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Metodologi Penelitian Pendidikan Ekonomi

Pertemuan 6 *Summary*

“Distinguishing between Theory, Theoretical Framework and Conceptual Framework: A Systematic Review of Lessons from the Field”

by Charles Kivunja

This paper clarifies the differences and relationships between theory, theoretical framework, and conceptual framework, which are often confused by graduate students. It defines theory as an organized set of interrelated concepts, definitions, and propositions that explain or predict phenomena at micro, meso, or macro levels. A theory provides the intellectual foundation for understanding relationships between variables and for predicting outcomes in education and social sciences.

The theoretical framework is presented as a structure or “coat hanger” that draws upon existing, published theories to guide data analysis and interpretation in a research study. It synthesizes leaders’ ideas in the field to form a scholarly lens for interpreting findings, enhancing credibility, transferability, and rigor. A theoretical framework is narrower and more focused than a conceptual framework and should emerge from a thorough literature review tailored to the researcher’s problem statement and research questions.

In contrast, the conceptual framework is a much broader, meta-level plan encompassing the entire research project: identification of the topic, research questions, methodology, data collection and analysis, theoretical choices, and dissemination. Kivunja likens the conceptual framework to a “house” and the theoretical framework to one specific “room.” While every dissertation should contain a theoretical framework, there is no requirement to formally present a conceptual framework.

The article also explains how to develop a theoretical framework, including reviewing relevant theories, identifying key variables, and customizing concepts to analyze one’s data. By distinguishing these three elements, the paper helps researchers design coherent, ethical, and rigorous studies. Ultimately, theory provides the foundation, the theoretical framework structures data analysis, and the conceptual framework frames the entire research enterprise.

