Secondary studies

1 The evidence based paradigm

This seeks to employ secondary studies as the tool for finding, judging and synthesizing the outcomes of all relevant empirical studies in order to draw conclusions.

2 What is evidence?

Evidence is derived from the aggregated outcomes of many primary studies, reinforcing finding that are common, and reducing the effect of variability in individual studies. In particular, the process of identifying well-founded evidence by using a secondary study requires

- Comprehensive and exhaustive searches to find all potentially relevant primary studies
- Carefully defined procedures for deciding whether to include or exclude each study that is found

Aim is to minimise bias and to emphasis the objectivity of the procedures employed

3 Secondary studies

For a systematic review, the research protocol will need to:

- Specify a well focused researched question
- Use the RQ to identify a set of keywords for searching
- Specify how and where to search for source material and the period to search
- Provide clear inclusion/exclusion rules for selecting primary studies

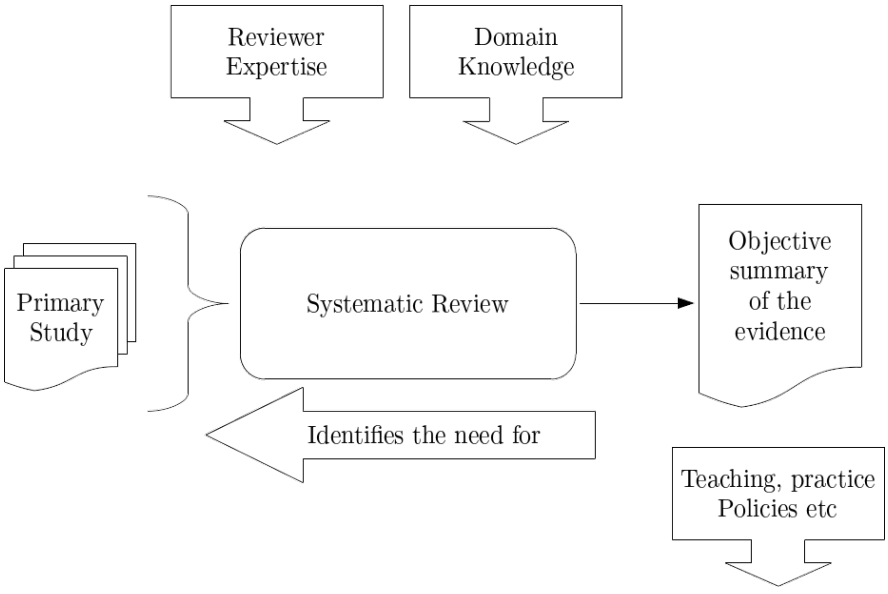
A broader form of systematic review, termed a mapping study can be used to identify where primary studies on a topic are clustered and where there are gaps in the empirical coverage

4 Influence on primary studies

Secondary studies:

- Influence the reporting standards for primary studies since for effective aggregation they need to be able to extract data using some common bias
- Help identify where primary studies are needed, since they may ”map the terrain” for particular topics

5 The SR Context



6 Procedures for a SR

Phase 1: Plan review

1. Specify research question used to create search strings
2. Develop review protocol (plan)
3. Validate protocol, which may include prototyping search strings

Phase 2: Conduct review

1. Execute search strategy, strings, sources, bounding dates etc
2. Select primary studies, title, abstract, full paper
3. Assess study quality
4. Data extraction
5. Synthesise the data to answer the research question

Phase 3: Document the outcomes