Editorial Commentary
Doing Literature Reviews: A General Guideline for Novice Researchers

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ABSTRACT
This paper illuminates the what, why and how of literature review and offers a novel framework for conducting and writing an effective literature review. The proposed framework follows the systematic data processing approach comprised of five sub-processes: 1) contextualization, 2) searching, 3) selection, 4) extraction and 5) reporting of the final write-up. This paper explains the rationale for developing a robust systematic literature review including detailed instructions on how to search for and evaluate quality literature.

KEYWORDS
Contextualization, Extraction, Literature Review, Peer-Reviewed Article, Searching

1. INTRODUCTION

Review of the literature is perhaps one of the most important parts of a research project. It may take few months to get fully planned and finalized. It is thus a laborious task which may become remarkably tedious for students. On the other hand, it undeniably has a great potential for becoming a source of diverse publications and a representation of the author’s mastery of the literature. The present article aims to delineate why a careful review of literature is essential for a good research, what a thriving literature review is and how it can be planned and carried out. A considerable amount of literature is available on the subject of literature review which covers different types of review and offers some organizing models for carrying it out. However, it is assumed that, an integrated article can be beneficial in, at least, two ways: 1) it provides a state-of-the-art understanding of what a review of literature means and 2) it explains how it can be planned and conducted. To do so, literature on this subject is analyzed and synthesized into a brief organizing framework. The main audiences of this works are students, and novice researchers who are about to begin or are in the midst of doing their literature reviews. The present article has been organized as follows: first we discuss what a literature review is and delineate its conceptual boundaries. In the third section we review types and methods of literature review and accordingly in the fourth section we propose an organizing framework for planning and conducting a thriving review.

2. WHAT AND WHY AND HOW OF A LITERATURE REVIEW

Review of the literature is an integral part of a research project. It is even needless to say that the primary proposal for a study begins with an overview of literature which must be then complete in the main project. It is the primary review of literature that shows the researcher what knowledge gaps can be addressed, what research questions can be proposed and accordingly what methods can be adopted to answer questions. However, in the present study we do not seek to discuss and explain these stages of a study rather we aim to illuminate the what, why and how of doing a proper review.
of the literature that supports the knowledge gaps of the study and serves as a foundation for creating significant contribution to a body of knowledge. We proceed by explaining what a literature review is and continue with a discussion on why a review of literature is important and how it can be done.

2.1. What Is a Literature Review?

Literature review is neither a compilation of literature nor a listing of concepts and definitions. Thus it must be distinguished from annotated bibliographies and summaries of articles in a list of a set. A literature review, indeed, must be seen as a whole. It is a purposeful systematic process of analyzing, evaluating and synthesizing literature in order to create value, extend frontiers of knowledge and enhance, quicken or challenge the current state of problem solving and decision making. Jancovicz (2000) defines literature review as a “critical search for an analytical framework or frameworks which you can put to work to text or a set of hypothesis or to systematically investigate a set of issues.” (p. 178). Hence, literature review is considered procedural, systematic and purposeful and its design and conduct require knowing of its constructs and architecture. This underscored the role of carefully and properly planning for literature rearview. Arguably it doesn’t meet its objectives and judged as waste of time and effort. To begin our journey towards a scientific model for literature review, we must understand what literature is really.

2.2. Why is Doing a Literature Review Essential for a Research?

Perhaps the main reason for doing a literature review is the curiosity of the researcher about ‘being’ and ‘becoming’ of his or her topics of interest. Put simply a sound review of literature could address questions about the emergence of concepts, theories and constructs and the evolutionary as well as revolutionary trajectories of paths of thoughts on specific issues. For instance, a review of literature in the ‘psychology of entrepreneurs’ would tell us about the main concepts, areas, theories or models as well as evolution of research findings about different psychological aspects of entrepreneurs’ behavior. Similarly, a literature review on the globalization and emergence of new economies could tell us about the main theories that explain these phenomena, key concepts, underlying assumptions and the development of and changes in thoughts and findings. As a result, a literature review is a key tool in addressing numerous questions. Given this, a literature review is not only an integral part of any research but it also can be thought of as research on its own.

