Research Methods for Business and Management

Session 3- Writing a Literature Review

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Last Session

• Defining the Research
• Formulating a Research Question
• Defining your Research Aim
• Specifying Research Objectives
This Session

• Introduction-Basics of a Literature Review
• Purpose of Reviewing Literature
• What is a Conceptual Framework?
• Structuring your review
• Common Faults and Major Pitfall
• Steps in conducting a Literature Review
• Sources
• What is expected at this level?
Introduction

• There is little point in reinventing the wheel
• Almost all the time the work or area you want to research may have already been studied by other people, perhaps directly or related.
• It follows that if you are to have authoritative knowledge of your research area you must start by reviewing the work of others
• Thus enabling you to build on the ideas of existing literature
Purpose of Literature Reviews

• To view the research problem from the lens of various researchers or theorists
• To present the theoretical framework of the study
• In other words, they need to write about:
  – Specific theories related to the problem.
  – What is known about the problem from other empirical studies.
• So essentially a literature review means locating and summarizing the previous studies about a topic or a problem
• But this is not sufficient at this level
• You are required to be critical of the literature surrounding and related to your research area
• hence the term “critically review the literature”
What do we mean by being ‘CRITICAL’

- It means **appraising or evaluating** a problem with the effective use of language
- You need to use your skill of making reasoned judgments and **arguing effectively** in writing
- Question what you read, question:
  - The conventional wisdom or tradition
  - The dominant view/message being portrayed
- Constantly consider and justify with clear arguments **your own critical stance** more importantly link the argument to the RQ and Research Issue
Dees (2003) suggests:

• Refer to and **assess** research by recognized experts in your chosen area
• Consider and discuss research that **supports** and research that **opposes** your ideas
• Make reasoned judgements regarding the **value of others’ research**
• Show how other research may **relate** to yours
• **Justify** your arguments with **valid evidence** in a logical manner
Blaxter et al (2001) suggests critical writing:
• Goes **beyond mere description** by offering opinions and making a personal response to what has been written
• Relates different writings to each other
• Does not take what is written at face value
• Views research writing as a **contested terrain**, within which alternative views and positions may be taken up
Outcome of Reviewing Literature

• What is already known about this area?
• What **concepts** and **theories** are relevant to this area?
• What are the **gaps** in the existing literature?
• Are there any significant **controversies**?
• Are there any **inconsistencies** in findings relating to this area?
• Are there any **unanswered research questions** in this area?
Where do you start?

• The theoretical view that you take and review must be appropriate to your Research Question and Objectives
  • That is, the review should in some way assist in answering the research question and
  • Contribute to achieving the research objectives
  • So essentially your review should provide a theoretical answer to your RQ
Ask two simple question

- What do I need to know to answer the RQ?
- What do I need to know to achieve the objectives?

- By doing this you would identify the keywords or themes that needs to be reviewed
Steps in Conducting a Lit Review

1. With these keywords begin searching books, journals, online databases etc

2. Initially try to locate as many as you can, reports of research articles or books related to your topic

3. Skim this initial group of articles or chapters and duplicate those that are central to your topic

4. As you read make notes and identify the key concepts discussed by the author

5. Then start groupings these key concepts into categories of THEMES
Steps Cont’d

6. As you put together the THEMES, begin to draft summaries of the most relevant points in made by the author, so that they can be combined into the final literature review.

7. After summarizing the literature, assemble the literature review, structuring it thematically or organizing it by important concepts.
Organizing the Literature you find

• Specific concepts, theories, and variables related to the problem.
• Your point of view about the topic.
• Different authors' points of view about the topic (either supporting or refuting)
• What is known about the problem from other empirical studies (i.e. results of research, also supporting or refuting points of view).
A useful technique

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<th>Concept</th>
<th>Notes</th>
<th>Author/Source</th>
<th>Interpretation or your Point of View</th>
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Two Processes to construct an Argument

1. Constructing Intertextual Coherence- the author shows how contributions to the literature relate to each other and the research

   - **Synthesized Coherence**- puts together work that is generally unrelated, i.e. theory and research regarded as unconnected and are pieced together

   - **Progressive Coherence**- portrays the building up of an area of knowledge around which there is considerable consensus

   - **Non-Coherence**- there have been many contributions but there is considerable disagreement among practitioners
2. Problematizing the Situation - the literature is subverted by locating a problem.

