

Practical Application of Some Relevant Management Theories, Assumptions and Their Possible Relevance to Students' Research Project, Theses and Dissertations

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ABSTRACT

The study was an X-ray on the practical application of some relevant management theories, assumptions and their possible relevance to students' research projects, theses and dissertations. The study points to the fact that management theories are applied in research to provide structured frameworks for planning, execution, and management of projects, ensuring efficient resource allocation, stakeholder coordination, risk management, and quality control. The study highlighted some relevant management theories as they provide frameworks for understanding and improving organizations by offering structured approaches to decision-making, enhancing efficiency, promoting collaboration, and fostering adaptability to change. Research into these theories allows for the refinement and development of new theories, leading to better management practices, increased productivity, and more effective solutions to organizational challenges in dynamic business environments.

Keywords: Practical Application, Management Theories, Assumptions and Research Project, Thesis and Dissertation

INTRODUCTION

It is no gainsaying that theory in management is a collection of ideas and principles that provide frameworks for guiding and running an organisation, business, or team to achieve its goals. These theories offer recommended strategies, tools, and guidelines for management practices, such as decision-making, leadership styles, and organisational structures, helping leaders motivate employees and improve performance. Management theories in the educational context are relevant because they provide structured frameworks for analysing complex situations, improving decision-making, enhancing communication, and increasing efficiency and productivity within an organisation. By offering proven concepts and strategies, theories help managers understand human behaviour in the workplace, adapt to changing environments, and develop objective, data-supported approaches to achieve organizational goals.

Ilona (2022) informed that management theory is relevant today because it provides frameworks and systematic approaches for managers to improve organizational performance by enhancing decision-making, increasing efficiency and productivity, fostering better communication and collaboration, and enabling adaptation to change. Theories offer foundational principles for leaders to understand human behaviour, analyse complex organisational systems, and develop effective strategies tailored to specific situations, rather than relying on guesswork.

To Stivers (2000) when using theories in research, key assumptions are that a systematic reality exists, the selected theory accurately reflects the phenomenon being studied, and the chosen variables are relevant and influential within the theory's framework. Other critical assumptions include that the theory has a defined scope (temporal, spatial, or cultural), that researchers can observe and

measure relevant aspects of the phenomenon, and that participants will provide honest responses if applicable to the research. This brief backdrop underscores the need for an X-ray on the practical application of some relevant management theories, assumptions and their possible relevance to students' research projects, theses and dissertations.

What are the basic research assumptions needed for research in educational management

Makowski (2020) observed that in research, assumptions are statement that have not been proven that a researcher accepts as true without direct evidence, providing a basis for the research design and interpretation of results. These can relate to the methodology, participants, theoretical frameworks, or the study's context and are essential for a study to begin. For instance, a researcher might assume participants responses will be true even when it is not proven. This underscore why research assumptions are of importance in the following ways

Assumptions serve as the starting point and framework for designing a study, formulating research questions, and choosing methodologies. This is because they influence how researchers understand and interpret the data collected, allowing for meaningful conclusions to be drawn.

Assumptions help to place the research within the broader context of existing knowledge and theories. Research can move forward by accepting certain conditions as true without needing to prove every single premise.

Types of assumptions in management research

Methodological Assumptions:

Talks about the statistical tools and methods used in the study, such as the assumption that statistical tools accurately measure variables or that interviews reflect genuine perspectives.

Practical Assumptions:

Assumptions related to the practical conditions of the study, like the assumption that a specific instrument can be used effectively for data collection

Theoretical Assumptions:

Theoretical assumptions relates with how concepts interact and the validity of the theoretical framework being used to study the phenomenon.

Participants assumptions

Beliefs about participants, such as that they will answer honestly, that they are representative of the population, or that they are aware of the issues being studied.

Reasons why Management Theories are relevant on students' research project, thesis and dissertation

In every research undertaking Theories are relevant as outline below by Bite and Konczos-Szom-bathelyi (2020).