A research is essentially a knowledge-creating process by which new scientific knowledge is added to the existing body of knowledge and without knowing what it already known and done the originality and accuracy of new knowledge created by a research project would be subject to questioning and criticism and cannot be validated so a literature review not only tells us what to do, where to look but also keeps us from reinventing the wheel and wasting our time, energy and resources on something which has already been studied . It is also axiomatic to say that, a sound literature review would exhibit the value, significance and originality of the research and makes it easier to justify, defend and explain.

As Sir Isaac Newton said “if I can see further it is because I am standing on shoulders of giants”, literature review is also metaphorically standing on the shoulders of others. A reviewer gain new insights in being and becoming of a specific field of inquiry by reviewing prior works of others.

2.3. Requirements for Doing a Proper Literature Review

Although literature review brings about numerous advantages but it is not free of difficulty and perplexity. In this regard, Adams et al. (2007) argue that, literature review requires careful planning, access to sources and dealing with complexity because it essentially aims to find and understand what has already been done (if anything) in the specific topic and also what has been done in the wider subject area of that topic.
Furthermore, literature review is per se a challenging research activity because it requires openness and broad thinking. A good literature review requires mental astuteness, motivation and commitment because it delineates the conceptual evolution and patterns of intellectual progress in a specific conceptual field. In addition, it shows main theoretical dimensions, and underlying assumptions of a specific field and present the methods and findings of experts and their arguments and thus exhibits the holistic platform of scientific works in an area of research. Thus, it makes the researcher perceive, think, analyze, deepen and widen his or her knowledge repository in an interesting, exciting manner and enables the knowledge evolves and develops through an accumulative process (Baker, 2000).

This is intrinsically the primary step of problem recognition and solution generation in existing body of knowledge (Baker, 2000). Furthermore a literature review enables a researcher to fulfill variety of objectives including synthesizing and gaining new perspectives, discovering important factors relevant to a topic, distinguishing what has and has not been done for a topic and ways to get them done, relating theory to applications or relating applications to different new contexts and tracking the evolution and changes of a stream of research over time to extract meaningful patterns and predictions and so on (Hart, 1998, p. 27).

3. LITERATURE: TYPES AND SOURCES

Merriam-Webster dictionary defines literature as “writings having excellence of form or expression and expressing ideas of permanent or universal interest (2): an example of such writings <what came out, though rarely literature, was always a roaring good story — People > b: the body of written works produced in a particular language, country, or age c: the body of writings on a particular subject <scientific literature>d: printed matter (as leaflets or circulars)”. Whereas, oxford dictionary describes literature as: “written works, especially those considered of superior or lasting artistic merit.” So, from an integrative view, literature simply refers to written superior materials on a specific subject. Thus, a literature reviewer must seek general quality material on a topic of inquiry and make sure that the materials meet quality criteria specific to the field of study. This note will be addressed later. However, accessing proper literature requires specific sources that any researcher must know professionally. To explain this theme, first and foremost different types of literature must be explained. In management research alike other disciplines literature basically fall into nine general categories as: 1) books (text books and edited books that collect articles) 2) academic journal articles. 3) Conference articles and proceedings 4) web materials 5) faculty’s work papers 6) Government and official authorities’ reports and publications and 7) companies’ reports and publications. 8) Research institutions’ publications and 9) magazines and newspapers.

Although researchers may get access to this variety of resources through different ways, however, scientific journals are widely recognized as the most important type of literature. Basically, journals can be accessed through academic databases. However, it must be noted that quality of journals has also been a subject of an ongoing debate (Yuyuenyongwatana, and Carrashe, 2008; Geary, Marriott, and Rowlinsonw, 2004). Some journals are deemed to be more scientific and reliable because are committed to publish only rigorous high impact research. Different listings of high impact journals for each discipline are available and researchers can access them through their libraries. A researcher must find these journals in his or her field by observing, reading high-quality and highly-cited publications and asking from experts. In this regard, however, number of academic journal rankings are available including financial times (FT top journal list) and Australian Business Deans Council (ABDC) that sort journals on the basis of their citation and contributory factors. ISI journal impact factor is another tool that shows the quality of a journal. However, each source has its own limitations. For instance, ISI impact factor is limited to only those journals that are indexed by ISI. Seemingly there is no generally accepted list or agenda for top scientific journals and each discipline has its own ranking and list. Thus, as noted earlier, it is a key task of the researcher to find the main journal in his or her discipline.
In a literature review project, as noted earlier, relevance and quality of materials involved are two fundamental factors. Although numerous ways of accessing literature might be available to a researcher however a quality-seeking writer must embrace guaranteed ways. As an initial stage, assuring the source of literature not only enhances the conduct and quality of the process but more importantly it enables the writer to advance his or her knowledge base as review process progresses. So, obtaining documents from academic databases is perhaps the most reliable and easiest way to assure the quality of sources. Furthermore, when quality sources are accessed some authors may be interested in further evaluating of the search results and narrowing the scope of the literature search down to a rich base of literature.