- **Incomplete** - the existing literature is not fully complete, there is a gap
- **Inadequate** - the existing literature has overlooked ways that can improve our understanding of it; alternative frameworks can then be introduced
- **Incommensurate** - alternative perspective is superior to the literature as it stands. It portrays the existing literature as wrong.
Constructing the Argument

• A concept is introduced
• A point is made (topic sentence) +
• It is supported with references or previous research results +
• If there is information refuting (contradicting) the point made, +
• The different points of view are compared and contrasted +
• A conclusion (restating the topic sentence) is drawn.
Connecting Phrases and words to create the argument

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<th>Subordinators</th>
<th>Sentence Connectors</th>
<th>Phrase Linkers</th>
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<td><strong>Addition</strong></td>
<td><strong>Furthermore, ...</strong></td>
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<td><strong>On the other hand, ...</strong></td>
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<td>**As a matter of fact, ...</td>
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• See Also Handout Citing Reference in Text

Available at:
Example of Constructed Argument

• See handout
**Activity**

- Using the Outline Given construct a paragraph for the concept

**Suggested Answer**
Structure Of Literature Review Chapter

• **Introduction** - start strong by bring relevance to the topic area, outline the key aspect that will be reviewed

• **Body** - this is were you build up the conceptual framework, review the key concepts and theories

• **Summary** - here you summarize analysis of the literature reviewed, implications to the problem, highlight the concepts that are central to analyzing your subject. Present your Conceptual Framework
Structuring your Lit Review

General level of knowledge

Provide Brief overview of key ideas and themes

Summarize, compare and contrast the research of the key writers

Narrow down to highlight previous research work most relevant to your own research

Provide a detailed account of the findings and show how they are related

Highlight those aspects where your own research will provide fresh insights
Structuring Cont’d

• The idea is that you try to **funnel** your discussion

• Start with a broad discourse i.e. general

• Then **drill down** to the key work which is most appropriate to answering your research question (well as much of an answer as you can get)

• Most importantly organize your discussion according to a **THEME**, sort of like telling a story
What is a Conceptual Framework?

- Refers to a system of **concepts**, assumptions, expectations, beliefs, and **theories**
- It explains the main things to be studied, the **key factors**, concepts, or variables and the presumed relationships among them
- It includes the actual ideas and beliefs that you hold about the **phenomena studied**
- This may also be called the **theoretical framework**
• It is primarily a conception or **model of what is out there** that you plan to study,

• It informs you as to **what is going on** with these things and why i.e. a **tentative theory** of the phenomena that you are investigating

• The function of this theory is to:
  – inform the rest of your research design
  – to help you to assess and refine your objectives
  – develop realistic and relevant research questions
So what is a Conceptual Framework?

- A concept map is a visual display of the theory or theories that is relevant to your study.
- A picture of what the theory says is going on with the phenomenon that you are researching.
- A concept map consists of two things:
  - concepts and
  - the relationships among these.

Customer Perspective
- Improved customer awareness and perceptions; increased amount, transaction, satisfaction and loyalty rates of online customers

Innovation and Learning Perspective
- Continuous improvement of current services and development of new ones

Internal Business Perspective
- Faster, more effective, high-quality and more reliable business processes and increasing usage of technology

Financial Perspective
- Increased profitability, sales, and cost reductions in online transactions
Common Faults

• No theme connecting all the elements together
• Too narrow a view of the topic area
• Only a justification for the research idea is given
• Repeating the same materials several times
• Too few sources used
• A narrow range of sources is used i.e. only internet sources
• Poor use of citations
• **No student content and the work relies entirely on the quotation or paraphrase, etc**
• The student has no idea whether they are quoting, paraphrasing, summarising, analysing, etc
• Plagiarism
Major Pitfall

• Presenting a mere summary of the articles and books read
• Each article or book being given one paragraph
• Arrange paragraphs alphabetically in author order
• No link or theme between ideas presented by various authors

DO NOT DO THIS, IT WILL NOT CONSTITUTE BEING CRITICAL
Get your hands on:

• Academic journals- (peer reviewed)
• Professional journals
• Books
• Electronic Databases
  – [http://libweb.anglia.ac.uk/index.html](http://libweb.anglia.ac.uk/index.html)
  – [http://scholar.google.com](http://scholar.google.com)
  – Cambridge Journals Online
  – Sage (HighWire)
  – **Stay away from Wikipedia and newspapers**
How many sources do you need to review?

- For your Assignment (proposal) 5 or 6 sources would be sufficient
- For your dissertation 20 to 30 sources would be a start
Evaluating Sources

• Make sure that your source can stand on its own i.e. reliable and
• It can be validated by the reader
• Look for the following:
  – Currency
  – Accuracy
  – Relevance
  – Authority
  – Range
  – Coverage
  – Objectivity
Referencing

• http://libweb.anglia.ac.uk/referencing/harvard.htm?harvard_id=65#65
So What is expected at this level?

- Demonstrate your **command** of the literature
- Clearly cross-examine the literature, bringing out the **arguments for and against or the controversy**
- Distinguish between varying schools of thought and authoritative perspectives
- You should be able to **reveal the gaps** in the existing literature
- At the end you should be a ‘Samurai’ in your particular subject matter
• Use a **good range** of high level authoritative sources

• You should **get to the original work** or theory and not rely on the account of other

• Remember that the Literature Review is **ONGOING**
In Summary

• You will need to
  – Include key academic theories
  – Demonstrate current knowledge of the area
  – Use clear referencing for the reader to find the original cited publications
  – Acknowledge the research of others

• The most important skills are:
  – The capacity to **evaluate** what you read
  – The capacity to **relate** what you read to other information