

Reviews

Doing a Literature Review in Health and Social Care: A Practical Guide

HELEN AVEYARD

Maidenhead, Open University Press, 2010

170 pp., ISBN: 978-0-335-23885-9

When nearing the end of any degree, the word ‘*dissertation*’ can cause feelings of anxiety in even the most proficient and erudite student. Accounting for a significant proportion of the overall mark on most academic programmes, the dissertation is a piece of work that can affect a student’s degree classification. Therefore, students who opt to undertake a literature review study or who find that doing a literature review study is a compulsory requirement soon realise that knowing how to organise and analyse large amounts of academic literature is an essential component to successful completion of a seemingly daunting task.

Doing a Literature Review in Health and Social Care, by Dr Helen Aveyard, offers a practical guide to setting a research question at the very start of the project (Chapter 2). It discusses the different types of literature encountered when undertaking a literature review (Chapter 3) and offers advice on how to clearly define a search strategy (Chapter 4). It then details a wide range of critical appraisal tools (Chapter 5) before providing useful information on how to synthesize research findings (Chapter 6).

Aveyard’s ability to explain the complexities of a literature review in a clear and concise manner is one of the strengths of this book. Her opening chapter clearly defines a literature review as a ‘comprehensive study and interpretation of literature that addresses a specific topic’. She later comments that

If your literature review is preliminary review prior to a larger study, the purpose of the review is to provide a critical account of the literature in a particular area in order to demonstrate why a new research study is required. (p. 2)

For students who are new to undertaking literature reviews, this simple direction enables them to understand the purpose of their dissertation and the subsequent research study that will follow. Furthermore, it highlights useful hints that the study will need to be comprehensive, with further chapters denoting ways of ensuring how a research study can be systematic and robust.

Aveyard’s book provides useful prompts throughout that require students to engage with their research and reflect on its impetus whilst questioning how the reviewed studies were carried out (p. 96). This is useful as it encourages students to do more than just regurgitate facts from other studies. By being inquisitive about someone else’s research, the student in turn is naturally prompted to ask similar questions of their own study which will make their dissertation more analytical. At the same time

the book provides the reader with a range of skills and ideas for researching issues and developing evidence informed practice; which in the context of social work is a core skill.

The final chapters give suggested structures for writing up results and include a section of commonly asked questions. What is useful is that the book allows the reader to dip in and out, needing only to read the parts pertinent to the level of progress. This proved to be very useful for fellow social work students on my course, where our progression was varied. Being able to quickly find the sections of guidance that were needed without being bogged down by dense dialogue made this book a necessity on the journey to doing a literature review.

Despite the many positives about this practical guide one limitation exists. The book is not very accessible for those who may have extra learning support needs and in this sense Aveyard's claims that this book is useful for 'students at all levels' is somewhat undermined. Therefore, it would be highly beneficial if Aveyard incorporated more accessibility strategies, such as coloured backgrounds to make case examples or key prompts clearer; approaches which are commonly used within other study guides (see for example Cottrell, 2008) and are increasingly prominent within academic texts.

To conclude, whilst the accessibility of this text could be further developed, this book is a valuable resource that will guide students from the start to the finish of their own literature review study and provide useful guidance to the practitioner within the fields of social work and social care.

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DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02615479.2012.689493>

Reference

Cottrell, S. (2008). *The Study Skills Handbook*, 3rd edn. Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke.

Child Development for Child Care and Protection Workers, 2nd edition

BRIGID DANIEL, SALLY WASSELL & ROBBIE GILLIGAN

London, Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2010

281 pp., ISBN: 978-1-84905-068-5 (£19.99)

The second edition of *Child Development for Child Care and Protection Workers* is intended as a resource for students and practitioners in the child care and protection field. It aims to provide a framework to understand child development, explore theory and knowledge, and make the link between theory and practice explicit. It grounds its approach in attachment theory and attribution theory, and uses these as themes which run throughout the book. With chapters on parenting and relationships, resilience and vulnerability, and protective factors and adversity, it offers a framework to understand

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