Although, Thomson ISI web of knowledge and web of science are web-based services generally used by librarians and researchers to search, evaluate and select conference and journal articles using techniques such as journal impact factors (JIF), as well as authors’ citation and co-citation factors However, according to Adams et al. (2007) the best way to assess the quality of literature is to read, understand and compare different pieces of literature and draw conclusion showing their logical and theoretical correlations. This might help if applied with above said factors. The following questions have been posed by Adams and colleagues to ask in order to evaluate the quality of literature: 1) is it clear that who or what is responsible for the content of the literature? Is it an academic source or authority? 2) When, where and by whom this work has been done and published? Does the material logically state its essence, objective and significance? Are the sources for any factual information clearly listed so that they can be verified in another source? Is the information free of grammatical, spelling and other typographical errors? (These kinds of errors not only indicate a lack of quality control, but can actually produce inaccuracies in information) (Adams et al., 2007, p. 61). These questions can be expanded by other personal questions; a reviewer may raise and seek literature to find answer. However, the underlying assumption here is that, if a reviewer searches and obtains material from quality sources and evaluates them by some questions as noted above, the literature review is founded on a robust reliable platform providing having a careful plan for abstraction of sources.

3.1. Types of Review

Having accessed the literature, the researcher must plan the review process. The review process is entirely contingent upon the purpose of the research and the intention and questions of the reviewer. There are different types of review to begin with. For instance, Adasm et al. (2007) propose three main types of literature review as: 1) An Evaluative Review 2) An Exploratory Review and 3) An Instrumental Review. These three represents the rationale which guides the process of review. Accordingly, they describe these three as (Adams et al. 2007, pp. 56-57):

- **Evaluative Review** provides a discussion of the literature in terms of its coverage and contribution to knowledge in a particular area.
- **Exploratory review** seeks to find out what exists in the academic literature in terms of theory, empirical evidence and research methods as they pertain to a specific research topic and its related wider subject area. It is also used to sharpen, focus and identify research questions that remain unanswered in the specific topic and finally;
- **Instrumental review** is used exclusively as a source of information on how to conduct some research on a highly specific research problem. It is not designed to identify the state of current knowledge in an area but to identify the best way to carry out a research project without reinventing the wheel and without incurring unnecessary and avoidable costs.

Similarly, scholars have also suggested different approaches to deal with and classify literature. For instance, a reflective review that focuses more on the evolution of a theoretical side of a field rather than empirical findings (e.g. Yu and Hang, 2010) or an integrative review which aims to criticize and synthesize literature on a specific topic to develop new perspectives (Torraco, 2005) as
well as a systematic review that is based on an explicit protocol to collect and review a large body of theoretical and empirical findings on a specific topic (Tranfield, Denyer, and Smart, 2003) to address different sides of a body of knowledge or dimensionalize it. As noted, the key issue in choosing the review approach is the objective of the review (Crossan and Apaydin, 2010). These typologies are not competing or contrasting and in fact it can be said that evaluative review is analogous to reflective as well as integrative while exploratory correspond with systematic review. In a research a researchers could leverage these views to develop a review that serves multiple purposes. These purposes are all determined by the nature of the literature, its volume, dimensions and objectives of the study (i.e. research questions or gaps).

We accordingly posit that; a research project is a research project that may require a synthesis of these three types. In short, since the purpose of a research is to create new theoretically novel and empirically valid knowledge, student must be able to understand the prior theoretical and empirical research on topic related to the research and then develop a foundation for proposing hypotheses. This implies that, the objective of the review would be both to reflect the evolution of relevant theories and to review them critically and synthesize empirical findings to defend the empirical and theoretical validity and novelty. Therefore, a methodology driving the review in a study is systematic in nature using an explicit protocol and is reflective and integrative in respect to the report of literature. The underlying motivation for undertaking this method is its ability to leverage systematic approach in order to gain, review and synthesize as much scientific evidence as possible for a research in order to form a an intensive understanding of extant literature both theoretically and empirically (Tranfield, Denyer, and Smart, 2003; Rousseau, Manning, and Denyer, 2008).

