Generic Mind Map of Focus Questions for a Literature Review

A map for when you have defined your research question.

A literature review is an exposition of the existing knowledge and reasoning which led you to believe that what you did was worth doing in the way that you did it, written so as to convince the reader of these things.

Constructing the map

1. Develop a clear and complete statement of your research question.
2. Underline each key term / concept / phrase.
3. Identify questions which flow from each of (2) and the research question as a whole. Generic questions to explore include:
   a. Motivations for research: (i) significance of area; (ii) gap / deficiency in existing knowledge
   b. Sources of new ideas / hypotheses
   c. Theory to guide where to look for answers.

These are methodological issues which may require their own lit review and mind map to address.

4. Look for follow-on questions and links.
5. Questions and map can be developed in any order. Once map is complete, can add numbers indicating a logical order in which to write up the map. (Note that the placement of numbers on this map is indicative only, not necessarily an order which will work in all circumstances.)

Reason A

Reason B

Reason C

How can the issue of X be better addressed?

How determine if better?

How inform methodological approaches?

In what ways are these potentially better?

Where might we look for “better” answers / solutions?

“Better” in what sense?

Why shouldn’t we be satisfied with current approaches / with what’s been done already?

What are the costs of not doing anything / benefits of addressing deficiencies?

How might these be addressed?

Empirical / theoretical justification?

What new technologies / techniques could be tried?

Ideas on how to overcome?

How might these be filled?

What gaps in knowledge / understanding are holding up progress?

How address?

What new technologies / techniques could be tried?

Justification of hypotheses

How address?

What issues still need to be addressed?

The map from here would proceed very much like it does in this section