How to critically evaluate a research proposal

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How to... carry out a literature review for a dissertation or research paper

By Margaret Adolphus

The purpose of the literature review

All literature reviews should be more than a mere description of the current state of knowledge of an area, and should critically evaluate the theoretical positions and research studies, drawing attention to major debates. This is particularly true for a research dissertation or paper, which should go one step further by using the review to situate the author's own contribution to knowledge.

The literature review has been described as a "report of primary scholarship" (Cooper, 1988) and "an interpretation and synthesis of published work" (Merriam, 1988, quoted by Murray, 2002). The two key words here are **scholarship** and **synthesis**: a literature review relates particular research to the a wider field.

There are two main purposes of a literature review:

1. **To show awareness of the present state of knowledge of a particular field**. Not just who has written what, but the main empirical research, theoretical positions, controversies, and breakthroughs as well as links with other related areas of knowledge.
2. **To provide a foundation for the author's research**. The process of reviewing the literature should provide, according to Steane (2004: p. 124), a rationale for the choice of problem to be investigated and the methodology selected. It should help the researcher define a hypothesis or a research question, and show how answering the question will contribute to the body of knowledge. Analysis of the literature can also help provide a particular theoretical lens, support the argument, or identify gaps.

Examples

In their article, "Accounting change in central government", Gomes *et al.* justify their study of Portuguese public sector accounting on the basis that European public sector accounting is less explored than that in the private sector, and particularly little is known about Portuguese double-entry bookkeeping.

Georgakopoulos and Thomson (2008) use the first four paragraphs of the article, "Social reporting, engagements, controversies and conflict in an arena context" to explain their influences, approach (grounded theory and the arena concept) and the debates that informed their research design.

In "The normative imperatives of business and marketing strategy: grounding strategy in resource-advantage theory", Hunt and Derozier (2004) summarize the various theories of optimizing strategic performance:

"… one school stresses the importance of industry factors (Montgomery and Porter, 1991; Porter, 1980, 1985), while others stress firm-specific competences (Day and Nedungadi, 1994; Hamel and Prahalad, 1994a,b; Prahalad and Hamel, 1990; Sanchez *et al.*, 1996) and inimitable resources (Barney, 1991; Grant, 1991; Wernerfelt, 1984). Some schools urge firms to focus on developing their dynamic capabilities (Teece and Pisano, 1994) and higher-order learning processes (Dickson, 1996; Senge, 1990; Sinkula *et al.*, 1997), while others emphasize the value-creating potential of networks of relationships (Berry and Parasuraman, 1991; Grönroos, 1996; Gummesson, 1994; Morgan and Hunt, 1994; Sheth and Parvatiyar, 1995a,b; Varadarajan and Cunningham, 1995; Weitz and Jap, 1995; Wilson, 1995). Some schools advocate a market orientation (MO) (Jaworski and Kohli, 1993; Slater and Narver, 1994; Webster, 1992, 1994), while others focus on 'first mover' innovations (Kerin *et al.*, 1992; Lieberman and Montgomery, 1998) and brand equity (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 1993)".

DOCTORAL THESIS RESEARCH PROPOSAL
Department of Statistics
Faculty of Science

The University PhD Statute 2003 (Reg 5 a ii) requires that during provisional registration (i.e. first year) a candidate complete a fully developed research proposal, including a provisional thesis title, a schedule of research, an outline of thesis structure and a statement of the resources required to complete the research. The research proposal should be submitted for approval to the Postgraduate Committee of the Department of Statistics. This should be done as soon as possible, but before the end of the provisional year at the latest. The Committee may accept the proposal, or indicate to the candidate and supervisor(s) changes needed and request a resubmission, or it may decline to accept the proposal. It will inform the Director of the School/Head of Department of its decision.

PhD candidates should note that the proposal should be a significant document (5-10 pages). It should be enough to establish that the thesis is appropriate for a PhD and that he/she seems capable of completing in good time.