In addition, a literature review specifically for a theoretical research is extensively influenced by the theoretical orientation of the research and its dominant methodological doctrine. In respect to the theoretical orientation a literature review can be regarded as a theory building review, or a theory-testing review or finally a theory-expanding review. Theory building review aims to analyze literature in order to develop arguments for adding new constructs into existing relationships. For instance, a review can be planned to show that no one has added age into the relationship between gender and drug addiction or to add and support the role of national culture in the relationship between managers’ world view and the degree of their export investment. Theory-testing review, on the other hand, aims to replicate prior studies in a new context and support theory with additional findings. This is basically not an approach in theoretical studies simply because it may not constitute a theoretical contribution (Whetten, 1989). An example of theory-testing reviews is meta-analytic reviews in which prior empirical findings are systematically revised and assess to show how a particular theory explains certain phenomena. It is not within the scope of the present article to discuss meta-analysis. Finally, a theory-expanding review aims to add new causal relationships into an established set of assumptions by analyzing and reviewing literature. For instance, by reviewing cognitive psychology literature a new set of relationships are identified which can extend the current knowledge on the role of managers’ stress and their specific task performance.

For the purpose of these kinds of review, researcher must understand the notion and types of theory as well as current state of theoretical development in the specific field of inquiry under review and craft an advanced search and analyses of existing body of literate on a specific contemporary topic. For instance if a research intends to work on resource-based theory of the firm, he or she should get to know the nature, origin and evolution of knowledge in this theory and then make a final decision about the theoretical-orientation of his research as if a theory is well-grounded and expanded the best reviews which offers new value may be evaluative review in the form of comparative or cross-sectional analysis instead of theory-expansion or theory-building reviews. This assessment and subsequent choice is basically a skill that is developed and accumulated overtime by the researcher.

At last but not least, researchers can also classify literature for a review based on the dominant methodology of the research whose literature review is progressed. In this case, a literature review can be on conceptual, qualitative, quantitative or even qualitative-quantitative or mixed-methods research.
However, it is not necessary mean that a qualitative research does not review and include quantitative literature but the dominant methodological doctrine sometimes indicates that in a qualitative study prior qualitative studies must be prioritized over quantitative studies and vice versa. This choice is however made based on the volume of different types of research and their contribution to the extant body of knowledge in the field of interest. For example, a research in the field of aboriginal studies or indigenous cultures that uses grounded theory approach (a qualitative technique for developing theory) can develop a literature reviewed section which consists of prior qualitative studies on the aboriginal issues and it can be reasonably argued that quantitative research may not be very relevant and hence can be marginalized in the review process. This choice, as noted, is made by the researcher based on the perceived contribution of different studies to the literature and their relevance to the research project’s objectives and questions. Similarly, a theoretical study on the profit impacts of taxation following implementation of a sustainability strategy would basically review quantitative economic literature in regards to taxation, profitability of a firm and so on and thus qualitative research can be under-emphasized for the review process.

The key point here is that a literature review can be even done independently as an integrated piece of academic work that offers new values or as a dependent manuscript in a bigger research project such as a qualitative, quantitative or mix-method dissertation, research article and so on. Irrespective of these types and settings a literature review is always a systematic process of careful collection, analysis and conclusion.

We will argue that, a literature review is a research project that requires a synthesis of these three types. In short, since the purpose of a literature review is to create new theoretically novel and empirically valid knowledge, researchers must be able to understand the prior theoretical and empirical research on topic related to the research and then develop a foundation for proposing hypotheses. This implies that, the objective of the review would be both to reflect the evolution of relevant theories and to review them critically and synthesize empirical findings to defend the empirical and theoretical validity and novelty. Therefore, a methodology driving the review in a literature review is systematic in nature using an explicit protocol and is reflective and integrative in respect to the report of literature. The underlying motivation for undertaking this method is its ability to leverage systematic approach in order to gain, review and synthesize as much scientific evidence as possible for a research in order to form an intensive understanding of extant literature both theoretically and empirically (Tranfield, Denyer, and Smart, 2003; Rousseau, Manning, and Denyer, 2008). Therefore, the process of literature review for a literature review is (1) systematically planned and conducted to cover as much quality literature as possible to (2) reflect the evolution of research theoretically and empirically in order to position the novelty of the research and accordingly (3) integrate different thoughts to develop a new perspective that is used in proposing hypotheses, and propositions. Having considered this argument we continue with the planning of a review.

