



Foundations of Education Research: Understanding Theoretical Components (1st ed.), by Joy Egbert & Sherry Sanden. New York: Routledge (2014). 200 pages. ISBN-13: 978-0415715799

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There are lots of challenges facing novice researchers and graduate students while committing to a research design. It is common to hear that graduate students spend countless hours learning the meaning of research components and terms. Also, it is not surprising that there are many professors who struggle with finding a good research book because most textbooks seem to lack practical models, examples or discussions to guide novice researchers to understand a very wide range of research in education. Dr. Egbert and Sanden's *Foundations of Education Research: Understanding Theoretical Components* fills the gap with this short, practical book containing literally examples and templates to steer both beginning and established researchers. What is more, the greatest value of this book is that it provides a clear-cut description of the main research

concepts and terms that every graduate student needs to know. Unlike many other research books, ideas of each research component in educational research are presented in an understandable manner with examples and visuals that make these concepts easy for novice and experienced researchers to apply later. With this in mind, this book is to “provide a brief overview of the basic jargon of research and components that are important to the research process regardless of a particular perspective. This book briefly defines, discusses, and provides applications of central components of research in order to give both novice and experienced researchers common ground from which to work” (p. xii-xiii).

The book consists of seven chapters, and the lay out of each chapter is quite similar. Each chapter starts with anecdotes from novice and experienced researchers to introduce the theme of the chapter. Besides, each chapter includes: three to five questions to be addressed, a reflection question, guided practice, further readings and references for readers to consider. The overarching scaffolding of the book is that the authors examine one research component in each chapter, starting with the foundational pieces, and then building on each preceding chapter to develop a text that helps the readers approach and think about a research study. The overall

structure of the book makes it informative, focused and engaging for a wide audience: senior college students, graduate students and educational researchers. Moreover, one of the significant strengths of this book is the authors use a tree diagram to illustrate the foundational aspects of research and a circle diagram to illustrate the powerful influence of wider concepts on each discussed idea.

In chapter one “Foundations of Research: Conceptual Framework”, the authors discuss two main topics: the importance of research components and conceptual framework. In this chapter, the authors state that the notions of research components can have an impact not only on the development of study, but also on the analysis and interpretation (p. 3). Accordingly, the authors first define some key research terms such as: conceptual framework, epistemology, paradigm, theory, theoretical framework, methodology, and method to support readers’ understanding of research design as well as to help them make educated judgments about their study. Then, the authors use a portrait painting and real life examples to help readers compose a conceptual framework in their research. The authors visualize a conceptual framework as a tree diagram and a circle diagram to simplify the concept of conceptual framework.

The second chapter entitled “Influences on the Research and the Researcher: Episte-What? In this chapter, the authors define the term “epistemology” and how it can be shaped. The chapter also sheds lights on three types of epistemologies: objectivism, constructionism and subjectivism. In this chapter, the authors argue, “epistemology acknowledges the impact of life experiences on the formation of the lenses

through which researchers specifically understand knowledge” (p. 23). To sum up this chapter, the authors add epistemology to the model (tree and circle diagrams) to show how the conceptual framework can affect epistemology.

“Research Paradigms” is introduced in chapter 3. After clearly defining the term, the authors compare the differences between conceptual framework, epistemology, and paradigm, and conclude that “paradigm is a more specific statement of general epistemology (p. 33)”. This chapter not only provides brief, but also a clear definition of some paradigms including Positivist, Interpretivist (Post-Positivist), Critical, and Constructivist. The authors employ real examples from research studies and literature to demonstrate what a paradigm resembles and how it is implemented in research. By doing so, it is explicit for researchers to associate their own research studies with theories. As in previous chapter, the authors add research paradigm into the tree diagram and the circle diagram.

The authors discuss topics regarding “Research and Theory: Just a Hunch or Something More?” in chapter 4 and “Theoretical Frameworks: You Cannot Have A How Without Why” in chapter 5. Both chapters offer novice and experienced researchers’ examples from literature to understand how theory supports and fits research work. Similar to the previous chapters, the authors propose two practices for the scholar to examine and reflect on their own research studies. In addition, chapter 5 provides novice researchers with in depth information on the concept of theoretical framework.

Chapter 6, “Research Methodologies and Methods: Ingredients for Research

Success” highlights the differences between methodology and method and their relationship to research. One of the interesting additions to this chapter is that the authors explained briefly how different methodologies fit various types of research such as: experiment, case study, ethnography, and action research. Moreover, the authors talk about different methods (e.g. sampling, statistical analysis, coding, etc.) that can be used after the researcher decides on the methodology to be employed in his/her study. Also, various examples with an explanation of how a methodology and methods impact a research study have been included in this chapter. Such examples help readers better understand how methodologies and methods affect research. The last part of the chapter shows how methodologies and methods fit into the developing model.

The last chapter of the book “ Myths and Misconception about Research,” first lists 14 myths that novice researchers might hold, including: never use Wikipedia as a resource, any topic is acceptable for research, any one can do research, and so forth. Afterwards, the authors explain how research misconceptions that a novice researcher might believe in need to be reconsidered. Having stated all these myths and misconceptions end the whole book in an affable way that have provided readers and scholars with worthwhile guidelines in terms of conducting academic research.

All in all, the reviewers find this book well structured and written in a reader-friendly and comprehensive language. It guides readers, researchers, and scholars step-by-step towards understanding what education research is all about. Although this book helps readers build up the concept of each research component, it is missing an entire research study to see the whole picture of a

complete study, which contains the research components. Also, it doesn't devote enough detailed samples of each philosophical theory of knowledge for further reading. However, the reviewers still find this book to be particularly well thought out for novice researchers who do not have or have little research experience, and a useful source for experienced researchers who want clear definitions of research terms.

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