



MASSEY UNIVERSITY

Literature Reviews: An Introduction

Presenter: Vanessa van der Ham
National Centre for Teaching and Learning

Literature Review: An Examination of the Key Research on a Topic

Seeks to answer the following questions:

- What have others said about this topic?
- What theories address the topic?
- Which policies address the topic? (If relevant)
- What research has been done previously on the topic?
- Do the results of the existing research agree with one another, or is there disagreement?
- What are the gaps in the existing literature?

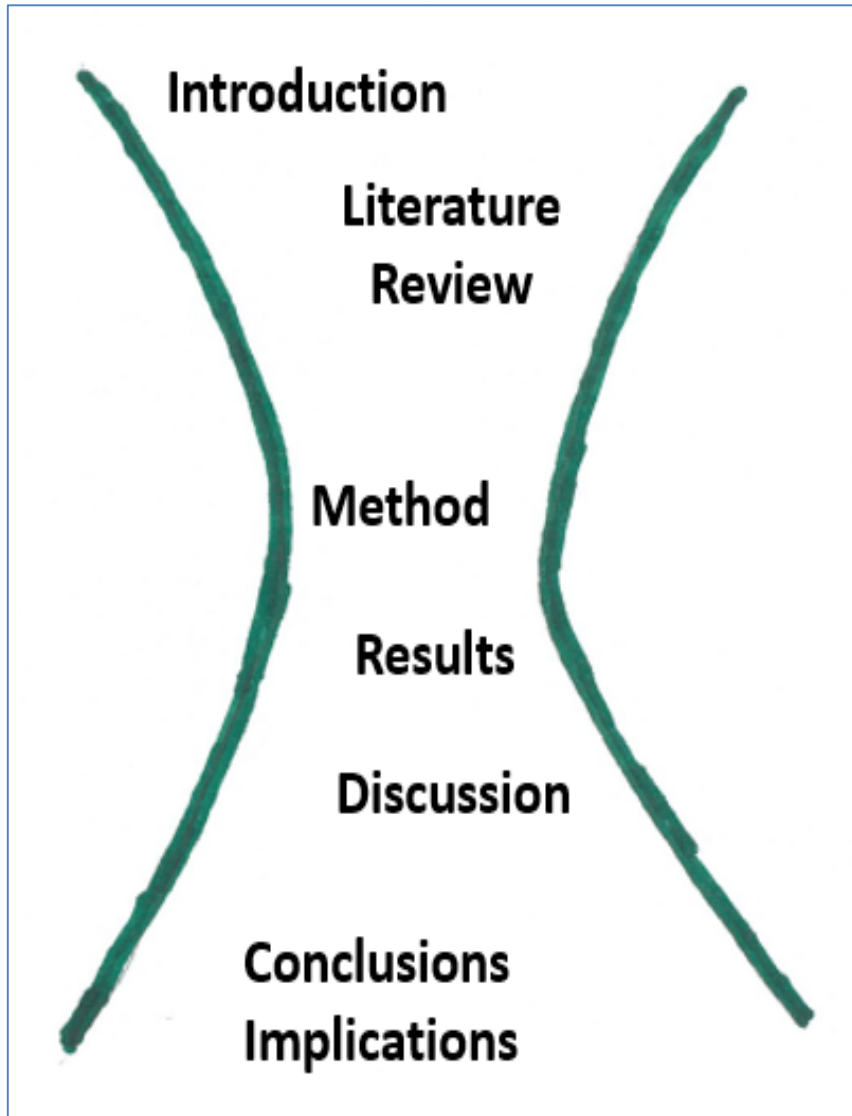
Different uses of literature review in assignments

- Review leading to research questions/hypotheses
- Review leading to conclusions on the topic (and recommendations)
- Review leading to new or adapted theoretical model or framework for new model



The story structure of research:

- There's this important problem or issue...
- and researchers understand some areas of the problem but others need more research
- a specific area requiring more research is this...and it's important because...
- so what we did was...
- and found that....
- which means we now know this...
- and these are the implications of this new knowledge for addressing the problem/issue.



(Adapted from Paltridge & Starfield, 2007)

Structure for Introduction → Literature Review

Provide the reader with a context/setting for your research

General problem requiring attention and evidence of significance of problem



Narrow down to specific aspect of the problem under investigation

Your specific topic area – what does the research say about its connection with the problem?



**Critical overview of existing research
in your specific topic area**

What do we already know from existing research?
Which aspects require further research?
- what are the gap(s) in the research?