The proposal should include:

Provisional Thesis Title

Names of Supervisors/Advisors

Objectives / Aims:
Clearly specify the purpose of this research. Include the main research questions and hypotheses.

Contribution of the proposed research:
Briefly describe and evaluate the existing literature. In what ways will your contribution be significant and original?

Methodology:
Briefly outline the processes, techniques and methodologies or the theoretical approach that will be used to achieve the objectives above.

Proposed thesis structure:
Outline the proposed structure of the thesis

Schedule / Timeline of Research:
Outline the proposed schedule or timeline for this research including completion dates for each stage. Outline work already completed or in progress to date.

Ethical Approvals:
Is ethics approval required? If so, has it been applied for or obtained?

Resources:
What resources are needed? Are all these resources currently available and do you have access to them? If not, how they are to be procured?

Mac Index to how the global ranking of currencies that purchase power at local Mickey D's. the biggest seller of McDonalds is France (James 2009).

1.9. Expected Research Methodology:

The research methodology of this thesis is going to be a mixed research methodology. It will get the benefits of both qualitative as well as quantitative researches. The data collection will be done through both qualitative and quantitative sources of data. The research approach will be deductive to critically investigate and analyze the affects of training and development on profitability of McDonalds. The research philosophy of positivism will be most useful for this study because it will comprehensively described the objective aspects of research. The data collection will be carried out through secondary and primary sources of data. The secondary sources of data will be the use of case studies, electronic libraries and journals to explain the phenomenon. The primary data will be collected through surveys and questionnaires. The research will be empirical.

1.10. Research Layout:

The dissertation is carried out sequentially in the form of chapters that represent progress. The layout of this research is given below:

1.10.1. Chapter One:

The first chapter entails the introduction of dissertation. The research problem statement, research question, aims, purpose, objectives, company profile, rationale of study, and complete layout of the research is explained in this chapter. The research background explains the reason why the research is being carried out.

1.10.2. Chapter Two:

The second chapter explains how the previous researches are evident in contribution towards the problem statement. The literature about training and development is critically evaluated through pedagogical evidences. Through theoretical framework the topic of dissertation is investigated.

1.10.3. Chapter Three:

The chapter three elaborates the research methodology for this thesis. This chapter gives complete information about research methodology, paradigm, philosophy, strategy and data collection methods. The complete research analysis process is described how it is analyzed.

Literature Review Template

Definition: A literature review is an objective, critical summary of published research literature relevant to a topic under consideration for research. Its purpose is to create familiarity with current thinking and research on a particular topic, and may justify future research into a previously overlooked or understudied area.

A typical literature review consists of the following components:

1. Introduction:

   - A concise **definition of a topic** under consideration (this may be a descriptive or argumentative thesis, or proposal), as well as the **scope** of the related literature being investigated. (Example: If the topic under consideration is 'women's wartime diaries', the scope of the review may be limited to published or unpublished works, works in English, works from a particular location, time period, or conflict, etc.)
   - The introduction should also note intentional **exclusions**. (Example: *"This review will not explore the diaries of adolescent girls."*)
   - Another purpose of the introduction is to state the **general findings** of the review (what do *most* of the sources conclude), and comment on the **availability** of sources in the subject area.

2. Main Body:

   - There are a number of ways to organize the evaluation of the sources. **Chronological and thematic approaches** are each useful examples.
   - Each work should be critically summarized and evaluated for its **premise**, **methodology**, and **conclusion**. It is as important to address inconsistencies, omissions, and errors, as it is to identify accuracy, depth, and relevance.
   - Use logical connections and **transitions** to connect sources.

3. Conclusion

   - The conclusion **summarizes the key findings** of the review in general terms. Notable commonalities between works, whether favourable or not, may be included here.
   - This section is the reviewer's opportunity to **justify a research proposal**. Therefore, the idea should be clearly re-stated and supported according to the findings of the review.