When the main objectives of a literature review are planned and its rationale and methodology are chosen according to the research questions and gap of the study the reviewer gradually orients his or her attention towards a conceptual understanding of the literature. It must be noted that literature review is all about learning and thinking. This learning and embedded thinking make the process of analysis thrive. In other words, as literature unfolds during review, the reviewer learns new knowledge, advance his or her understanding of the literature, and develop new thoughts which not only drive the review further but also will be used in the final assessment, report and analysis regardless of the type of the review. The key to meet the requirements of this process is a careful planning and conduct a careful plan enhances the review, allows the reviewer to collect as much relevant material as possible and facilitate review, learning, analysis and report and finally gives the review legitimacy for further examination and assessments. Thus, given this overview the time is ripe to talk about the planning of a thriving literature review for a literature review.
4. HOW TO PLAN AND CONDUCT

A review is planned on the basis of its purpose. It also requires diligence and commitment. It is an accumulative process which cannot be rushed and must be carried out carefully. Purpose and plan govern attention and stimulates commitment which allows the reviewer to design structure and control the whole process. We posit that a review of literature for a research study involves five phases: 1) Define the context (i.e., contextualization) 2) search 3) selection 4) extraction through an analytical review (i.e., analysis) and 5) report. Phase two and three (search and selection) are ongoing which make the entire process like a living organism which grows towards completion. It means that, a literature review begins with searching and selecting of relevant literature and these two activities continue as new works are published and included into the review process. A researcher must be aware that one of the most important criteria for a quality review is its ability to show the evolution and trajectories of the knowledge in the literature by illuminating recent and novel research and linking it to the past. A researcher is capable of doing so only if he or she shows the state-of-the-art knowledge and its links with the past research in a coherent and consistent manner. We will explain how this goal can be achieved. There are few general guidelines for planning of a review (e.g., Baker, 2000; Tranfield, et al. 2003; Torraco, 2005; Jahangirian et al. 2011). However, we synthesized them into an organizing framework illustrated in the below table. This framework is based on two aforementioned assumptions: 1) a literature review is a systematic review. That is, it is based on a clear replicable protocol and 2) it is reflective and integrative process. That is, it reflects different views, thoughts and aspects of different bodies of literature in an integrative way. This could reasonably generate a supportive review that shows where the research is positioned and how it can delineate and defend its originality and significance. Put simply, this process shows ‘what is known’ and ‘what remains to be known’ in a persuasive mode. So, it not only enables the researcher to justify the research questions and objectives but also it allows the research to cast some light on the potential areas for future research.

Since a literature review is highly likely to involve multiple concepts from different disciplines and as a result, it necessitates the reviewer to deal with a great volume of literature, it has to follows an explicit, easy-to-conduct and replicable review protocol or framework (MacPherson and Holt 2007). Webster and Watson, (2002) dissert that a review must be concept-specific and complete. That is, selection of sources is based on the focus on the key concepts and their related fields. To do so, the reviewer must define the context and form the questions which review must provide answer to. Therefore, the research rationale, knowledge gaps and research questions form the rationale behind the conduct of review in the contexts. It must be noted that, it is wise to not confine topics of sources to a particular set of methodologies, set of journals or a geographic region. In other words, the initial search must be as general as possible to generate as much related result as possible for a given context. Defining a context or contextualization refers to identification of key terms or concepts that represent a distinct research context. For instance, a context for a research in the business and management can be a ‘resource-based view of international collaboration’. This context is defined by terms such as ‘resources’, ‘capabilities’, ‘international collaboration’ and so on a determined by the research objectives and research questions. The search for related articles on this context cannot be limited to only journals in international business or European or American journals. Instead the objective here is to collect all related reliable research on this topic. To do so, a careful search must be carried out.

