Research Background / Literature Review

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Example from FRGS
Detailed proposal of research project

(a) Research background including Hypothesis /Research Questions and Literature Reviews

(b) Objective(s) of the Research

(c) Methodology
   Description of Methodology
   Flow Chart of Research Activities (Please enclose in the Appendix)
   Gantt Chart of Research Activities (Please enclose in the Appendix)
   Milestones and Dates
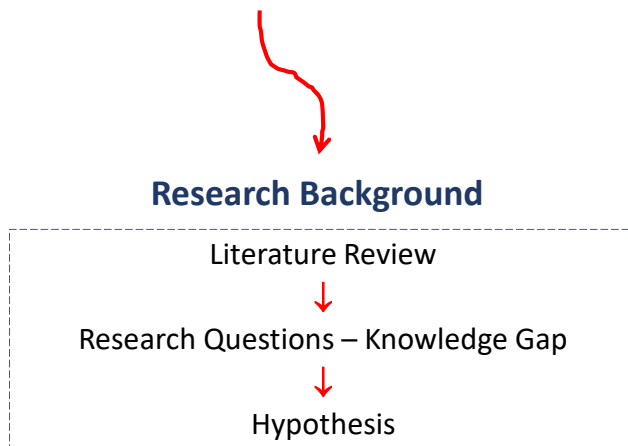
(d) Expected Results/Benefit
   Novel theories/New findings/Knowledge
   Research Publications
   Specific or Potential Applications
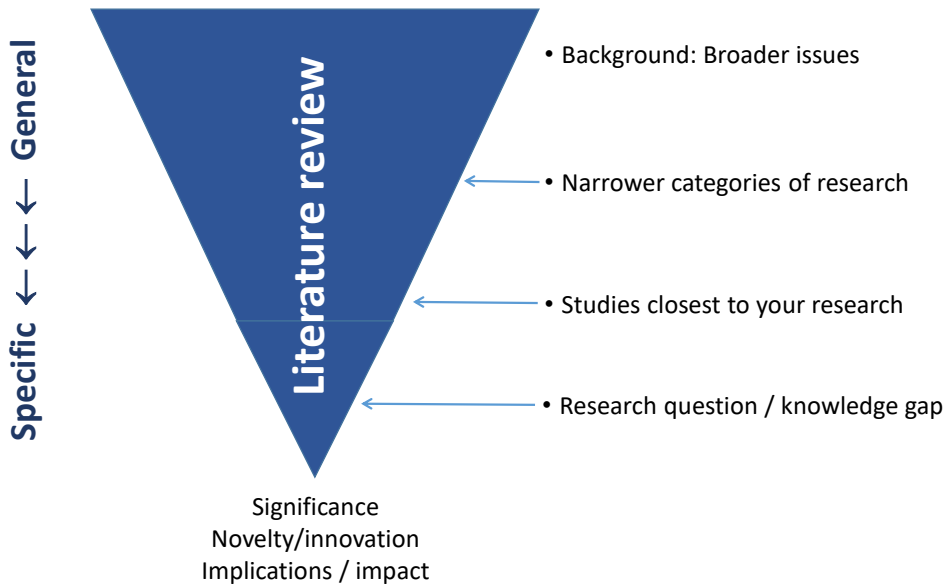   *Number of PhD and Masters (by research) Students*

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(a) Research background including Hypothesis / Research Questions and Literature Reviews

Research Background

Literature Review
↓
Research Questions – Knowledge Gap
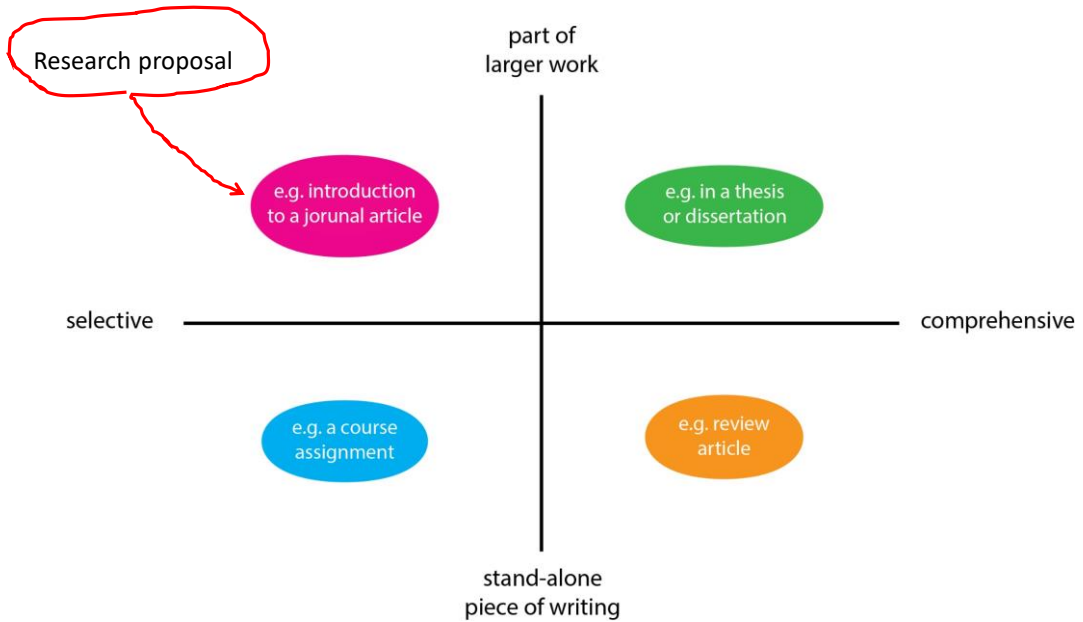↓
Hypothesis