- 1. Theories provide structured frameworks:** Theories give managers a systematic way to plan, organise, and make decisions, moving beyond trial-and-error to a more rational and informed process.
- 2. Improves Efficiency and Productivity:** Management theories offer practical tools and strategies to streamline processes, boost staff motivation, and ultimately increase overall organizational performance and productivity.
- 3. Enhances Decision-Making:** By offering structured approaches, theories help managers analyze complex situations, weigh alternatives, and predict potential outcomes, leading to more effective choices.
- 4. Promote research collaboration:** Understanding management theories helps leaders create an environment where team members are motivated to participate, increasing collaboration and teamwork.
- 5. Helps to proffer solutions to problems:** Theories equip managers with the tools to effectively solve business problems and deal with staff to achieve desired targets.
- 6. Proffer easy means of arriving at fast solutions to problems:** Frameworks like contingency theory teach managers that there is no "one-size-fits-all" solution and that the best approach depends on the specific context, allowing for greater adaptability.

- 7. Provides Objective Guidance:** Management theories encourage leaders to make changes based on data and scientifically proven principles, rather than relying solely on personal judgment or outdated preferences.

In addition, theory is relevant to research practices because it provides a foundation for understanding, explaining, and predicting phenomena, guiding researchers in selecting appropriate methods and interpreting findings, and connecting new research to existing knowledge. A theoretical framework helps define the scope of the research, identify key variables, and establish the significance and context of the study.

ADOPTING SOME RELEVANT MANAGEMENT THEORIES,

The following theories can successfully be adopted to support research, thesis and dissertations in educational management. Thus:

- i. Theory of human management in organization (X and Y theory) by Douglas McGregor (1960)
- ii. Human relation theory by Mary Parker Follet (1933)
- iii. Human capital theory by Gary Becker (1964)
- iv. Maslow's hierarchy of need theory (1959)
- v. Frederick Herzberg two-factor theory (1959)
- vi. Expectancy theory of motivation by Victor Vroom (1964)
- vii. McGregor's theory X and theory Y (1960)
- viii. Path-goal theory of leadership effectiveness by Robert House (1971)
- ix. Total Quality Management Theory (TQMT) by William Deming (1980)
- x. Human capital development theory by Theodore Schultz (1961)
- xi. Theory of quality management by Deming William Edward (1982)

Common application of these theories in educational management

i. Theory of human management in organizations by Douglas McGregor (1960)

The theory of human management in organization was propounded by Douglas McGregor

in (1960). The theory suggests two aspects of human behaviour at work, or in other words, two different views of individuals (employees): One of which is negative, referred to as Theory X and the other is positive, so called as Theory Y. This underscores why the theory is commonly referred to as theory X and Y. According to McGregor, the perception of managers on the nature of individuals is based on various assumptions.

Assumptions of Theory X

- i. An average employee intrinsically does not like work and tries to escape it whenever possible.
- ii. Since the employee does not want to work, he must be persuaded, compelled, or warned with punishment so as to achieve organizational goals. A close supervision is required on the part of managers. The managers adopt a more dictatorial style.
- iii. Many employees rank job security on top, and they have little or no aspiration/ ambition.
- iv. Employees generally dislike responsibilities.
- v. Employees resist change.
- vi. An average employee needs formal direction.

Assumptions of Theory Y

- i. Employees can perceive their job as relaxing and normal. They exercise their physical and mental efforts in an inherent manner in their jobs.
- ii. Employees may not require only threat, external control and coercion to work, but they can use self-direction and self-control if they are dedicated and sincere to achieve the organizational objectives.
- iii. If the job is rewarding and satisfying, then it will result in employees' loyalty and commitment to organization.
- iv. An average employee can learn to admit and recognize the responsibility. In fact, he can even learn to obtain responsibility.
- v. The employees have skills and capabilities. Their logical capabilities should be fully utilized.

In other words, the creativity, resourcefulness and innovative potentiality of the employees can be utilized to solve organizational problems. Thus, we can say that Theory X presents a pessimistic view of employees' nature and behaviour at work, while Theory Y presents an optimistic view of the employees' nature and behaviour at work.