Searching literature: This phase is composed of four phases: (1) determining data bases, the main databases may include, Science Direct, Jstor, John Wiley, Springerlink, IEEEExplore, Emerald Insights, ISI Web of Knowledge, EBSCO Business Premier and ABI Inform Proquest. Additionally, sources such as unpublished doctoral dissertations, conference papers research books can also be found and accessed by search in the Google Scholar and researchers’ own Institutions’ libraries. (2) Using key terms and concepts in search engines. For instance, since main journals in business and management are in ABI Inform, EBSCO business premier and ISI Web of Knowledge Databases we use our key concepts (i.e. resources, capabilities, international collaboration, etc.) in these databases.
The researcher must be familiar with the search techniques such as developing search strings by using AND, OR, and NOT. Key terms were used in search of title, abstract, key words of articles and entire body of the articles (Webster, and Watson, 2002).

Initial result of the search could be confusing. Therefore, the results must be further narrowed and sifted in terms of their relevance and rigor. In academic parlance, the major contributions are assumed to be in leading journals (Bem, 1995; Webster, and Watson, 2002). Thus, the first activity is to select high impact journals and refine the search to confine results to only those journals. This would result in a set of more relevant literature. The process of refining the search protocol is iterative. The results must be exported to different Endnote Libraries and further reviewed (Thorpe et al. 2006; MacPherson and Holt, 2007). Therefore, (3) a subjectively review of the results must be carried out. It is basically done by reviewing the abstract or executive summary of the articles to decide whether or not they are relevant to the research. Finally (4) reference chasing must be conducted in which reference sections of selected articles were reviewed to find more relevant articles and add them to the library. This would result in inclusion of additional journal articles, research textbooks and conference papers. This is analogous to the ‘go backward’ step suggested by Webster, and Watson, (2002) in which the citations for the articles identified in the previous sections are reviewed to determine prior articles which must be considered for the review. These four steps for the search create the consideration list which is used in the review.

The next phase is the selection in which key articles from the consideration list are categorized and then selected to review. Articles can be categorized and tabulated based on their methods, research questions or key findings. A sample table to categorize articles is illustrated in Table 1.

It is wise to tabulate articles chronologically. It allows reviewer to make sense of the evolution of knowledge and detect changes in thoughts, empirical, conceptual and theoretical progress as well as trajectories of knowledge development in a specific research context. When tabulation and selection of key articles to begin with is complete the process of data extraction begins. The objective is to extract key points from the articles. Salipante, Notz, and Bigelow, (1982) suggested that reviewers can use conceptual matrices to extract and organize data from the literature. These conceptual matrices refer to tables that relate different studies to a particular concept, terms or research dimension. For instance, a matrix can relate all theoretical research about resources of the firm in business and economics to the notion of resources in a specific research project from the general ideas to specific.

The main difference between conceptual matrices in this phase and the tables in the selection phase is the attention to the details and content of the articles in the data extraction phase. Matrices in the data extraction phase can be concept-specific for instance one table (matrix) for all articles about the concept of ‘resources’. Articles are selected from the table explained in the previous phase. To create tables in the selection phase, reviewers can basically skim the articles and focus mainly on their abstract, introduction and conclusion sections however in the data extraction phase articles must be gone through carefully. The attention to specific details and summarizing key notes is the key task of reviewers in this phase. Different matrices for different aspects of the research can be developed and completed over time in parallel with the accumulation of literature in the selection

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<th>Authors</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Key Question</th>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Research Context</th>
<th>Key Findings</th>
<th>Relevance To My Research</th>
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<td>X, Y</td>
<td>1987</td>
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<td>survey</td>
<td>150 cases in the US</td>
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<td>A, B, and C</td>
<td>1999</td>
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<td>theoretical</td>
<td>the key argument is that</td>
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phase. Extracting data from the literature is here an interpretive and subjective process that is based on the comprehension, creativity and commitment of the reviewer. As a result, it is suggested that reviewers continuously check their matrices as they gain new knowledge gradually and master their literature. In this phase the reviewer it is likely to end up having different matrices even for closely related terms and concept. This signifies the importance of a planned synthesis. Synthesis of evidence or data or finding of the review is the last and most difficult phase. In synthesizing findings, the reviewer can compare and relate different aspects of the literature detect and discuss similarities, commonalities and contradictions or differences between different studies in terms of their methods, arguments and findings. This synthesis reflects the reviewers’ mastery of literature. Its credibility and integrity however requires a significant amount of attention and care given to: 1) flow of information, 2) consistency and coherency, and 3) academic honesty and appropriate citation.

