

Carrying out a Literature Review

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What do we look for in a research report?

Advice from a journal editor and thesis examiner



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Main Issues

1. Conceptual Framework
- 2. Literature Review**
3. Methodology
4. Findings and Discussion
5. Ethics
6. Quality of writing and expression

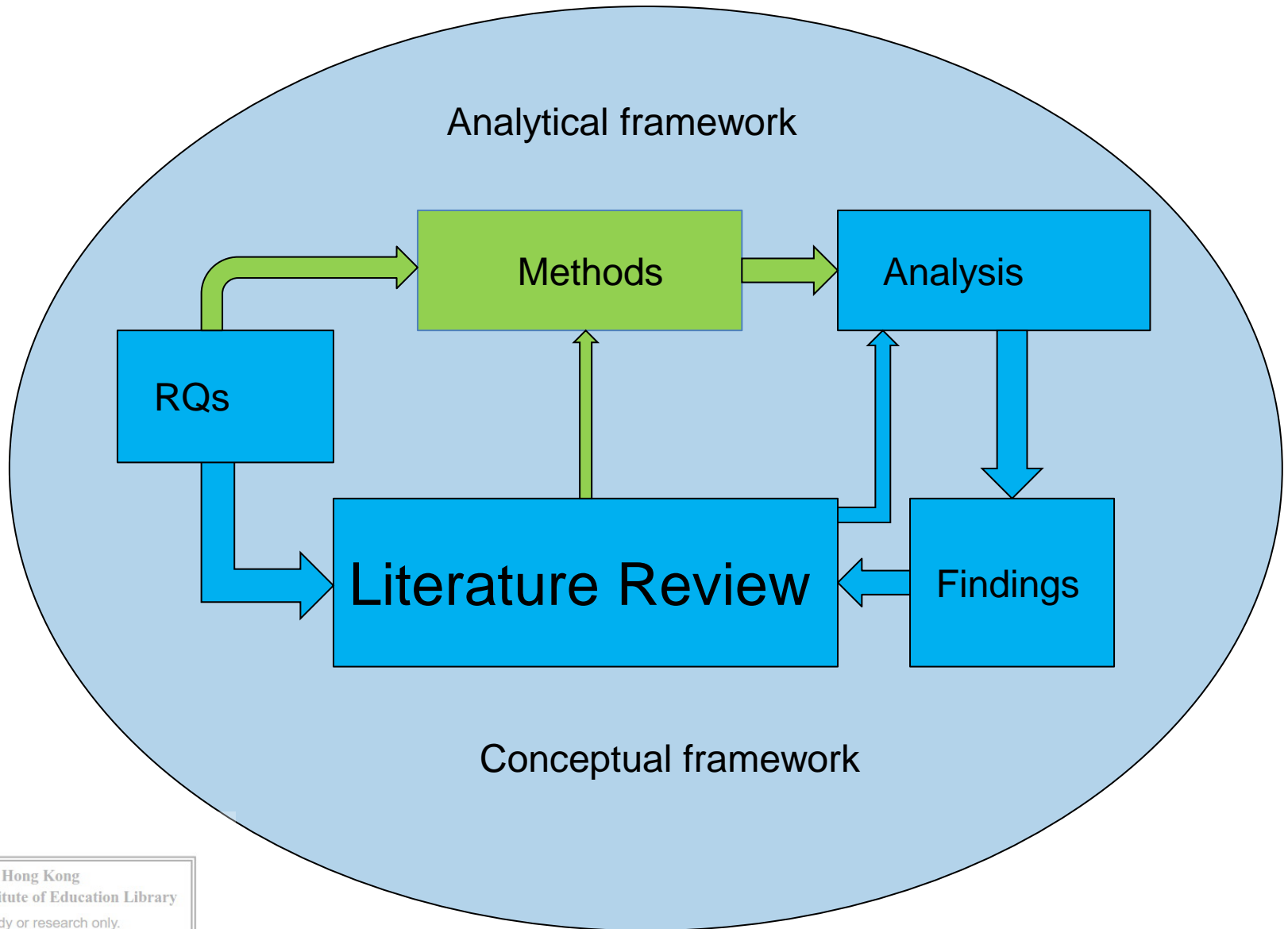
How does a Literature Review fit into a thesis?



