

Logistics Management Versus Supply Chain Management – the Crystallization of Debate for Academic and Practical Clarity

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Abstract—The relation of terms logistics and supply chain management has been debated since the first use of the latter in the 1980s. In the beginning of 2000s, four schools of thought were observed to exist in the academic world, called traditionalism, relabelling, unionism and intersectionism. This paper focuses on the current state of the debate, drawing on recent approaches and findings, a content-analysis on modern textbooks of the field and additionally on a survey carried out among Estonian specialists of logistics and supply chain management. The results are pointing out that traditionalist and relabelling approaches are mostly a view of the past and the definitions and understanding of supply chain management has harmonised in time, both in academic approaches as well as in the view of practitioners. Furthermore, it demonstrates the only recent switch of generations contrasting with some recent studies. Additionally, it is the view of the authors that the pressure to clearly differentiate itself now lies on logistics more than supply chain management, which traditionally used to be the other way around. The findings do not only have theoretic relevance but also allow for more clarity in the language use in the field and provide input on how to build university curricula for logistics and for supply chain management, either jointly or separately, which is challenging by nature due to the extensive scope of modern logistics as well as supply chain management. On business relevance, companies deal with logistics and supply chain in different scope - local and global market. The role of this paper is to provide input for theoretical treatment of epistemology and ontology, its role in understanding supply chain management and logistics and how it interacts with the core content of logistics and supply chain management in real business.

Key words—supply chain management, logistics, intersectionism, unionism.

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