The Nature of Organisational Behaviour

The scope for the examination of behaviour in organisations is very wide. There are a multiplicity of interrelated factors which influence the behaviour and performance of people as members of a work organisation. It is important to recognise the role of management as an integrating activity and as the cornerstone of organisational effectiveness. People and organisations need each other. The manager needs to understand the main influences on behaviour in work organisations and the nature of the people–organisation relationship.

The learning objectives of this chapter are to:

- explain the meaning and nature of organisational behaviour and provide an introduction to a behavioural approach to management;
- detail main interrelated influences on behaviour in work organisations and explain the nature of behavioural science;
- explain contrasting perspectives of organisations and different orientations to work;
- explain the importance of management as an integrating activity;
- assess the importance and nature of the new psychological contract;
- recognise the need for an international approach and the importance of culture to the study of organisational behaviour;
- appreciate the complex nature of the behaviour of people in work organisations.

Chapter 2 provides an introduction to the study area, a perspective on the nature of organisational behaviour and the importance of the role of management in work organisations. This chapter highlights the significance of the people–organisation relationship. It also considers different orientations to work and the nature of organisational effectiveness.

Influences on behaviour

Organisational behaviour is concerned broadly with the study of the behaviour of people within an organisational setting. It is important to emphasise that the behaviour of people cannot be studied in isolation and that it is necessary to understand interrelationships with other variables which together comprise the total organisation. Figure 2.1 provides a convenient framework for study. This basic framework can be expanded and developed, possibly with appropriate annotations, as a representation of the demands of, and approach to, particular units of study.

Contribution of behavioural science

The study of behavioural science, in one form or another, is now included in many courses on organisation and management. However, while a prior knowledge of behavioural science would prove useful to the reader, it is not assumed. Neither is such knowledge a necessary prerequisite for an understanding of the concepts and ideas discussed in the book.
The people–organisation relationship

Effective performance is dependent upon the nature of the people–organisation relationship and the psychological contract within the employment relationship. Management is an integral part of, and fundamental to, the successful operations of the organisation. Management is viewed as the cornerstone of organisational effectiveness. A heavy responsibility is placed therefore on managers and the activity of management. How managers exercise the responsibilities and duties of management is important. Attention must be given to the work environment, and appropriate systems of motivation, job satisfaction and rewards.

Patterns of behaviour are influenced by a complex combination of factors. It is important to remind ourselves of the human aspects of the organisation and the idiosyncratic behaviour of individuals.

The psychological contract

An increasingly significant feature of the people–organisation relationship is the concept of the psychological contract, and the ability to balance the unwritten needs of individual employees with the needs of the company. Forces of global competition and turbulent change make employment guarantees unfeasible and also enhance the need for levels of trust and teamwork. It is unlikely that all expectations of the individual or of the organisation will be met fully. There is a continual process of balancing, and explicit and implicit bargaining, which places emphasis on effective human resource management.

The need for an international approach

There are a number of factors which cause many commentators to consider that the business environment is becoming more international or ‘global’. One significant example is Britain’s relations with the European Union and the movement towards harmonisation of employment practices and conditions.

Attention needs to be given to the dimensions and nature of national culture and the cultural environment of any society. There is an interesting debate on the influence of national culture, the extent to which significant differences in organisations across the world can be attributed to culture, and possible links between cultural variance and workplace behaviour.

Debate

‘The study of organisational behaviour is really an art which pretends that it is a science and produces some spurious research findings to try to prove the point.’

Some starting points

For

- Organisational behaviour (OB) deals largely with intangibles. Not only is it difficult to observe and measure, it is also difficult to establish links between cause and effect.
- Science aims to be able to control. There are moral and ethical considerations in OB which militate against this.

Against

- The problems of considering OB as a science occur only if we try to apply rigid scientific practices to the subject.
- OB is a science in that it follows similar principles (that is to describe, explain, predict and control) but it is a different type of science – a social science – and thus cannot be compared directly.
Assignment: Select a shape

A first step in understanding human behaviour and the successful management of other people is to know and understand yourself. This simple exercise can help to provide a lighthearted but important step towards self-reflection and a means of encouraging discussion among course members at an early stage of their studies. Here are the given comments on each of the shapes.