If we correlate it with Maslow's theory, we can say that Theory X is based on the assumption that the employees emphasize on the physiological needs and the safety needs; while Theory Y is based on the assumption that the social needs, esteem needs and the self-actualization needs dominate the employees.

McGregor views Theory Y to be more valid and reasonable than Theory X. Thus, he encouraged cordial team relations, responsible and stimulating jobs, and participation of all in decision-making process.

Relevance of Theory X and Theory Y: Quite a few organizations use Theory X today. Theory X encourages use of tight control and supervision. It implies that employees are reluctant to organizational changes. Thus, it does not encourage innovation. Also, many organizations are using Theory Y techniques. Theory Y implies that the managers should create and encourage a work environment which provides opportunities to employees to take initiative and self-direction. Employees should be given opportunities to contribute to organizational well-being.

Theory Y encourages decentralization of authority, teamwork and participative decision making in an organization. Theory Y searches and discovers the ways in which an employee can make significant contributions in an organization. It harmonizes and matches employees' needs and aspirations with organizational needs and aspirations.

The relevance of the theory to the study is that school supervision practice revolves around the school principal as the internal supervisor. The school principal should ensure to practice the dimension of Theory X and theory Y such as the application of direction, forced controlled,

threatened with punishment to accomplish a task and if these is adequately practiced by the school principal, likely school facilities will be adequate to ensure quality in the school system (Mansaray, 2019).

ii. Human relation theory by Mary Parker Follet (1968-1933)

The human relations theory was pioneered by Mary Parker Follet (1968-1933) and George Elton Mayo. Mary Parker Follet was a pioneer of the human side of administration. She believed that the fundamental problem of all organizations was developing and maintaining dynamic and harmonious relationships. According to Akpakwu (2012) human relations are meant for recognition of the fact that the man who does the job is more important than the work itself even though the work must be done according to established rules and regulations some of the assumptions include:

According to Luthans (2016) a man works well when he is happy within the environment of his work; A man works well when he is given due respect as a human being; A man works well if his supervisor takes notice of his work; If he works well he should be highly commended and in the same way, if he does wrong, he should be reprimanded; A man performs his duties well when he is trusted both by his supervisors and his colleagues and a worker works well when he is properly informed, instructed or oriented on what is happening or what is needed.

Relating these assumptions to this study, school principals should take into consideration the feelings, emotions, needs and aspirations of their teachers, participative management in which as many teachers as possible are involved in decision making at their level of competence should be promoted. Principals should be willing to at all-time branch into informal decisions and to listen to the social, economic and personal problems of teachers. Listening alone is a technique that could nullify a nagging problem that might deter a teacher from self-investment into work and with this practice will assist the school achieve quality education. Rebores, (2024).

iii. Human capital theory by Gary Becker (1964)

This study is predicated on two theories. The human capital theory and pedagogical content knowledge theory. The human capital theory was propounded by Gary Becker in (1964). The theory stated that education, and training of employees enhances their competence at work place. Becker 1964 asserted that the above can be achieved by inculcating the relevant knowledge to the employees. Backer pointed out that high productivity by employee has a lot to do with their training and development, because it is through training that useful knowledge and skill are imparted. It should be noted that human capital theory is based on the proposition that training of manpower and also developing of the same would improve the productivity/output of workers, which would in turn, affect their work behavior positively.

However, relating the human capital theory to school in order to achieve quality education the teachers need to be involved with constant and consistent developmental process, in order to achieve the set goals of the school through, quality education delivery. The said theory is pivotal to the achievement of educational goals, in that when teachers are trained, the effectively and efficiently perform their duties, with better and improved work behaviors and needed school facilities are provided. Likely quality assurance will be guarantee in the system. On this note Uzonwune as cited in Maduiké and Ogbuehi (2016) posited that staff training and development aids pedagogical growth, understanding and discovery of self-cognitive development, theoretical development, professional development and career development. The teacher needs some continuous development so that they can grow in competence and excitement and so be able to handle changes dictated by social, political, technological, economic and ideological changes in the society.

iv. Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory (1959)

The hierarchy of needs theory was propounded by a clinical psychologist, Abraham Maslow, in 1954. This theory, which is regarded as one of the most important theories used in the study of motivation, holds the notion that human beings have needs and wants to be satisfied. The author

opines that human beings do not randomly need or want things but their complex needs are ordered in a hierarchy of pre-potency. The author further maintains that the gratification of such needs leads to dissatisfaction.