4. References

   - As well as accurate in-text citations, a literature review must contain **complete and correct citations for every source.**

Effective community evaluation is a systematic way to improve and account for activities conducted by a CoP. Evaluation is used widely in many public health settings, and it can be applied easily to communities of practice. As concerns regarding the cost and effectiveness of public health activities continue to grow, evaluation can be a powerful tool to inform decision-making and build support for continued funding. Find out "what works" and "what does not work" Conduct self-assessment and inform decision-making Improve capacity to identify and implement effective public health practices Demonstrate effectiveness of a CoP to community stakeholders Evaluation is a critical component of community work. As part of the participatory process of CoPs, all members are active players in both levels of the evaluation, which are described below. Evaluation Level 1: Community of Practice Approach Evaluation CDC will conduct ongoing evaluations of the CoP approach for public health to determine how well the approach is working to build relationships and foster collaborative work across public health. The use of CoPs is a promising new approach, and information collected through evaluations is assisting CDC in modifying the approach as indicated for the public health context. Evaluation Level 2: Community of Practice Evaluation Each public health Community will benefit from building evaluation into its work as soon as the CoP agrees on its focus and scope. CDC has developed resources, such as the SMART Objectives Template and the Evaluation Interview Template, to assist communities in their evaluation work. In addition to the core questions in the templates, members of each CoP are encouraged to develop their own questions that address issues specific to their CoP. The table below depicts appropriations by fiscal year starting in 1986 to present day. Effective fiscal year 2014, funding is being provided through the Prevention and Public Health Fund under the Affordable Care Act provisions. Related Resource Description Audience SMART Objectives Templateword icon[DOC – 187KB] When it comes time to define the goals and objectives of your CoP, this template will walk you through the process of developing specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-based objectives. Leaders of new and existing CoPs Evaluation Interview Templateword icon[DOC – 189KB] This template helps you start-off your evaluation process by aligning it with the standard evaluation for CoPs. The template contains sample evaluation objectives and sample questions. Each CoP can modify the template by modifying or adding additional questions that are specific to its goals and objects. Leaders of new and existing Communities of Practice (CoPs) How to Make a Professional Proposal... How to Write Business & Technical... How to Write a Fitness Proposal How to Write a Business Proposal... The Difference Between A Business... The Best Careers for Organizing... Paper Topics for Management Research How to Write the Implementation... The Difference Between Humanistic... What Is a Business Research Report? How to Apply for Grants for Community... What Are the Types of Action Research... Organizational Communication Topics How to Write an Executive Summary... Peggy was in the midst of developing a unique fashion accessory that could be worn as a necklace, belt or bracelet. To solidify her design, she invited business colleagues to preview her product along with its proposed instructions and packaging. Almost everyone praised her effort; however, the owner of a local jewelry store kept avoiding her.Peggy approached the owner to inquire about his reaction to the accessory and explained that his opinion was integral to her success. The store owner shared his concern that the product's instructions were a little confusing; he didn't understand how it could be quickly altered for different uses. Peggy asked how she could make the instructions easier to understand, and the store owner recommended putting pictures next to the directions so customers could see how easily the invention transformed. Thanks to the store owner's valuable advice, Peggy was able to implement the change and vastly improve the salability of her product. CDC's Evaluation Framework is a concise, thorough approach that can be easily understood and applied. The framework, which has been adapted for use with CoPs, emphasizes six logical steps and can be used as a starting point for CoPs evaluation. 