Transcript

Chapter 6: Reviewing the Literature

Almost regardless of topic, there are four key elements of a literature review:

* Why is this interesting?
* What have other researchers said about it?
* What hasn’t been said about it (this is the knowledge gap)?
* What will you do in relation to that gap (essentially, what are the aims and objectives of your research)

Now the first of these - why is this interesting - is basically a broad contextual justification for your project. You might appeal to policy or to practice, popularity, economics, or even the knowledge-base. But you need to try and give the reasons to research something in more detail.

Now the second of those things is concerned with reviewing what has been said about the topic by key researchers in the field. This might reflect disciplinary, theoretical, or empirical concerns. But what you are trying to do is situate your project in the wider field of knowledge.

Now, if you do that, it should provide you with a platform to identify a knowledge gap and this is essentially what’s not yet known about your subject, or where the knowledge-base might not be as robust as it could be. Think of it as a summary of the field of research.

And finally, and again following on from the knowledge gap, are the aims and objectives of your research. Or put more simply, what you are going to do to fill the knowledge gap that you’ve identified.

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