

1. USERS DRIVING THE REVIEW

Who is the review for? Who is asking the questions & informing the conduct of the review?

1A. User Role²:

i) Control / Manage; ii) Engage/ Participate ; iii) Inform directly;
iv) Inform indirectly (implicitly or explicitly) via: (a) representation; (b) new data collection/research; (c) existing literature; (d) reviews of literature on user views

1B. Stage of the review process for the user role^{2,3,4}:

i) Focus of the review question: such as in user driven or user informed review questions;
ii) Process of review: such as in user engaged or user informed reviews;
iii) Communication: such as user directed or user informed review reports and summaries;
iv) Interpretation: methods for user interpretation of review findings;
v) Application: methods of application of the interpreted/contextualised review findings

2. TYPES OF QUESTION

What is the question being asked (that the review aims to answer)?

Explicit systematic methods can be used to bring together evidence about what we know in respect of all types of questions. For example:

- i) perspectives/concepts to interpret the World
- ii) frequency with which things occur
- iii) processes by which things happen
- iv) effects of different variables / occurrences

The Methods for Research Synthesis Node of the ESRC National Centre for Research methods is currently developing a typology of research questions. (<http://www.ncrm.ac.uk/nodes/mrs/about.php>)

3. EVIDENCE TYPES

What types of evidence are being considered?

All forms of evidence may be subject to systematic mapping and synthesis using explicit systematic methods. For example⁵:

- Organisational
- Practice community
- Policy community
- User of service / public
- Research

The reviews may be of new primary data or already existing data. For example, practice reviews can include new surveys or reviews of literature on practice or both.

4. SYSTEMATIC AND NON SYSTEMATIC REVIEWS

Is the review systematic in using explicit rigorous methods?

Reviews vary in the use of systematic methods⁶:

- i) Explicit systematic: explicit use of rigorous method that can vary as least as much as the range of methods in primary research
- ii) Implicit systematic: rigorous method but not explicitly stated
- iii) False systematic: described as systematic but with little evidence of explicit rigorous method
- iv) Argument/thematic: a review that aims to explore and usually support a particular argument or theme with no pretension to use an explicit rigorous method (though thematic reviews can be systematic)
- v) Expert or ad hoc review: informed by the skill and experience of the reviewer but no clear method so open to hidden bias.
- vi) Ad hoc: no clear method or expertise (Synthesis of textual data is narrative synthesis. Confusingly, some use the term narrative to refer to traditional ad hoc reviews)

N.B. (a) Rapid evidence assessment: that may or may not be rigorous and systematic. If it is systematic then it is likely to be narrowly specified in some way; (b) Scoping reviews are usually non systematic piloting of all or some part of a review.

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