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Purpose

- What has been done
- What has not been done
- What is needed to be done and why
- Indicate your part or contribution

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Structure

General → → → → → → Specific

Literature review

- Background: Broader issues
- Narrower categories of research
- Studies closest to your research
- Research question / knowledge gap

Significance
Novelty/innovation
Implications / impact

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Literature Review

Research proposal

part of
larger work

e.g. introduction
to a jorunal article

e.g. in a thesis
or dissertation

selective ————————————————— comprehensive

e.g. a course
assignment

e.g. review
article

stand-alone
piece of writing

Literature review helps you:

- Place your work in context → Describe relationship of each work to others under consideration

- Identify research gap

- Define and limit the problem you are working on

- Sharpen, reformulate the problem in a clear-cut way

- Help us formulate a satisfactory structure of the research proposal

- Resolve conflicts amongst seemingly contradictory previous studies

http://library.bcu.ac.uk/learner/writingguides/1.04.htm

Do not just describe what authors X, Y, Z… did → Interpret what has been done

How to Review Literature ?

- **Summarise**: restate overall literature findings with your own words in a concise way

- **Compare**: find similarities among literature, explain how each article similar to others

- **Contrast**: find differences, explain how each article differ from others

- **Criticize** strength and weakness, aspects of methodology

- **Synthesize**: combine several literatures into an idea

- **Highlight gaps** in research

- Show how your study relates to previous studies

[Caulley (1992), La Trobe University]

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After careful reading of pertinent literature:

- Break literature into → "conceptual categories" /themes rather than describing groups of materials one at a time

- Conceptual categories reveal themselves → after you have read most of pertinent literature

http://libguides.usc.edu/writingguide/researchproposal

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If you are comparing, contrasting and evaluating the previous literature, you are on the right track

Descriptive	Analytical
• Summarises what other people have found without saying what these findings mean for your investigation. • Usually a chronological list of who discovered what, and when.	• Synthesises the work and succinctly passes judgement on the relative merits of research conducted in your field. • Reveals limitations or recognises the possibility of taking research further, allowing you to formulate and justify your aims for your investigation.

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For example: ?/X "Green (1975) discovered …."; "In 1978, Black conducted experiments and discovered that …."; "Later Brown (1980) illustrated this in ……";	**For example:** ✓ There seems to be general agreement on x, (see White 1987, Brown 1980, Black 1978, Green 1975). However, Green (1975) sees x as a consequence of y, while Black(1978) puts x and y as …. While Green's work has some limitations in that it …., its main value lies in …."

Points to Consider When Reviewing a Literature

- **Provenance** — Author's credentials? Author's arguments supported by evidence (e.g. primary historical material, case studies, narratives, statistics, recent scientific findings)?

- **Objectivity** — Author's perspective even-handed or prejudicial? Is contrary data considered or is certain pertinent information ignored to prove the author's point?

- **Persuasiveness** — Which of the author's theses are most/least convincing?

- **Value** — Author's arguments and conclusions convincing? Does the work ultimately contribute in any significant way to an understanding of the subject?

(Source: University Library, University of California)

A good literature review is characterized by:

- Logical flow of ideas

- Unbiased and comprehensive view of previous research on the topic

- Current and relevant references with consistent, appropriate referencing style

Critical Evaluation of the Literature

- Have you organised your material according to issues?

- Is there a logic to the way you organised the material?

- Does the amount of detail included on an issue relate to its importance?

- Have you indicated when results were conflicting or inconclusive and discussed possible reasons?

- Have you indicated the relevance of each reference to your research?

Courtesy of the University of Melbourne

What a good literature review does:

- Critically evaluate relevant literature information.

- Integrate and synthesize existing literature.

- Provides new theoretical insights or develops a new model as the conceptual framework for your research.

- Convinces your reader that your proposed research will make a significant and substantial contribution

- Enough discussion on previous research for readers to understand bigger picture
- Not meant to be comprehensive → be highly selective and highly relevant
- Critical review of gaps/problems
- Do not say another's work is "inadequate" → identify issues not addressed
- Establish what is original in your approach (innovative) → how your work differs from others
- State where your own previous contributions (if any) fit in

Interpretation of literature should lead to →research question, hypothesis and objectives

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Common Errors Made in Literature Reviews

- Confusing structure → Not logically organized
- Not focused on most important facets
- Reads like a series of disjointed summaries
- Not written in author's own words
- Too few references or outdated references cited
- Recent references are omitted
- Too Much Information
- Not Enough Information: do not explain concepts, do not provide enough background, or do not discuss enough
- Readers struggle to understand

Sample Literature Review/Introduction