25 Each of the six steps is described in detail below. Engage StakeholdersThe evaluation cycle begins by engaging stakeholders (i.e., the persons or organizations with an investment in what will be learned from an evaluation and what will be done with the knowledge). Public health work, including CoPs, involves partnerships; therefore, any assessment of a public health program requires considering the value systems of the partners. Stakeholders should be engaged in a way that ensures their perspectives can be heard and understood. When stakeholders are not engaged in this way, evaluation findings might be ignored, criticized, or resisted because they do not address the stakeholders' questions or values. After becoming involved, stakeholders help to execute the remaining steps. Describe the CommunityCommunity descriptions convey the mission and objectives of the CoP being evaluated. Descriptions should be sufficiently detailed to ensure understanding of the CoP's goals and strategies. The description should discuss the CoP's capacity to effect change, its stage of development, and how it fits into the larger public health community. CoP descriptions set the frame of reference for all subsequent decisions in an evaluation. The description enables comparisons with similar CoPs and facilitates attempts to connect community components to their effects. Moreover, stakeholders may have differing ideas regarding CoP goals and purpose. Evaluations done without agreement on the community definition are likely to be of limited use. Sometimes, negotiating with stakeholders to formulate a clear and logical description will bring benefits before data are available to evaluate CoP effectiveness. Focus the Evaluation DesignThe direction and process of the evaluation must be focused to assess the issues of greatest concern to stakeholders, while using time and resources as efficiently as possible. Not all design options are equally well-suited to meeting the information needs of stakeholders. After data collection begins, changing procedures might be difficult or impossible, even if better methods become obvious. A thorough plan anticipates intended uses and creates an evaluation strategy with the greatest chance of being useful, feasible, ethical, and accurate. Gather Credible EvidencePersons involved in an evaluation should strive to collect information that will convey a well-rounded picture of the CoP and be seen as credible by the evaluation's intended audience. Information (i.e., evidence) should be perceived by stakeholders as believable and relevant for answering their questions. Such decisions depend on the evaluation questions being posed and the motives for asking them. Credible evidence strengthens evaluation conclusions and the recommendations that follow. Justify ConclusionsEvaluation conclusions are justified when linked to the evidence gathered and judged against agreed-upon values or standards set by the stakeholders. Stakeholders must agree that conclusions are justified before they will use the evaluation results with confidence. Ensure Use and Share Lessons LearnedLessons learned during the evaluation should automatically translate into informed decision-making and appropriate action. To make sure the evaluation findings are used correctly, deliberate effort is needed to ensure the evaluation processes and findings are disseminated and interpreted appropriately. Preparing for use involves strategic thinking and continued vigilance of the changing environment, both of which begin in the earliest stages of stakeholder engagement and continue throughout the evaluation. Utility: Does the evaluation serve the information needs of intended users? Feasibility: Is the evaluation realistic, prudent, diplomatic, and frugal? Propriety: Has the evaluation been conducted legally, ethically, and with due regard for the welfare of those involved in the evaluation, as well as those affected by its results? Accuracy:Will the evaluation reveal and convey technically adequate information about the features that determine worth or merit of the CoP? Moving Along with the Evaluation Once you understand the basic concepts of evaluation, several additional activities can be completed to target the evaluation to the needs of your community. First, assess the state of the field your CoP addresses. A SWOT analysis (defined below) can help you define what currently exists, what is needed, and where the CoP can target its activities. Use the information collected in the analysis to develop your CoP's goals and SMART objectives (defined below). Specific questions related to the work conducted within the CoP can then be added to the Evaluation Interview Template. The table below depicts appropriations by fiscal year starting in 1986 to present day. Effective fiscal year 2014, funding is being provided through the Prevention and Public Health Fund under the Affordable Care Act provisions. Related Resource Description Audience SMART Objectives Templateword icon[DOC – 187KB] When it comes time to define the goals and objectives of your CoP, this template will walk you through the process of developing specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-based objectives. Leaders of new and existing CoPs Evaluation Interview Templateword icon[DOC – 189KB] This template helps you start-off your evaluation process by aligning it with the standard evaluation for CoPs. The template contains sample evaluation objectives and sample questions. Each CoP can modify the template by modifying or adding additional questions that are specific to its goals and objects. Leaders of new and existing Communities of Practice (CoPs)

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