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What is a Literature Review?

a process which:

- **identifies**
- **evaluates**
- **analyses**
- **integrates**

relevant publications on a topic.

It serves as a foundation for the study, as well as the basis for interpretations of findings for the study.

A literature review integrates relevant publications in order to identify:

- ◆ **History and geography of the topic**
- ◆ **Key studies**
- ◆ **Key concepts**
- ◆ **Analytical frameworks**
- ◆ **Gaps**

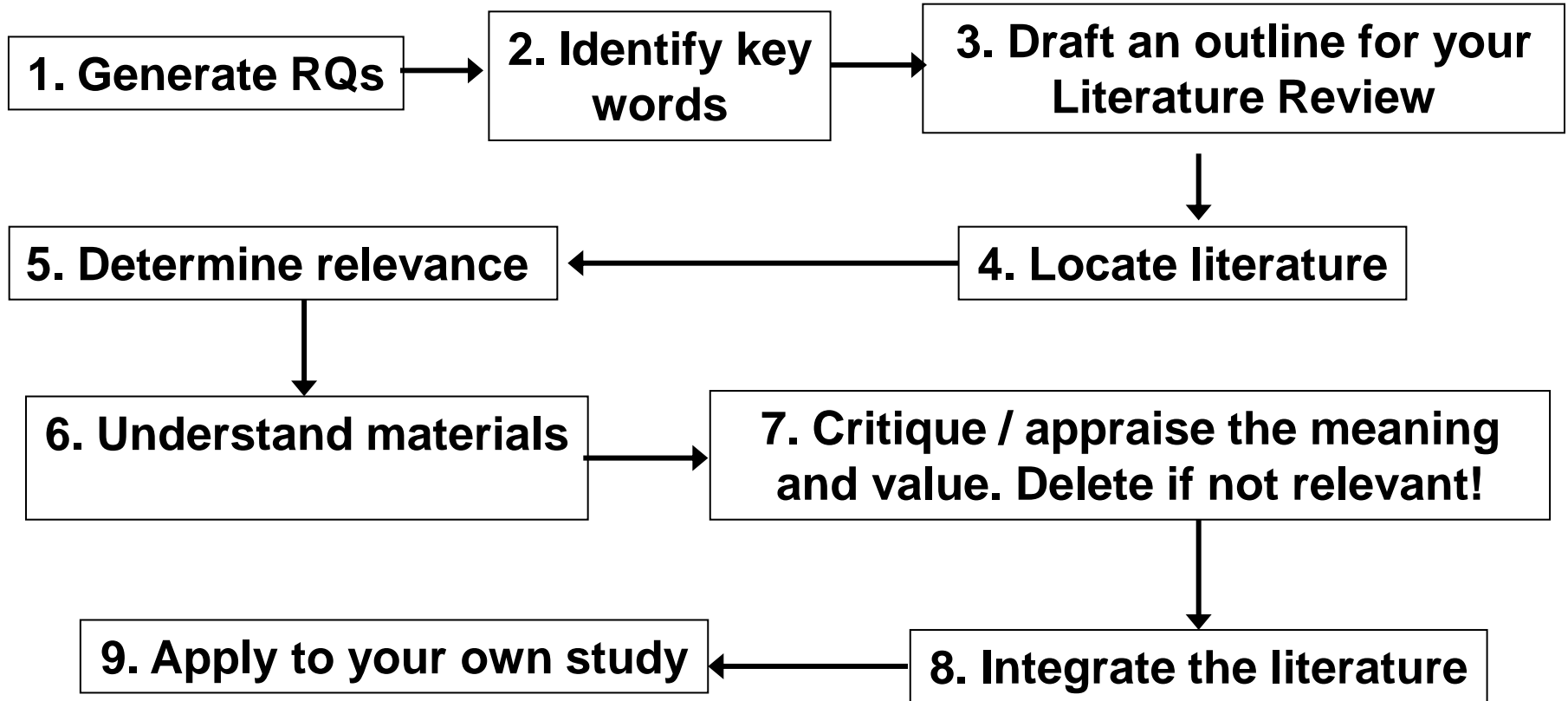
The Basic Steps of a Literature Review



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The Basic Steps



Note: the process may not be linear as indicated in the diagram

Underline the key words in your RQs



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What should be in the review?

RQ:

What were the particular socio-political and pedagogical influences on curriculum innovation in general and on syllabi and textbooks specifically in the field of junior secondary school English in the People's Republic of China between 1949 and 1994?

What were the particular **socio-political** and **pedagogical influences** on **curriculum innovation** in general and on syllabi and textbooks specifically in the field of junior secondary school **English** in the **People's Republic of China** between **1949** and **1994**?

Locate Relevant Literature

Draw a mindmap to link the literature to your RQs.

If the literature doesn't fit, don't use it!

My Literature Review

2. 1 Introduction

2.2 English in the Curriculum

2.3 Explanations for Curriculum Change

- 2. 3.1 Macro-level Explanations
- 2.3.2 Meso-/Micro-Level Explanations
- 2.3.3 Macro and Meso-/micro-level Explanations

2.4 The Process of Curriculum Change

2.5 The Products of Curriculum Change

2.6 Conclusion

Sources of Information

- The Library
 - Journals
 - Reviews: e.g. *Reviews of Research in Education*; *Reviews of Educational Research*.
 - Handbooks
 - Encyclopedias
 - Books: particularly introductory chapters of edited books
 - Professional Bodies & Research Institutes – e.g. the Australian Council for Educational Research
- Electronic Databases
 - ERIC
 - NEKAS
 - ProQuest
 - <http://scholar.google.com>
- Useful Websites

Summarise and Integrate

- **Organise the materials**
- **Integrate findings**
- **Delineate supporting and opposite views**

Lai (1994) extended Marsh and Huberman's framework of Superordinate and Subordinate agencies to include Intermediate agencies because the bipartite model was inadequate in accounting for the particular circumstances of the PRC. The nomenclature, Superordinate, Intermediate and Subordinate, denotes the hierarchical relationship in the power structure between the agencies at a particular level and decision-making/actual implementation.

