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Significance of Literature Review in the Research of Social Sciences

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Abstract

Literature review is a preparatory work that enables a researcher to take up motivating future research. Literature review often makes a researcher an expert specialist of specific subject. Literature review is not just a report that summaries articles or books but it provides a description, summary as well as the critical evaluation of a scholarly work. The purpose of literature review is to provide background information, to establish importance, to demonstrate reliability and to carve out a space for further addition to research. Review of the literature is very essential and important for the proposed research writing. It's always helpful for the researcher throughout his research work. Without surveying the relevant literature, no one can identify the research problem. So review of literature is the backbone of the research problem. Most of the other elements of the proposal are related with it. Reviewing the literature provides the guideline to the researcher to complete his proposed research oriented studies. Research is a process of knowing causes and effects of the events. Research is essential to know the fact; because seeing, hearing and feeling may be different than the reality. Knowing from such activities does not have the proof and such knowledge would not be believable to the others. But the knowledge gained from a researcher is proved by evidences and that is believed by others. Such work is known as a scientific research and it provides us reliability, authenticity and validity of the relevant social phenomenon.

Key words: Research, social miracle, reliability, authenticity & critical evaluation.

Introduction

Research is systematic efforts, which guide the researcher to gain new knowledge. A researcher tries to get the new facts on a subject and collects the materials or evidences to examine whether the fact is correct or not. With the help of evidences, he examines the facts and reaches in the conclusion. Such conclusion are helpful not only for him but for all human beings.

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Trying to get a new knowledge deeply in a subject following the systematic way is also known as research. There are many steps and processes to complete a research as the guidelines for a researcher. A research begins from an unknown position of a subject, and after its completion, the valid knowledge is gained from it. Following the different steps like the climbing of a ladder, the researcher should explore its academic relevance and significance. Research refers to systematic investigation in pursuit of knowledge or conformation in any field (Suleman, 1998). The manipulation of things, concept or symbols for the purpose of generalizing to extend correct or verify knowledge, whether that knowledge aids in construction of theory or in the practice of an art (Slinger & Stephenson, 1930).

It is often said that once the research topic is selected and finalized more than half of the work is done. Identifying the problem of choosing a subject, formulating the objectives reviewing the literature, formulating the hypothesis, generalizing and writing the report etc, are the main steps of a research. These steps help the researcher to reach in his final goal. Among these, reviewing the literature is one of the most important steps of a research. Review of literature also helps a research scholar become clear about what other scholars have already done and what is remaining to be done in a particular subject (Devkota, 2002). Any attempt to study a problem systematically or to add to men's knowledge of a problem may be regarded as research (Therdorson, 1983).

Reviewing means thinking again. Studying the documents published or unpublished related to the field of research is a review. But only reading of such materials is not the completion of the review of literature. It must be written and submitted in the research proposal. It fulfils the gap of knowledge relating to the subject matter up to the present time. Without knowing the facts of the subject matter up to the present time no one can search new knowledge (Achart, 1998). The main purpose of doing research is to gain new knowledge and the reviewing the literature of the related documents helps the researcher to reach near his purpose. It is related with the deduction theory of gaining knowledge. At first a researcher reads the published documents and aims to reach on the new facts. Review of the literature is a part of a research proposal, though some of the universities and research institutions have their own rule to submit it on the research report, too (Adhikari, 1980).

The review of literature is a task that continues throughout the duration of the thesis. It begins with a search for a contribution to knowledge, a careful existence should be made that the proposed study has not previously been carried out. Although completely new and original problems are rare, a previous study should not be exactly replicated unless the techniques

used had been faulty or the findings and conclusions are doubtful or unless some new sources of information had been discovered to shed new light on the problem (Anderson et al., 1991). Some of the researchers even believe that they have chosen completely new topic having not been any literatures to be reviewed. But in reality none of the subject or topic of the present world is completely new, and has non-availability of the related literatures in such studies (Dahal & Khatiwada, 2058). We can find many more references used in different kind of researches in such a subject. If it is not possible, it is certainly possible that the researches of the some categories or the some methodology can be found. They also might be the sources of the review of literature for the researchers (Devkota, 2002).

Generally, researches are done to make new theories in the field of social sciences. Formulation of hypothesis is compulsory in such cases. After testing the hypothesis, it establishes a theory. So it is compulsory to test the hypothesis to make a theory. Exploratory or non-experimental researches can be completed without the formulation of hypothesis (Gylnn and others, 1995). So the new theory cannot be established through such researches. A researcher doing his work of such category can follow the previous theories established by the scholar to complete his research work. Reviewing the literature is essential in both designs of research (K.C., 2002).

Objectives

The main objective of this study is to assess the significance of literature review in the research of social sciences. The specific objectives of this study are to introduce basic concepts and meaning of literature review, to find out the research gaps, to identify the research problems and to develop research methodology.

Justification

Review of literature is the process of reading related documents and writing the comments about the subject matter (Hornby, 1984). A researcher can comment that whether they are sufficient or not for the purposed study. It is different than the casual reading of a story or novel. It is focused and directed towards the specific purposes. Literatures of special kinds and categories are selected by the researcher and the related parts of them are reviewed.