Therefore

How your study fills the research gap(s)

Objectives of your research

□ Review leading to research question(s)

Previous research on the topic

- Theories
 - Studies
 - Reviews
- What was studied?*
How was it studied?
Findings?

Comparison of findings
Areas of agreement
Areas of disagreement

Contribution of the research
Limitations of the research
Gap(s) in the research

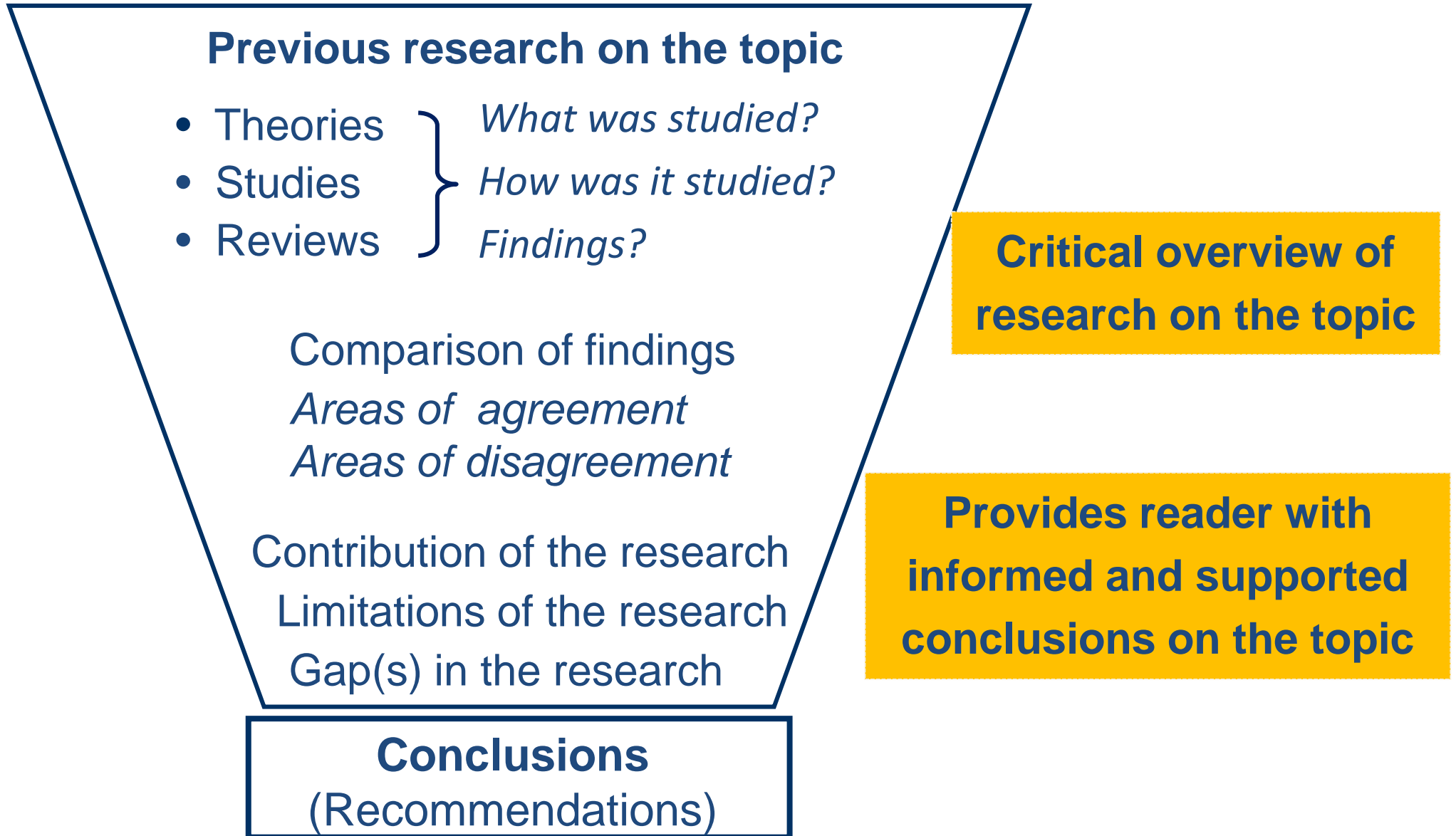
**How your study
addresses the gap(s)**

**Positions your own research
in the context of previous
research on the topic**

