin your research

RIDLEY (2012)

Introduces relevant terminology and provides definitions to clarify how terms are being used in the context of your own work.

It describes related research in the field and shows how your work extends or challenges this, or addresses a gap in work in the field.

It provides supporting evidence for a practical problem or issue which your research is addressing, thereby underlining its significance

REVIEWING SELECTED LITERATURE (KUMAR 2014)

Read existing literature and examine critically:

–Note whether the knowledge relevant to a theoretical framework has been confirmed beyond doubt

–Note the theories put forward, the criticisms of these and their basis, the methodologies adopted (study design, sample size and its characteristics, measurement procedures, etc.) and the criticisms of them

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REVIEWING SELECTED LITERATURE (KUMAR 2014)

Notice where there are significant differences of opinion among researchers, giving an opinion about their validity in addition to putting forward a position with reasons

Ascertain the areas in which little or nothing is known –the gaps that exist in the body of knowledge

Be careful ...

A literature review is not a list of everything you have read!

It is selective, relevant to your research, and integrated.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Shopping list approach – lists the readings considered appropriate without showing why they are specifically relevant to the research question. Descriptions of the readings, with little evaluation or relevance to each other.

Thematic approach – readings presented and evaluated in a way that is highly relevant to the research in question.

HOW TO WRITE A LITERATURE REVIEW(KUMAR 2014)

- Write about the literature reviewed to provide a theoretical background and contextualise findings to existing body of literature:
- Describe various theories
 - Specify gaps in the existing knowledge area
 - Write about recent advances in the area of study
 - State current trends
 - Refine own methodology
 - Quote findings from existing studies

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INTERNET

Is the author clearly identified and appropriately qualified to comment?

Is the author attached to a reputable academic or commercial organisation you are familiar with?

Is the material presented research based and if so how was it obtained?

Is there any evidence that the website or material presented has been peer reviewed in any way?

When was the material posted, is it current?

INTERNET

Relying on the internet as your sole means of searching for information will have consequences as far as your grade is concerned.

Thoughtless and indiscriminate use of the internet can lead to poor scholarship and shallow learning resulting in low marks

Sharp (2012)

Scanning –a focused approach looking for one specific piece of information

Skimming –quick review of contents, introduction, review or abstract, in order to see if content is relevant.

Reading to understand –detailed study of passage, chapter etc. May need to read more than once but definitely need to take notes.

Walliman(2014 p108)

BEING CRITICAL IN YOUR LITERATURE REVIEW

Being critical does not mean you always have to find fault with the work of others.

You can be critical in your literature review by:
selecting what is relevant from source texts for your work
making connections between the source texts that you cite
showing the links between the work that you cite and your own research, e.g. how you are using the work of others to shape your own.

TOP TIP

One way to avoid drifting into a 'shopping list' approach is to avoid starting every paragraph with an author's name, but with a reference to the theme you intend to address (not an absolute rule).
The 'thematic approach' tends to eliminate waffle as the writer is more likely to maintain relevance to the research question.

REFERENCES

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