Getting into shape

We must now return to the shapes. We were assured that the shape we chose did, to some extent, reflect our personality, and that the shapes were representative of particular characteristics.

(a) The square is a hard worker, well organised, dependable, cautious, meticulous, knowledgeable and good on long-term projects. But squares need to be given clear guidelines and appropriate tools. They are not strongly oriented towards people, are content to work on their own on detailed projects and are generally happy with their own company. On a training course a square is the sort of person who takes detailed notes and wants to be sure of gathering all the necessary information. This is not the shape of the leader but rather the reliable lieutenant.

(b) The triangle is the leader shape. Triangles love recognition, are conscious of the organisational hierarchy, and are confident, decisive and clear and confident where they are going. However, they can also be outspoken, dogmatic and, at times, stubborn. They are businesslike, conscious of the bottom line, irritated by a lot of detail and prefer summaries to reports. Most important, they often think they can do a job better than others – which means they can be poor delegators.

(c) The circle is chosen by those who are people-oriented. Unlike the first two shapes, this has no rough edges: it is a warm shape, resembling the sun, and adding two eyes and a mouth can give you a happy smiling face! Such people are harmonious, likeable, nurturing, emotional and good communicators. Moreover, in addition to liking others they also like to be liked themselves and work well with people they can get on with. Consequently, they are not always good at being the boss, are suspicious of the organisational hierarchy and can easily be swayed.

(d) The squiggle is the one shape that has no set pattern to it: whereas the others take recognisable forms this one differs for every individual. People who choose this shape tend to be different, individualistic, open, creative, innovative, excitable and ‘idea oriented’. They tend to look outside the work organisation and are adept at coming up with original proposals. But they can also be unreliable, disorganised, scatty, unpredictable and invariably have a low attention span.

The truth, of course, is that as with Eysenck’s types, we may feel we correspond to different shapes at different times; but my experience shows that over 90 per cent of students feel the shape they initially choose is a fair reflection of how they see themselves. Some correspond very closely to a particular shape while others may be a mixture, but most seem able to identify with a shape to varying degrees.

Case study: Eric and Kipsy

This case study should help demonstrate the complex nature of the study of management and organisational behaviour; and the difficulty in identifying a single solution to a particular problem. Accordingly, the analysis of this case can be undertaken in a number of different ways using a variety of different frameworks. It can be used, for example, to highlight important areas of management and organisational behaviour to be studied at a later stage of a particular course or unit. It could also be used as a cohesive case to link various concepts/ideas throughout subsequent chapters of the book. The case is likely to be an important learning experience if participants are asked to work in small self-selecting groups.

By adopting a brainstorming approach and exploring a range of possible considerations, the case can be a vehicle for drawing attention to a wide selection of discussion topics. The following is an example of a key-point analysis, including the importance of implementation and priorities.
Organisational problems

These include:

- lack of responsibility, boredom, clerks not responsible for their own errors
- orientation/motivation to work
- wide range of ages/experience of female staff
- frustration of psychological contract – for example, aspirations of the job – little chance of advancement
- poor communications – formal and informal
- management relying too much on formal structure
- Kipsy as informal leader – lack of recognition of informal organisation
- Kipsy developing a stereotyped image of Eric
- lack of involvement/participation by management with staff
- management failure to motivate staff – no rewards for good work, lack of job satisfaction
- main areas of conflict – for example, between telephonists/salespersons
- manager's lack of experience/confidence
- inflexibility of management – for example, working hours
- lack of basic systems – procedures, guidance and direction, downwards communications
- management style and level of supervision
- narrow span of control – too many supervisors?
- symptoms and sources of stress.

Manifest problems to be addressed:

- high turnover and absenteeism of staff
- low levels of motivation
- delays in salespersons getting through to clerks
- excessive errors
- abrupt and unfriendly telephone manners
- training of relief part-time staff
- timekeeping/shirking.