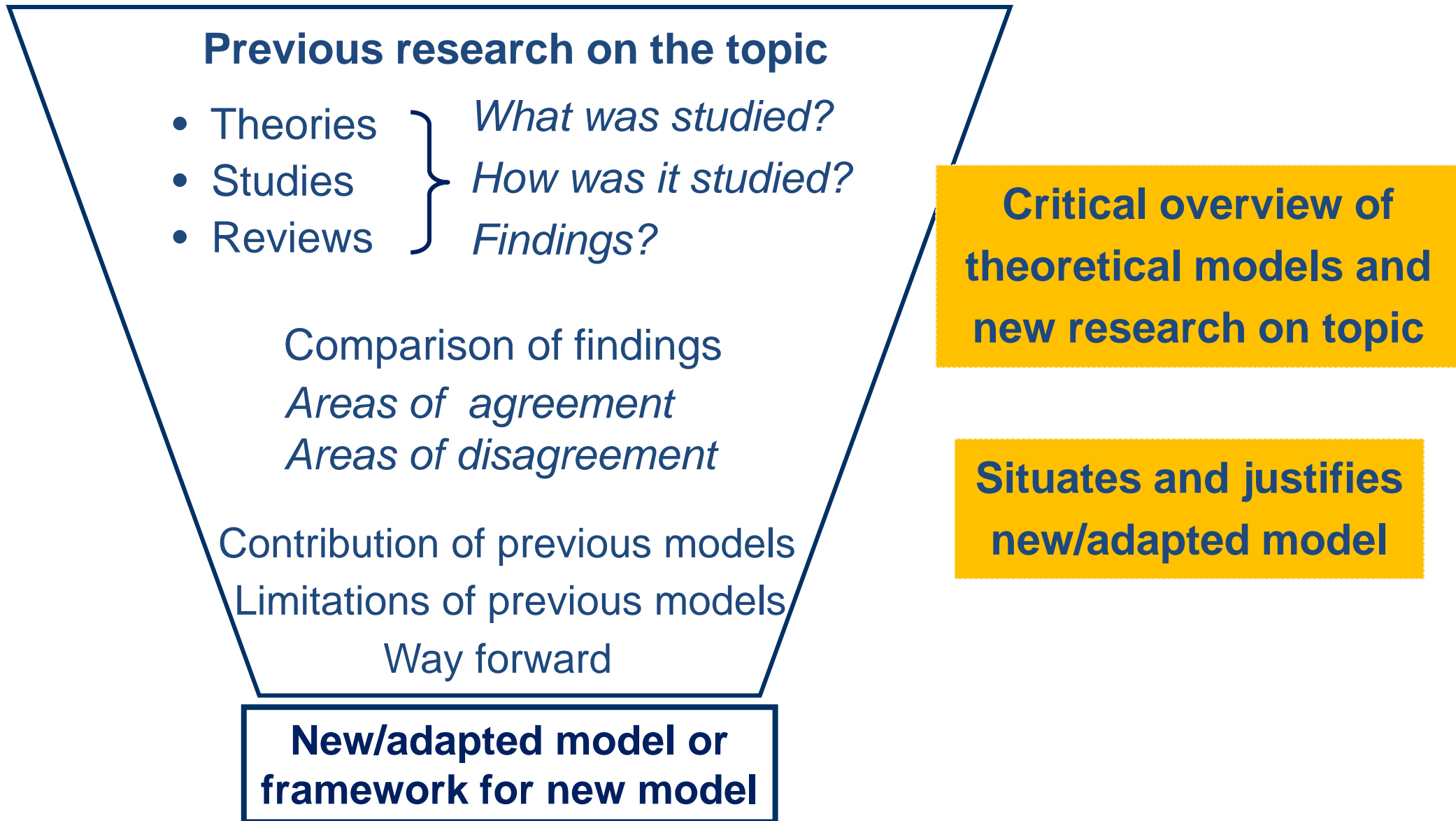
**Creates a space for
your research**

**Justifies your topic and
your methodology**

□ Review leading to conclusions on topic



□ Review leading to new/adapted theoretical model



How is a literature review organised?

- by key themes or findings
- arranged in headings and sub-headings
- as an **argument** that *flows*
 - information from various sources is *synthesised* to form a coherent argument

Organised by key themes or findings

Topic: What are the most effective measures to prevent smoking onset amongst adolescents?

