



Demystifying Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks: A Guide for Students and Advisors of Educational Research

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ABSTRACT The meanings and operationalizations of theoretical and conceptual frameworks largely remain mystical in the minds of many (post)graduate students who continue to struggle to develop appropriate theoretical or conceptual frameworks for their studies. This is a theoretical paper that draws its evidence from a critical review of relevant literature, seeking to (a) define and clarify the respective meanings of the terms 'theoretical' and 'conceptual' frameworks, and (b) illustrate how these constructs are developed in respect of quantitative and qualitative research. The researchers hope that this paper will contribute significantly to how students and advisors of educational research engage and operationalise the two constructs of theoretical and conceptual frameworks in their problem formulation processes, and that this will happen in ways that demystify these constructs and lead to higher levels of understanding and reduced incidences of frustration, on the part the students.