It has long been argued that, synthesis of evidence or data must follow an interpretive narrative process (Denyer, and Tranfield, 2006). The interpretive part refers to the fact that, different reviewers may interpret different pieces of literature differently based on their own understandings, knowledge, and also objectives of the research and the narrative part indicates that the report must be narrative. It implies that it has to have a coherent and consistent flow form the beginning to the end. Coherency refers to the attribute of being clear and easy to understand. If the review aims to reflects similarities or contradictions in some literature it has to point out it clearly. Consistency refers to the uniformity of style, vocabulary and terminology. A reviewer must be aware that in the report phase all terms, theories and ides must be defined and the key terms, definitions and assumptions smut be maintained throughout the report. Lack of consistency and coherency confuses the reader and reduces the reliability and credibility of the review. Finally, in the report phase citation is extremely important, proper citation is a must. Reviewers must choose and maintain a proper citation style and cite pieces of literature properly and honestly. The report will create the ‘literature review’ section of the thesis or dissertation. It must be constantly reviewed and modified as new literature is accumulated and included. Researchers are advised to 1) develop a search schedule to search databases for new literature such as articles, annual reviews, books, and conference proceedings on a regular basis and 2) subscribe to journal alerts in the main databases. Therefore, they will be informed when a new relevant article is published. We hope that this guideline could help researchers and nascent researchers gain a deeper and broader understanding of what a review is and how it can be properly conducted (see Table 2).

5. CONCLUSION

Review of the literature is one of the most important tasks of any researchers and is a key research skill and method om its own. This article attempted to help new researchers in early stages of their research understand what a review of literature is, why it matters and how it can be planned and carried out. It was shown that the review of literature is a systematic process aiming at generating a reflective and integrative report that reflects evolution of the knowledge in an integrated manner. A framework was accordingly proposed consisting of five sub-processes: contextualization, searching, selection, extraction and reporting. These processes were subsequently explained.
### Table 2. A framework for doing a literature review

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<th>Contextualization</th>
<th>Search</th>
<th>Selection</th>
<th>Extraction</th>
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<td><strong>Key Tasks</strong></td>
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<td>Identifying Key Concepts, Terms, Identifying Main Bodies of Literature</td>
<td>Identifying key data bases determining key journals using search techniques developing a general consideration list</td>
<td>Reviewing articles in more details chasing references of articles in the list (go-forward)</td>
<td>Developing conceptual matrices Review them frequently Synthesize analysis</td>
<td>Narrating Maintaining Consistency Maintaining Coherency proper citation</td>
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<td><strong>General Guidelines</strong></td>
<td>Define your search protocol in terms of key journals and key words, refine the initial results by skimming results (reviewing abstract, introduction and conclusion) and categorize them based on their rigor or research, type of research and relevance to your work. This allows you to form a general consideration list.</td>
<td>Review articles listed in the consideration list. Go through them carefully and chase the key articles cited in them and add them to the list then develop different tables for different aspects of the research based on the research objectives, and questions. Chorological table are specially recommended.</td>
<td>Take specific notes, synthesize different aspects of literature by developing arguments by comparing and illustrating similarities, commonalities and contradictions and put arguments in tables to facilitate the last phase of write-up</td>
<td>Begin narrating from general to specific issues, Check the flow of the narration and improve consistency and coherency by iteratively reviewing the flow of the report. It should be reflective, integrative and comprehensive. Check for the proper citation, accurate rephrasing and quoting.</td>
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REFERENCES


Arash Najmaei graduated from the Macquarie Graduate School of Management (MGSM), Sydney with an award-winning PhD in entrepreneurship in 2014. His research interests include entrepreneurial business modeling and the role of business systems and entrepreneurs in sustainable development. His work has appeared in more than 10 journal articles, 5 book chapters and more than 30 conference proceedings. Dr Najmaei is currently working as a consultant in Australia. He is also an adjunct lecture at the Australian Catholic University (ACU) and the International College of Management Sydney (ICMS) and is a research affiliate of the Institute For Sustainable Leadership (ISL), and MGSM.