Figure 2.7 Superordinate, Intermediate and Subordinate Agencies in the PRC

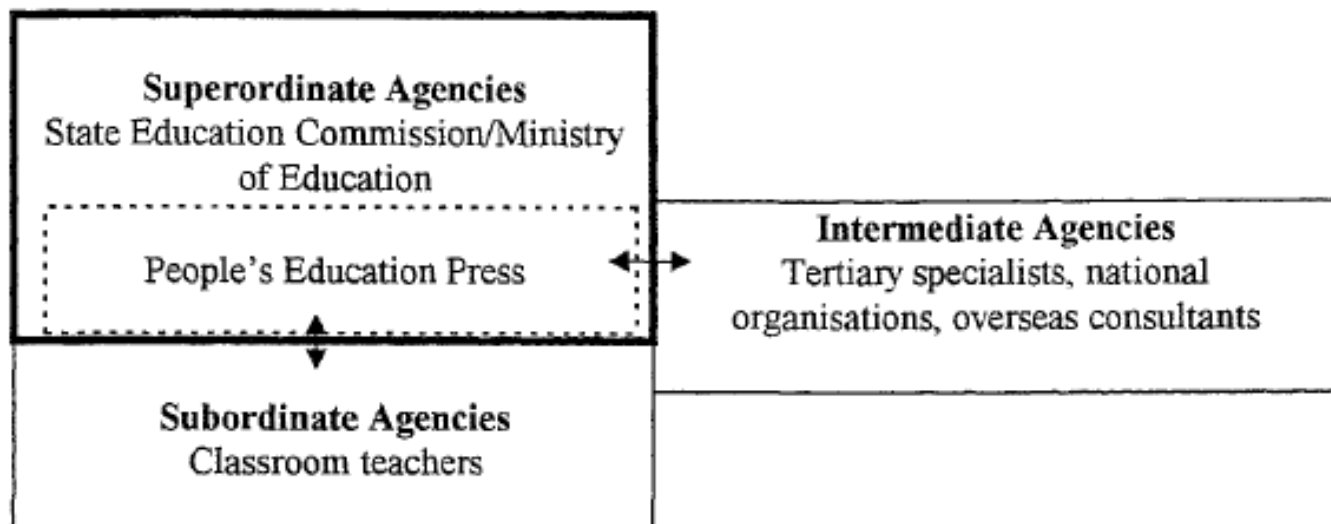


Figure 2.5 Views of Shifts in Socio-Political Climate in the PRC

Date	<i>Pendulum Ruyen (1970)</i>	<i>Three strands Sautman (1991)</i>	<i>Linear periodisation Nathan (1976)</i>	<i>English Tang Lixing (1983)</i>
1949	Radical	Bureaucratic & radical	Pragmatic/moderate	Mass literacy
1952				
1953				