The review of the literature is helpful for the researcher throughout his research work. Without surveying the related literature, no one can identify the research problem. Review of the literature is the backbone of the research proposal. Most of the other elements of the proposal are related with it. Reviewing the literature is important not only to prepare the proposal, it is very much helpful to prepare the research report. It provides the guideline to the researcher to complete his study (Kumar, 2005).

Methodology

Man is thoughtful. He always thinks about the subjects, which are seen, heard and felt in his everyday life. He tries to increase his knowledge about the events. He keeps the keen interest on such events and tries to know how and why they happened. His interest helps him to know about them. It is one of the processes of knowing the new events. But this kind of process is not a research.

Research is a process of knowing cause and effects of an event. Research is essential to know the fact because seeing, hearing and feeling may be different than the reality. Knowing from such activities does not have the proof and such knowledge would not be believable by the others. Such work is known as a scientific research and provides validity to the gained knowledge.

Scientific research is a careful investigation of a subject. It is based on a fixed methodology. It is completed by the help of the evidences. Here, research in general is considered as a scientific research. In the process of defining, it is said that investigation undertaken in order to discover new facts get additional information etc. is a research. In reality research is an investigation which is done to get new information and the knowledge on a subject. Again it is said that a careful investigation or inquiry especially through search for new facts in any branch of knowledge is research. Review of literature is (Bird's eye view) infact a good guidance to researches. It leads them carry on their scholarly performances at its best.

Critical Analysis of the Results and Data

There are different kinds of literatures needed to be reviewed for the different topics of researches. Such literatures are determined on the basis of subject matter. In some field of the studies large number of the books and other materials are found, whereas it is harder to find and determine the literatures to be reviewed in some topics. In such cases the researchers have to face two kinds of difficulties. If the published and unpublished documents on the related fields are available in a large number, researchers have to face the problem of selection of the proper documents to review (Redman & Mory, 1923). Again in the non-available condition of the literatures, he has to face the problem of determination of the literatures.

The proper availability of the literature does not create the serious problem of reviewing, because it is expected to select the books of the renowned writer related to the research topic. If a researcher has the proper knowledge of research methodology, he can easily select the related and important books to review. Again in unavailability of such literatures,

he has to choose the documents having the same characters of his research topic (Shah, 1972; Sharma, 2003).

There are different kinds of literatures as the secondary source of the research. Generally they are intended to be reviewed in the process of research. Following are the main literatures of such categories:

- Encyclopedias-general and specific,
- Books-textbooks, reference books and year-books,
- Journals-published monthly, quarterly, half yearly and annually of the related fields,
- Reports of the different commissions, Private institutions,
- Seminar papers,
- Research dissertations,
- Audio-videotapes and microfilms
- Newspapers-daily, weekly and monthly.

The sources of literature mentioned above are in general. Apart from these documents, specific documents should be reviewed in the field of specific topics. The categories of the literatures intended to review might be determined on the subject matter of the research (Singh, 1978).

After selecting the literatures, the question arises about reviewing them in a research. But there is no any hard and fast rule about it. The researcher can review the literature in his own style. In general, a short introduction of the research is essential at the beginning while reviewing the literatures. Necessity of the research and its methodology are the subject matter need to be adjusted after introduction in the process (Slesinger and Stephenson, 1930).

The main body of the review of literature concentrates on the analysis of the related documents. It is submitted in the review after the introduction body. Each literature needs to be reviewed serially and orderly. The books of the renowned writer related with the research topics should be reviewed first and should submit it after the introduction. Each literature should be review serially and orderly in the alphabetical order from the writer's name. Publication date of the documents is another criteria of reviewing the literature in order (Subedi, 2002).

The length of the review of literature is not determined. A researcher can determine its length in accordance with the necessity. Reviewing the literatures in detail helps the researcher to complete his research on time. The number of the documents reviewed indicates the level of study of the researcher in his subject. For the doctorate degree, Dean's office Humanities and social Sciences, Tribhuvan University flashed a rule of

preparing the review of literature. Fifty pages review is expected to be prepared by the students of doctorate level of that faculty. But this rule is not followed by the scholars of some departments (Suleman, 1998 & Swami, 1999).

A researcher needs to describe the events related to his thesis from the relevant literatures. Priority should be given to the literatures of the renowned writers. The valuable books are expected to be reviewed in the beginning in the alphabetical order and the date of publication is also the basis of reviewing them in order. In the process of reviewing related and unrelated portion of the literatures should be pointed out serially (T.U., 1978 & Tripathi, 1987).

A good bibliography is essential for the review of the literature. Proper survey of literature helps the researcher to collect such materials. Source cards and note cards should be prepared after surveying the literatures (Theoderson, 1983). They might be useful in every step of the research (Wolff & Panta, 1999). Note taking is also a helpful medium to the researcher to collect materials together with the review of the literatures.

Conclusion

In social science, literature review usually has an organizational sequence combining synthesis followed by summary. Analytical features of literature review also trace an intellectual progression of a matter, including major debates. However, literature review becomes significant to perform an effective research. An effective research is that one which resolves conflict among significantly ambiguous studies. The critical analysis of each research work should consider provenance methodology, objectivity, persuasiveness and value. Research without literature review is not clear because the research cannot hit a specific discipline as the complete understanding of research requires researchers to consciously examine how perspectives can take turn over time. Literature review raises a rapport which then turns out to become a base for finding facts. It guides to assemble the research well.

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