Possible solutions

These include:

- change overall management structure – more autonomy to Eric
- improve communications – staff involvement, staff meetings
- review procedures for recruitment, selection and induction
- review training programme, including part-time staff
- try to change company policy on flexible working hours
- review supervisory role
- examine opportunities for job enrichment
- improve technology – automatic read-offs – change waiting system
- reduce number of operators
- regular breaks for the staff
- clearer identification of errors
- incentive schemes (not necessarily pay) – suggestion schemes
- improve identification with ‘product – stress importance of operator's job
- meetings between telephonists/salespersons – target operators to specific group of salespersons – field visits.
Implementation
(a) Agreement/mandate from top management?
(b) Share problem with the staff – ask for solutions – talk and listen to them.
(c) Evaluate possible solutions and establish priorities. Consider, for example:
   - short-term/long-term;
   - costs;
   - easy/difficult;
   - timing;
   - likely effects on, and benefits to, the staff.
(d) Need to establish credibility and assert position. Attempt to achieve something positive to
deliver to staff.
(e) Possible priorities:
   - challenge top management on flexible working hours;
   - review of structure, roles and responsibilities;
   - review of recruitment, training and development.

Note: In undertaking the analysis for this case, and similar types of cases, it might be helpful to
encourage the use of a simple diagrammatical plan of main issues, possibly along the lines of
the outline example in Figure 2.A and/or outline profiles of main characters along the lines of
the example in Figure 2.B.
Additional seminar activities

Case study: The organisational setting in Spain

In the forty years after the Second World War, Spain underwent important changes in business, political and social environments. These changes were instrumental in helping both public and private organisations make the transition from the authoritarian/bureaucratic style of organisational control to being dynamic and outward-looking. However, this organisational change was not able to keep up with the pace of change in the external environment, and Spain still lagged behind her European partners in many areas, having a negative effect on the competitiveness of Spanish businesses.

Traditionally the culture that has predominated has been characterised by the size and importance of the state sector under the aegis of the Instituto Nacional de Industria (INI), and a rigid, monolithic state bureaucracy which offered civil servants at all grades a job for life; a large number of small and medium-sized firms, many with strong family links that led to a static hierarchical organisational structure; a pool of cheap and compliant labour which removed the impetus to invest in and develop new technologies; and an inward-looking productive structure which was highly protected and therefore denied the challenge of competition. The stability provided by the authoritarian regime of General Franco before 1975, and the cosy relationship between business, banks and government, allowed business organisations and government agencies to forgo long-term planning. Spanish firms thus failed to identify long-term strategic objectives and short-termism, insularity and quick profits for business became the norm.

Figure 2.B Outline profiles of main characters

ERIC
- Eric is a new manager taking up his first appointment after management training in a critical area for his company.
- He lacks knowledge of both the work involved and the staff he has to control and appears to be unsupported by his first line manager.
- His inexperience causes him to make a fundamental error in his response to the problem of flexitime which is the core of his problem with Kipsy. His failure is not having communicated this senior management decision in a timely and discreet manner.
- However, he seems to be a consultative manager; this is shown by his approach to his supervisors and team members by holding meetings to try to address the problems.
- His problems are further compounded by his crash programme implemented as a knee-jerk response to the visit to the regional vice-president. His failure to seek support from a more senior and experienced figure (after a few weeks), however understandable, must count against him.
- His lack of experience is also shown with his failure to take control of his supervisor in respect of the discipline to be maintained within the office. He needed to take his supervisors to task over their failure to deal with the posters immediately he became aware of them.

KIPSY
- An intelligent person with good A and B grades in her academic subjects. She is also in the top 10% in the applicants’ tests.
- Her high hopes of a career are further enhanced by the training course where she is led to expect a varied and interesting job.
- This fails to materialise and she becomes bored with the mundane tasks and apparent lack of prospects.
- Her expectations of a new bright manager are also dashed, which leads her into dysfunctional behaviour. This causes serious problems as she is a prime mover in the informal network system.
- Frustration is the main cause of her behaviour as she recognises that her actions are wrong, but she can see no way of redressing the situation.
One significant event which helped force organisations in Spain to change in the second half of this century was the abandonment of the policy of autarky in the late 1950s which led to a partial lifting of government controls on the location and expansions of business and fewer restrictions on foreign investment in Spain. The post-war economic prosperity in Western Europe provided Spain with an influx of tourists and an outlet for workers looking for better pay and conditions abroad. Income from tourism, emigrant remittances and foreign investment led to an economic boom in the country which led to a proliferation of new private business organisations and a more pragmatic approach to the control of the political economy. However the influence of these factors only laid the groundwork for future changes. Foreign investment led to ‘a modern, dynamic component of large firms grafted on to the pre-existing world of predominantly small companies’ (Shubert, 1990), while new ideas on forms of social interaction brought in by tourists and returning emigrants were repressed or rejected by the narrow, authoritarian, blinkered view of the administration and many managers. On the surface at least, there was little movement from the mechanistic organisation and its rigid structures to the organic organisation, more appropriate in a changing environment, identified by Burns and Stalker (see main book, pp. 571–3).