Restrictions on tobacco advertising

Tobacco advertising and smoking initiation
Effectiveness of banning advertising
Alternative forms of tobacco promotion

Restrictions on sales to adolescents

Age limits
Restricting sales to tobacconists only

Product regulation

Labelling
Ban on small packaging

Health education

Mass-media campaigns targeted at youth
Smoking prevention programmes in schools

Themes/issues that emerge in the literature

Set out under headings and sub-headings

Synthesise information on existing research

A literature review is not just a collection of summaries:

Research by Brown (2002)

Research by Smith (2005)

Research by Atken (2007)

Synthesise information on existing research on the topic

→ ***Where is your voice here?*** What is the point you're making about the topic in this paragraph? Which issue does the research highlight?

Research by Brown (2002)

→ ***Where is your voice here?*** What is the relationship between Brown's research and Smith's research?

Research by Smith (2005)

→ ***Where is your voice here?*** What is the relationship between Atken's research and that of Brown and of Smith?

Research by Atken (2007)

How are all these linked to your research question?

Synthesise existing research on topic

Correlates of Burnout

Introduce information before going into detail

Correlates of burnout can be grouped into three major categories: individual (or personal), job, and organisational...

Individual Level Correlates

Your voice must guide the discussion

Demographic variables (such as gender and age) represent examples of variables studied at the individual level. Gender has been frequently investigated as a correlate of burnout, although findings for this variable are varied. Although there are some studies showing that burnout occurs more often among women than among men (Bussing & Perrar, 1991; Maslach & Jackson, 1998b; Poulin & Walter, 1993a), the opposite is also found (Price & Spence, 1994; Van Horn et al., 1997)...

Age is the most consistent factor related to burnout (Birch et al., 1986; Mor & Laliberte, 1984; Poulin & Walter, 1993a)...

Critiquing existing research on the topic

*What are the strengths and limitations of the existing research in **relation to your topic**?*

- Contributions to the topic area
- Limitations in terms of the topic area
- What are the gaps in the research?

*You're constructing **an argument** about previous research on the topic*

Critical evaluation of existing knowledge on topic

Despite the abundance of definitions and theories of burnout, there is still lacking a comprehensive theoretical framework for burnout, due to the complexity of the phenomenon (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998)...

The amount of qualitative research on teacher's work stress is limited. Two studies by Blase (1986) and Ianni and Reuss-Ainni (1978) will be discussed below...

- Identify strengths & limitations in relation to your research
- You are constructing an **argument** about gaps in current knowledge
 - **your voice** must come through clearly in the review

Identify gaps in the research

Using negative openings:

However, little information

little data

little research

However, few studies

few researchers

few attempts

Using contrastive statements:

The research has tended to focus on..., rather than on...

However, much of the attention has been focused on X rather than Y.

Raising questions, hypotheses or needs

If these results could be confirmed, they would provide strong evidence for...

It would seem, therefore, that further investigations are needed in order to...

Recommended: Manchester University's *Academic phrasebank* (2018):

Google: **manchester university + academic phrasebank**

Existing knowledge on your topic: What do you include?

Critical evaluation of
existing knowledge

Origins and definitions
of the topic

Your Topic

Theories about
the topic

Major issues
and debates

Main questions and
problems that have
been addressed

Trends in the research

Teacher Burnout: A Study of Occupational Stress and Burnout in New Zealand Schools

- 2.1. The Nature of Stress
- 2.2. History of the Stress Concept
- 2.3. Main Approaches to Definitions of Stress
- 2.4. The Stimulus Based Definition
- 2.5. The Response Based Definition
- 2.6. Summary of Response and Stimulus Approaches
- 2.7. The Transactional or Interactional Definition of Stress
- 2.8. The Burnout Concept
- 2.9. Defining Burnout
- 2.10. Cherniss's Model of Burnout
- 2.11. Golebiewski's Model of Burnout
- 2.12. Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory
- 2.13. Conceptual Framework
- 2.14. Measurement of Burnout
- 2.15. Correlates of Burnout
- 2.16. Studies on Teacher Stress and Burnout
- 2.17. Conclusion



Stress

Burnout

Stress and Burnout

Origins and definitions of the topic

Example:

In order to study stress in teachers, a clear understanding of what is meant by the term 'stress' is needed...The word stress has become a word commonly used in a variety of settings, with different meanings attached to the situation in which it is used. Selye (1956), one of the pioneers in the field...