1954	Moderate		Leftist	Soviet influence
1957			Rightist	
1958	Radical	Radical	Mobilisation	The First 'Renaissance'
1959				
1961		Reform	Rightist	
	Moderate			
1966	Radical	Radical	Radical	"severe winter" for English
1969			Pragmatic/moderate	
1976				
1977		Bureaucratic		The Second 'Renaissance'
1980		Reform		

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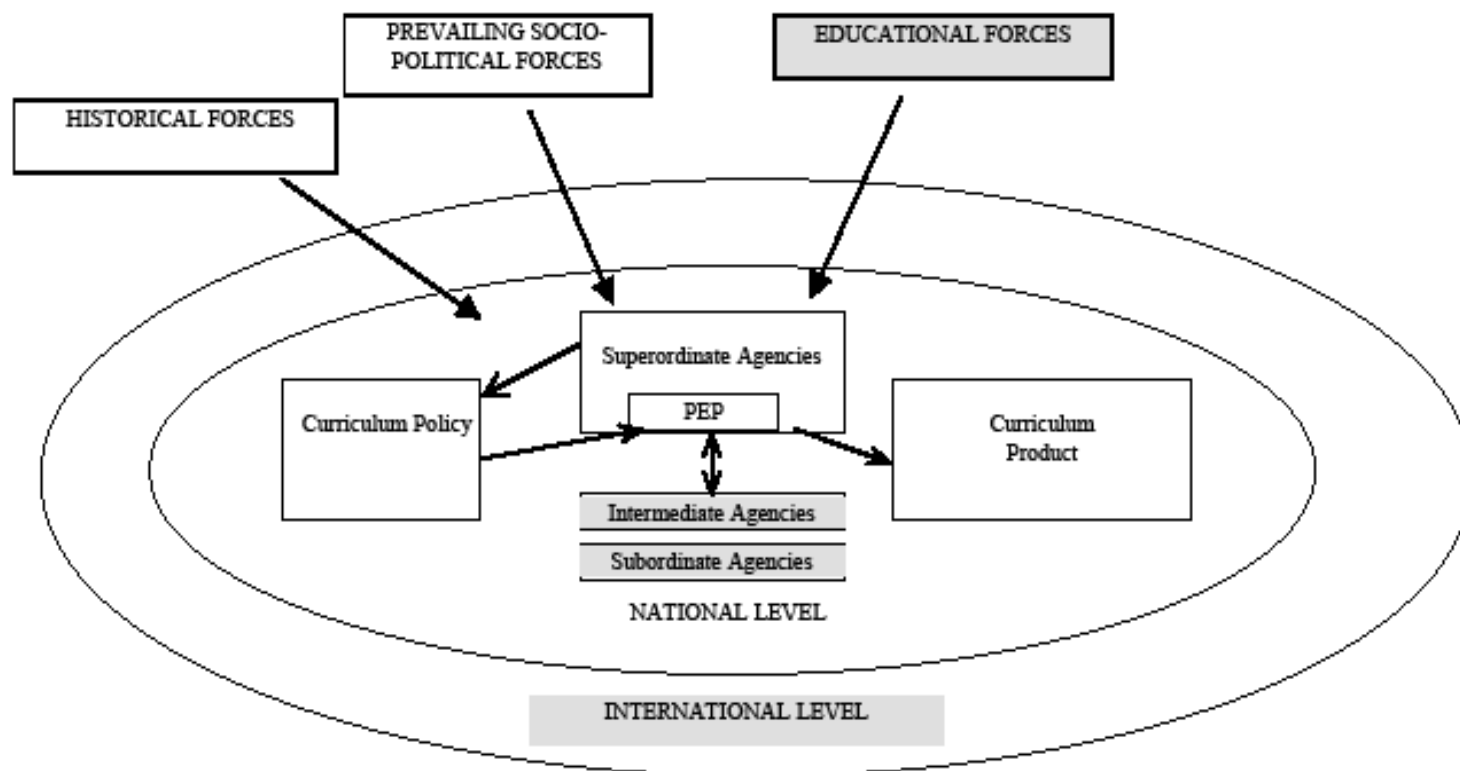
Mapping the thesis on to the area



