

## **EDTE 227 Literature Review**

A literature review is a summary of all the literature on a given topic. (Your assignment will be a short review and cannot include all the relevant literature, so select the most important articles.) You are required to review a minimum of 15 articles. The review should be approximately 10 double-spaced, typed pages (not including title or reference pages.)

In the beginning of your research there may seem to be too much information but as you read and think about your topic you will be able to narrow your focus and highlight those articles. Your goal is to continually refocus your research so that you have a point of reference for selecting the pertinent sections of the literature.

The essential steps involved in a review of the literature include:

1. Defining the research problem/topic as precisely as possible
2. Pursuing the secondary sources
3. Selecting and pursuing an appropriate general reference
4. Formulating search terms
5. Searching the general references for relevant primary sources
6. Obtaining and reading the primary sources, and noting and summarizing key points in the sources.

Remember that a literature review is a piece of discursive prose, not a list describing or summarizing one piece of literature after another. Your ultimate goal is to synthesize the material into a cohesive portrayal of where the research is at this point in time and how it can help in your research planning or education practice.

As you work on your review of the literature you should take detailed enough notes (organized in a table or tables) so that you won't need to refer to the original articles as you begin to organize and categorize your material.

Once you have your notes organized you will need to synthesize the literature prior to writing your review by using the notes and summary tables to develop an outline of your final review. Please refer to the steps outlined by Galvan on pages 71-79.

After you have created your outline you will move on to writing the review. Please refer to pages 81-90 in the Galvan text for guidelines on developing the review and pages 91-96 to create a coherent essay.

### **Elements of a Literature Review**

Your literature review report should contain a title page, an introduction, a body, a discussion, and a reference page:

#### **Introduction**

The introduction of a literature review serves the same purpose as an introduction in any other type of paper or essay. The introduction should include a statement of the problem, briefly explain the significance of your topic study (to the education field and the world if applicable), and act as a way to introduce the reader to your definitions and background. This sets the theoretical framework for your paper.

### **Body of Literature Review**

The body of your literature review should summarize the findings of studies that have been conducted on your topic. For each study you should briefly explain its purpose, procedure for data collection and major findings. This is the section where you will discuss the strengths and weaknesses of particular studies.

Remember that a literature review should not be a listing of articles or researchers but rather a flowing article incorporating both prose and citations such as “Calvin and Brommel (1996) believe family communication . . .” Avoid having a lot of short paragraphs of one or two sentences.

### **Discussion**

The discussion should be similar to a conclusion portion of an essay paper. It serves as a summary of the body of your literature review and should highlight the most important findings (in your opinion.)

There needs to be a sense of completion to the whole piece in this section. Your analysis should help you to draw conclusions. In this section you would discuss any consensus or disagreement on the topic. It can also include any strengths and weaknesses in general of the research area. If you believe there is more to research you may include that here.

### **Reference Page**

The reference page contains a list of the sources of information you used and cited in your paper. Only include those cited in the text but be sure to include every citation. This section must follow APA format.

In general, your paper should show a sense of direction and contain a definite central idea supported with evidence. The writing should be logical and the ideas should be linked together in a logical sequence. The ideas need to be put together in a way that is clear to the writer and to the reader.

**Be sure to use APA format, as specified in the APA 5<sup>th</sup> edition handbook. Format guidelines are also available at:**

**<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/workshops/hypertext/apa/index.html>**

## Recommended Reading

- The Literature Review: A Few Tips On Conducting It  
<http://www.utoronto.ca/writing/litrev.html#top>
- Literature reviewing: Finding the evidence in the first place! [.ppt]  
[http://www.man.ac.uk/rcn/rs/rsni/Finding the evidence.ppt](http://www.man.ac.uk/rcn/rs/rsni/Finding_the_evidence.ppt)
- Guidelines for Literature Review  
<http://www.hsl.creighton.edu/HSL/Guides/Lit-Review.html>
- Practitioner research: The purposes of reviewing the literature within an enquiry  
<http://www.scre.ac.uk/spotlight/spotlight67.html>
- The systematic literature review: What it is and how IT can help  
<http://www.comp.leeds.ac.uk/comir/people/eberry/sysrev/sysrev.htm>