Introduce
seminal texts

There are, however, three general perspectives which have been identified. One is that stress is the result of something outside of the individual, i.e., external factors are the cause of stress the second is that stress is internal, it is what goes on inside the individual as they interpret or react to what is going on around them (Gold & Roth, 1993); and the third major perspective is the transactional view of Lazarus and colleagues which focuses on the cognitive processes and emotional reactions of individuals to stress in their environment (Lazarus, 1978)

Provide
overview
of
definitions

Introducing theoretical models

Use original sources

Summarise the information on models using your own words

Use appropriate signal words

Use sources for overview & critique

...Maslach and Jackson (1981) conceptualised burnout as having three core components: emotional¹ exhaustion, depersonalisation² and lack of, or reduced, personal³ accomplishment. Maslach's model of burnout characterises *emotional exhaustion* as feelings of being emotionally overextended and depleted of one's emotional resources. Maslach (1998) cites major sources of this exhaustion as work overload and personal conflict at work.... *Depersonalisation* refers to a negative, cynical or excessively detached response to other people, which often includes a loss of idealism... *Reduced personal accomplishment* refers to a decline in feelings of competence and productivity at work...

The above three-component conceptualisation is the most widely accepted model of burnout (O'Driscoll & Cooper, 1996)...

Critical evaluation of theoretical models

Topic sentence
linking paragraph to
last section &
introducing new
point

Connecting words
and phrases to
guide readers

Despite the popularity of the stimulus approach, the stimulus model is not without its limitations. One is that stimulus events alone may be insufficient when predicting an individual's response. For example, two teachers subjected to loud, noisy classrooms may show quite different levels of strain, or may show strain at different times. Thus it fails to take account of individual differences, and it ignores the perceptual cognitive processes which underpin such differences (Cox & Fergusson, 1991).

Another criticism of this approach is that...

Discussing trends in the research

Indication of
time period

In the last few decades, research on stress has broadened
and become influenced largely by behavioural scientists,
moving away from the strict focus on physical stimuli and
their physiological consequences (Travers & Cooper, 1996).

Vocabulary used
to indicate trends

There has also been a shift of orientation from physical
stressors...toward...

(Whitehead, 2001, p. 15)

- When did your concept first start to appear in the literature?
- What was the focus of discussion/research at that time?
Eg. Was it in a specific context?
- How has this changed over time?
- Current theory and research on the topic?
- Strengths and limitations

Concluding the review

From this overview of teacher stress and burnout, some important considerations emerge. Firstly, findings from biographical/ demographic characteristics in relation to stress and burnout **are not conclusive**. Also, the review provides predominantly quantitative, empirically based studies, **with very few findings coming from interpretive or narrative study**. Apart from Friedman's (1991), Blase's (1996) and Ianni and Reuss-Ianni's (1978) study, **there has been limited research using qualitative methods encouraging free expression of teacher's personal meanings associated with work stress and burnout.**

Summarise findings from existing research

*Leading to concluding statements
- indicating need for further research*

While studies list factors that contribute to stress and burnout, **it is clear that understanding the complexity of burnout in schools is required to give deeper insight into the problem.**

(Therefore this research...)

- and your study if you're conducting one

Deciding which literature is most pertinent to your review

Library searching - Electronic and hard copies:

- university databases
- use **abstracts** to help you in your search
- which authors and articles/books are cited most?
- make an appointment with a librarian for a research consultation

*Make sure you follow guidelines in
Course Guides for requirements*

Prioritise material type

Peer reviewed

1. Articles in refereed, international journals
2. Books / Chapters in Ed. Books
3. Articles in national, refereed journals
4. Conference papers / Research reports (govt, com, org)
5. PhD thesis
6. MA thesis
7. Honours thesis
8. Websites / Articles in non-refereed journals

- Check course requirements
- Consult with your supervisor

Presenting information and analysis

A range of formats can be used:

- Text
- Tables
- Diagrams

- Consult with your supervisor on appropriate formats
- See Emerson & Hampton, Chapter 9
- Examine other literature reviews
- Create **templates** according to the requirements of your course
 - presentation and referencing of texts, tables and diagrams
 - in-text references to texts, tables and diagrams

Help with literature review

- **One-to-one & small group consultations at NCTL:**
Contact details: Email: ctlalb@massey.ac.nz
- **Massey's OWLL site**
- **Recommended text on literature review (available in the Library):**
Hart, C. (1998). *Doing a literature review*. London, England: Sage Publications
- **Recommended for students in the sciences (available in the Library):**
Cargill, M. & O'Connor, P. (2009). *Writing scientific research articles*. Oxford, England: Wiley-Blackwell.

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