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English Language Curriculum Change in PRC



NB: Shaded areas are not strongly represented in current literature



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Critique

- **Use either theory or personal experience**
- **Critique information:**
 - **Accuracy, representativeness, significance, relevance, timeliness, simplicity**

The value of the literature review depends not only on the information and knowledge, but also on your views



Tang Lixing (1983) and Penner (1991) analysed the predominant English Language pedagogies promoted and, to some extent, used in junior secondary schools in China between 1949 and 1982 in different socio-political periods (Figure 2.3). There are fundamental agreements in the two sets of findings, with some differences over dates, and with Penner noting a greater presence of Kairov's Five Steps and Audiolingualism. **Penner's periodisation and findings concerning pedagogy correspond closely to those in this present study, although neither Penner nor Tang Lixing discern the structural approach which, as will be shown later, was identified by key informants as an important pedagogical influence in the English language curriculum. This, as noted above, could be due to the overlapping of features of different pedagogies.**

Common Errors

- **Belief that the literature review is to show others how knowledgeable you are**
- **Lack of self-confidence, easily give up on your right to critique**
- **Over-reading**
- **Covering too many aspects**
- **Failure to synthesise**

Exercise

Develop criteria for evaluating literature reviews

Grade A (Outstanding):

The review of the literature is detailed, relevant and recent and sufficient for the purposes of the proposal. There is thorough critique in addition to a summary of relevant literature informing the area. The review clearly identifies the need for, and the contribution of the study

Grade B (Good):

The review of the literature is sufficient for the purposes of the proposal, and both relevant and recent. It gives a good overview of the area and a strong critique of early studies.



Grade C (Adequate):

The review of the literature is sufficient for the purposes of the proposal, but could be further enhanced in terms of its critique, relevance, updated-ness, focus or coherence.

Grade D (Marginal):

The work shows the student had only partial understanding of the concepts and skills involved in literature review. Nevertheless, there are signs of emerging competence in terms of the way select relevant and update materials and to critique on these materials

Grade F (Fail)

The review of the literature is very weak, and contains no recent work. It is only vaguely related to the task, and does not inform the research area.

So, what did you learn from this session?



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Thank you!

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