Maslow (1954) lists five human needs which he arranged hierarchically thus:

- i. Psychological needs: Psychological needs refers to need for food, water, air, several gratification, shelter, clothing and sleep.
- ii. Safety needs: These include the need for security, protection against danger, accident, threat, physical, psychological and economic disaster. They also include the desire for stability, freedom from pain and job security.
- iii. Belongingness and social needs: These include need for affection, love, companionship, association, friendship, interaction and acceptance.
- iv. Esteem or ego needs: These refer to need for prestige, self-esteem, recognition, self-confidence, self-competence and mastery.
- v. Self-actualization needs: These refer to the desire to become more of what one wants to become. The ability to become what one is capable of becoming, to make maximum use of one's potential and make the highest accomplishment.

The author concludes that when one level of needs becomes satisfied, it ceases to be a motivator and the person moves to the next level of needs.



Figure 1: Maslow's hierarchy of needs (1954)

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, a theory assumes that humans are driven by a hierarchy of needs, with basic physiological needs at the bottom and self-actualization at the top, and that lower-level needs must be met before individuals can focus on higher-level needs. The theory is relevant to this study because if the teaching profession enables the teachers to satisfy all or most of the needs listed by Maslow, then they are likely to value teaching profession and strive to become committed teachers. If on the other hand these needs are not satisfied, the teachers may become frustrated, unhappy, not committed and have no value for teaching profession. Therefore, if teachers are not promoted as at when due, rewarded for hard work, accorded recognition for achievements, their needs will not be satisfied and this leads to frustration.

v. Frederick Herzberg's two-factor theory (1959)

The Herzberg two-factor theory was developed by Frederick Herzberg's in 1959. The theory posits that two different sets of factors affecting motivation and work. This led to the development of a two factor theory of human motivation and satisfaction. This suggested that satisfaction and job dissatisfaction are simply not opposite. The factors that produce job satisfaction (satisfiers), he labeled them "motivators". This he said is directly related to job content, reflecting a need for personal fulfilment. They include organizational policies and administration, supervision, inter-personal relations, working conditions, job security and pay. Motivators produce job satisfactions, "hygiene" merely prevents job dissatisfaction. The author explained as follows:

- i. That when "motivators" are present in a job, motivation will occur but when absent, they do not lead to dissatisfaction.
- ii. When "hygiene" factors are absent from a job, dissatisfaction will occur. Hygiene prevents dissatisfaction but does not lead to satisfaction.

Herzberg saw motivators as achievement recognition, growth, advancement and responsibility. The teacher after receiving training, like going back to school, attending

seminars and workshops in their areas of specialization, should see themselves as individuals who are capable of becoming what they desire in life. It involves a feeling of self-fulfillment and realization of one's potential.

Frederick Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, also known as the Motivation-Hygiene Theory, assumes that job satisfaction and dissatisfaction arise from two distinct sets of factors: motivators (related to the work itself) and hygiene factors (related to the work environment). Frederick Herzberg's two-factor theory, is relevant because it highlights the importance of both intrinsic and extrinsic factors in employee motivation and job satisfaction, suggesting that managers should focus on both motivators (achievement, recognition, responsibility) and hygiene factors (salary, working conditions) to create a positive and productive work environment.

vi. Vroom's expectancy theory (1964)

The expectancy theory was developed by Victor Vroom in 1964. The theory postulates three key variables viz: valence, instrumentality and expectancy. The theory was based on the idea that people prefer certain outcomes from behaviour to others. The anticipated feelings of satisfaction should be the preferred outcome.

