

Abstract

Constructing Knowledge: Writing Dissertations That Take Scholarship in New Directions

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The focus of this lecture is on the need to review forms of construction of knowledge. The key themes of the lecture include forms of theorizing and knowledge creation. The principal argument here is the need to restructure and improve the conduct of social science-based research. In order to this, there is also a need to recognize problems with major theories, a factor that will lead to the need to consider new ways of doing research and theorizing.

This lecture will provide examples of theories developed in the industrialized West that may be inapplicable in developing economies. Such theories may even be of detriment to developing multi-ethnic societies when research based on these theoretical frameworks are adopted and implemented as public policies by nation-states and governments.

For these reasons, this lecture will present reasons why there is a need for aspiring academics to recognize the history, as well as limitations, associated with major social science theories. These theoretical limitations, once acknowledged as problematic, evoke the need for academics to consider carefully how social science research can be re-framed and re-contextualized based on local histories and realities. A key objective of this lecture is to argue that the search for new ways of constructing knowledge is crucial if our scholarship is to lead to relevant, and ultimately just, responses to key problems in society.

The second part of the lecture will focus on methods to empower doctoral students to pursue original ideas rather than reproduce a professor's existing conceptual and theoretical ideas. Methods to engage students in academic dialogue of novel ideas in order to build new knowledge will be discussed.