Even after the collapse of the authoritarian regime in Spain in the mid 1970s, the political and economic turmoil was not conducive to the introduction of innovative management structures. While the emphasis was on political change, the machinery of state administration changed very little and another layer of bureaucracy was added with the creation of seventeen autonomous communities each with their own regional parliaments and their own administrative structure. The oil crises of 1974 and 1979 left Spanish companies reeling, unable to come to terms with the speed and scope of the changes taking place in the external environment, and unwilling to risk significant changes in internal management structures. This period of crisis led to even greater government intervention in private companies, with the state taking over companies which were in danger of collapse in order to save jobs. This corporatist and paternalistic response from a weak government was allied to a general disenchantment in the business community, which was compounded by the election victory of the Spanish socialist party in the 1982 general elections. There were fears that the government would initiate a policy of nationalisation, support union wage claims and adopt a model of central planning for the economy. In fact these fears were unfounded. When the socialists came to power ‘The Spanish economy was based on an inefficient, backward productive structure. Industry was biased towards consumer goods and traditional sectors, was labour intensive, used outdated technology and had low levels of productivity and competitiveness’ (Ferner and Hyman, 1994). In order to tackle these problems the government adopted a tight monetarist approach and applied market principles to cut inflation, reduce the balance of payments deficit and promote greater flexibility in business. Another of the commitments of the government was to reduce bureaucracy and initiate a policy of privatisation through a policy of industrial reconversion, that is, restructuring the state sector enterprises to make them more efficient and responsive to market forces.

Not all the government’s measures were successful. Public administration fell prey to the party machine and management was again hooked on short-term objectives, governed more by sectoral interests than market principles. On the other hand the adoption of a free market philosophy revitalised the faith in private enterprise as a motor for growth and prosperity and started a shift of young professionals away from the public to the private sector. These measures that the government took were also aimed at bringing the Spanish economy in line with the other Western European countries in the EU. By 1985 the economic indicators had begun to show a recovery but it was Spain’s accession to the EU in 1986 which was the primary impulse for change. Membership of the EU was widely seen as a positive move, which would lead to a process of modernisation and to Spain gaining her rightful place in the Western world. However, there were problems. Membership subjected Spanish companies and industries to a level and intensity of competition that was unheard of, and these changes in the external environ-
ment forced organisations in Spain to review the technological, structural, personnel and management systems with which they worked. Some feared that Spain’s accession to the EU and the corresponding loss of the protection of tariff barriers would lead to Spain’s industries being overwhelmed, while others accepted that the internationalisation of the Spanish economy would provide the stimulus that business people needed to change attitudes, renovate the industrial base and learn to compete in foreign markets. Initially, during the difficult period of adjustment, many companies were forced to close in the face of foreign competition, but the last half of the 1980s saw Spanish growth rates surpass other EU member states, averaging almost 5 per cent between 1987 and 1990.

Although the economy slumped at the beginning of the 1990s, competition and government policy have gone some way towards modernising the organisational structures. The government carried out a policy of privatisation, creating a new holding for profitable state industries and a semi-privatised banking group for the different state banks. Private banks were not slow to adopt practices that had been introduced by foreign banks such as Barclays and NatWest, offering a wider range of services and changing the industry from one based on the bank–client relationship to that of ‘an industry based on competition, price and service’ (Canals, 1994). The liberalisation of the banking sector led to mergers between and greater competition from savings banks, and banks were at the forefront of new technology in Spain.