Valence is the anticipated satisfaction from an outcome. The point is that rewards must be meaningful to the employees. Instrumentality, the strength of the valence of an outcome is dependent upon the extent to which the outcome serves as a means to other outcomes. An outcome with high valence is likely to be instrumental in leading to achievement of a large number of need-related outcome.

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Expectancy – this can be employees' expected desired performance to be attainable and that desired

performance be clearly linked to rewards. Failure to appropriately and fairly reward performance will severely diminish motivation. Expectancy theory holds that motivation is determined by:

- i. The belief that effort will be rewarded
- ii. The value attached to the specific reward is to be appropriate.

The force exerted to do something is therefore dependent on both valence and expectancy. A person's "effort" that is the strength of his motivation and the energy he exerts depends on the value of a reward. This is in turn influenced by the record of actual performance.

Vroom's expectancy theory assumes individuals are motivated by conscious choices to maximize pleasure and minimize pain, driven by the belief that effort leads to performance, performance leads to rewards, and those rewards are valuable to them.

Vroom's Expectancy Theory is relevant because it provides a framework for understanding and improving employee motivation by highlighting the importance of perceived effort-performance relationships, performance-reward relationships, and the value individuals place on rewards (valence), thus helping managers create motivating work environments. Thus, people change their level of effort according to the value they place on the bonus they receive from the process and on their perception of the strength of the links between effort and outcome.

vii. Path-goal theory of leadership effectiveness by Robert House (1971)

Path-goal theory by House (1971) states that a leader's behavior is contingent on the satisfaction, motivation and performance of his/her subordinates. The assumptions of Path-goal theory include the following:

- i. Leaders who show the way and help followers along the path are effectively leading.
- ii. Leadership behavior impacts on subordinate's motivation, satisfaction, effort and performance as moderated by situational factors of the subordinates and the work.

- iii. Effective leadership will select the style that meets the subordinates' needs.

Path-goal theory is related to the present study because it assist administrators of tertiary institutions to be aware that they are the key individuals in bringing about school quality through the provision of quality of physical facilities, instructional facilities, quality of leadership, quality of staff and a conducive environment for teaching and learning.

viii. Total Quality Management Theory (TQMT) by William Deming (1980)

An American management expert named William Deming propounded the theory of Total Quality Management Theory. According to Deming (1980), total quality is a description of the culture, attitude and output of an organization or a company that strives to provide customers with products and services that satisfy their needs. TQM states that:

- i. The organization at all levels must accept and practice its commitment continuously.
- ii. Quality improvement must be embedded in the organizations culture from top
- iii. Aim for constant improvement in products and processes
- iv. Must provide adequate training, and equipment and encourage pride in employees' own work and the product.
- v. There is a need for cooperation, team work and develop trust throughout the organization.
- vi. Organisations should support self-improvement and education at every level
- vii. Quality and reliability must not be compromised

The relevance of this theory to the present study is that tertiary institutions as organizations that provide services to students, parents and the general public. Hence, the theory will serve to enlighten school managers have enormous responsibility by ensuring the sustainability of quality practices and the provision of quality facilities that will enhance lecturers' task delivery and bring about the achievement of quality graduates in our tertiary institutions of learning. Hence, school managers will take responsibility as quality custodians of their institutions and ensure quality exhibited in

administration, supervision, leadership, school plant and in teaching and learning.

Summary and conclusion

In the research sphere, theories are essential because they provide structure, context, and a conceptual framework for the study, helping to identify research gaps, predict findings, and guide the research process. Integrating theory increases the rigor and quality of research, enables comparison of results, and allows for the development of new knowledge, ultimately leading to more valid, reliable, and impactful findings. In conclusion, theories provide essential frameworks in research to explain and predict phenomena, offering a structured basis for hypotheses and methods, connecting new knowledge to existing scholarship, and simplifying complex ideas to facilitate deeper understanding and the generation of new research. Without a theoretical base, research risks being unsystematic and lacking the depth to move beyond mere description towards meaningful generalization and advancement of knowledge.

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