



Research Seminar and Workshop, January 2018

Professor David B. Grant
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Wednesday 17 January

The Importance of Theory in Logistics, Supply Chain & Operations Management

It has long been argued that dissemination through academic journals should be both *rigorous*, i.e. theory or evidence-based and properly executed, and *relevant* to those who might read and use the research. But what is *theory*? Properly using and building theory in research is how researchers provide explanation for various phenomena and define their value and usefulness to society. Researchers readily accept that if employees in manufacturing and service companies follow robust processes they can predictably produce outputs of quality and value. Thus, the same should hold true for researchers: if they follow a robust, reliable process they can produce and publish research that is of high value to academics and practitioners, i.e. it is relevant and has impact (Carlile and Christensen, 2004).

Swanson et al. (2017) found seven theories primarily used in logistics and by association all LSCOM research: the resource-based view (RBV) of the firm (17.8%), transaction cost economics (TCE) or transaction cost theory (11.8%) game theory (10.0%), contingency theory (8.3%), institutional theory (6.3%), and organization and agency theory (5.0% each). Thus, LSCOM researchers do not take full advantage of other theories to provide explanation.

In contrast, Schmenner wondered whether theory was needed at all in operations management and posited that “*good empirical work does not need to be based on theory*” (Schmenner et al., 2009:341). This is a pragmatic and practitioner approach and the other four ‘co-authors’ provided a commentary either supporting or refuting Schmenner’s proposition. For example, Ketokivi noted that theoretical paradigms “*help us make our scientific contributions explicit*” and “*help us demonstrate to our peers we have done something that complements, completes, or challenges extant research within the paradigm*” (2009: 342).

This lack of theoretical diversity, depth, and application in LSCOM research might be due to ‘conceptual slack’, which is a divergence in analytical perspectives and methodological approaches and boundaries related to other disciplines (Halldórsson et al., 2015). This seminar will reflect further upon what theory is generally and as regards applied domains such as LSCOM, why academics in these domains should use theory, and how they might do so. These notions will be illustrated by examples from the presenter’s own research over the past decade.

Monday 22 January

Workshop on Reviewing and Publishing in Quality Journals

The presenter will provide a workshop for academics and PhD students on the reviewing, writing and publishing process in academia.

Biography:

David B. Grant is Professor of Logistics, Hull University Business School, UK and Professor of Supply Chain Management & Social Responsibility, Hanken School of Economics, Helsinki, Finland. He received his PhD from Edinburgh University in 2003 and his thesis investigated customer service, satisfaction and service quality in UK food processing logistics, winning the *James Cooper Memorial Cup PhD Award* from the Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport (UK). David's prior academic appointments include the University of Calgary in Canada and Edinburgh and Heriot-Watt Universities in Scotland, and his senior administrative appointments at Hull included Directorship of the Logistics Institute and Associate Dean (Business Engagement) from 2009 to 2014.

David's research interests include customer service and satisfaction, services marketing and service quality, retail logistics, reverse and sustainable logistics, and methodologies in logistics and supply chain management. His business experience includes retail, corporate banking, technical design, seminar facilitation, and consulting and recent applied research has investigated retail store on-shelf availability and out-of-stocks, total loss and waste in food retailing, forecasting and obsolete inventory, fashion logistics, service quality of internet retailers, and consumer logistics and shopping convenience.

David has over 220 publications in various refereed journals, books, chapters and conference proceedings and is on the editorial board of many international journals. He is a member of the UK Logistics Research Network (LRN), the French Association Internationale pour la Recherche en Logistique (AIRL), the Nordic Nordisk Forskning i Material Administration (NOFOMA), and the British Retail Consortium's Storage and Distribution Technical Advisory Committee. David is also a Fellow of the UK Higher Education Academy (HEA).