The attitudes and skills of the personnel in organisations in Spain are still anchored in the past. ‘It would appear that conservatism and paternalistic employment relations remain the dominant characteristics of small-scale capital in Spain’ (Ferner and Hyman, 1994). The individualism which militates against group work, the acceptance of authority and the mistrust of new ideas are attitudes which need to be overcome if Spanish work organisations are to become more competitive. Another of the serious problems is the quality of education and training in Spain. Only 17 per cent of the working population in Spain between the ages of 16 and 65 have the qualifications that employers are looking for. The demand for university graduates and qualified postgraduates in business outstrips the supply by three to one, and there is a proliferation of MBA courses on offer in the main urban centres.

Given the short supply of skilled personnel, one would expect that the commitment to in-house training in Spanish firms would be high. However, training is not a priority in Spanish firms, coming sixth on the list of priorities. The proportion of overall labour costs in companies dedicated to education and training is 0.2 per cent, compared to an average of 1.5 per cent in other EU countries. Training is often given on an ad hoc basis as a ‘reward’, and not included in the overall corporate strategy of companies, indicating that Spanish companies still have a long way to go in developing the skills that are required to be competitive. New managers are coming out of Spanish Business Schools at a rate of some 11 000 a year, however, with an international outlook and speaking one or two foreign languages. They are learning to be more flexible in the organisational environment and to work outside a narrow, precise sphere of responsibility.

Fears have been expressed that foreign investment and the sale of Spanish companies to foreign firms is leaving the Spanish economy dangerously dependent on decisions taken abroad. The introduction of foreign capital has, though, meant a change in management structures in Spain, while direct foreign investment has brought with it new working practices and new organisational structures. In Spain there are still organisations with 14 to 16 different organisational levels, which slows down internal communication and promotes inflexibility, but multinationals such as General Electric have reduced these to four levels in Spain. Companies are also decentralising their operations. This, given the authoritarian and hierarchical structure of organisations to date, has often met with opposition from regional managers who are not accustomed to taking important decisions without approval from head office.

The level of technological innovation in an organisation is another of the subsystems that can be used to analyse the competitiveness of a work organisation. Traditionally in Spain low labour
costs have been the cornerstone of the competitive advantage of firms. Now, with the widespread application of technology and with spending on research and development programmes, low labour costs have become less of a competitive advantage. Again Spain still spends less than 1.0 per cent of her gross domestic product on research and development, compared to an average of 2.33 per cent in the four leading countries in the European Union – France, Great Britain, Germany and Italy. EU membership has thus had a positive impact, prompting greater official recognition of the need for research and development, but too much is still spent on importing foreign technology.

These are just some of the internal and external environmental influences that are affecting Spanish organisations. The pace of change in the past thirty years has been dramatic, and public and private organisations are struggling to adapt. In many respects Spain is still ten to fifteen years behind the leading member states of Europe, but the commitment to organisational change is coming from local, regional and national government bodies, the education system, and from large and small Spanish and foreign businesses.

Activity brief
1. Prepare an environmental audit of the political, economic, social and technological factors which have most affected organisations in your country or region.
2. Discuss how the management functions in your country, region or immediate organisation differ from those outlined above.
3. Suggest how cultural forces accelerate or slow down changes in organisations in your own country or another country with which you are familiar.

Further reading
Almarcha Barbado, A. (1993), Spain and EC Membership Evaluated, Pinter.
Shubert, A. (1990), A Social History of Modern Spain, Unwin Hyman.

Case study provided by Bob Gould, University of Portsmouth.

This case aims to give an overview of the relationship between the nature of the external environment in Spain and the impact of major changes in this environment on the five sub-systems which can be used as a basis for the analysis of work organisations identified in the main book, p. 114. The case thus provides a helpful link with Chapter 4. The country has undergone dramatic institutional and cultural change in the last forty years. More recently the government in Spain has forced competition on business organisations, reformed labour legislation to make the labour market more flexible and promoted the use of technology by investing in business parks such as the Cartuja 93 project on the 1992 Expo site in Seville. Many Spanish organisations have responded and are now looking to become more competitive by taking on young executives who have studied abroad, who have at least one foreign language and who are not anchored in rigid hierarchical structures, but who can work in groups and teams as well as independently. This demand profile is common to many organisations, but it is particularly acute in Spain where there is a close identification with Europe, the perceived need to catch up, and a desire to make a break with an authoritarian past.

The follow-up activities will help students compare and contrast the situation in Spain with the situation in an environment with which they may be more familiar.
Question 1

Prepare an environmental audit of the political, economic, social and technological factors which have most affected organisations in your country or region.

Here it is hoped that the student will be able to identify the main factors which have led to changes in organisations in their own country or region by means of a PEST analysis. (See Chapter 4.) Political factors, such as the free-market policies, anti-union legislation and privatisation pushed through by successive governments in Great Britain, as well as changes in education policy, will have a bearing on the structures of organisations, both public and private, and the attitudes of people involved in those organisations. There is an obvious connection with economic factors here, so students may wish to focus on, for example, Britain's continued separation from European Monetary Union (EMU) as a factor which has influenced organisational behaviour. Social factors, such as demographic trends, levels of unemployment and people’s preferences about where they want to live, will also impact on organisations as will the level of technological preparedness of the population, and the ability of organisations, to adopt new technologies and to adapt.

Depending on the size, the class might be divided into four groups, with each considering one of these factors in a given country/region or in a given organisation. The students should be asked to make a note of the amount of overlap that exists between the different factors, to highlight how much they are interrelated.

Question 2

Discuss how the management functions in your country, region or immediate organisation differ from those outlined above.

A group discussion on how the external environment may have shaped management structures. In the article there is an implied connection between the longevity of a corporatist authoritarian regime in Spain and the hierarchical management structures still very much evident in Spanish organisations. How does the Spanish experience fit in with the characteristics of formal and informal organisation shown in Table 4.1 on p. 100 of the main book? How different are the organisations in the student’s own country or region and why are the management functions different?

Question 3

Suggest how cultural forces accelerate or slow down changes in organisations in your own country or another country with which you are familiar.

The aim of this question is to get students to think about, and identify, cultural factors which will impinge on organisational behaviour. The students could be asked to identify cultural traits in their own countries and assess how these traits might affect organisational behaviour. In Spain, accession to the European Community in 1986 was hailed with headlines such as *Ya somos europeos!* (At last we’re Europeans!). There was, and still is, widespread enthusiasm for membership of the (now) European Union which implied change, modernisation and a chance to be on a par with the best in Europe, and to some extent these aspirations have been realised. However, there are still cultural differences which are holding back or delaying a greater integration with Europe. The working day for many public and private organisations is still interrupted for a three-hour lunch break. Although Spaniards work as hard as any in Europe, this greatly reduces the time that people have available to get in contact with business partners abroad during their opening hours. Internal company organisation is such that it can often take half a dozen different phone calls to reach the person you want to speak to. Punctuality is still not high on the executive's list of priorities, whether it be for a meeting or for a delivery date, and a culture of ‘who you know’ rather than ‘what you know’ still exists when it comes to getting a promotion or a job. Corruption in government and the administration is diverting energies from the main task of making Spain competitive, and this attitude permeates private organisations.
Asking students to identify social and cultural aspects of nations or organisations may lead to stereotyping, but an awareness of different national or regional characteristics can help when it comes to dealing with a new organisational setting.

Case study guide provided by Bob Gould, University of Portsmouth.

**Exercise 1**

In small groups of not more than five people, design an activity which illustrates one of the topics considered in Chapter 2 of the main book. For example, this could be a group exercise, a card game, a quiz or a ‘Question Time’ type group discussion.

Play out the activity with the rest of the group and then prepare a verbal presentation based on the following points:

- How successful was the activity? Why or why not?
- What modifications, if any, would you make to your activity?
- How does the success (or otherwise) of your activity link with issues concerning the study of OB?

This exercise could be used as the main assessment in a seminar programme. Students can be given several weeks in which to prepare the activity in their own time and then use a seminar to play it out. Alternatively it could be used over two seminars without pre-preparation – this would also encourage students to think laterally, creatively and quickly.

The verbal presentation could be based around the following points:

- How successful was the activity? Why or why not?
- What modifications, if any, would students make to their activity?
- How does the success (or otherwise) of the activity link with issues concerning the study of OB?

**Exercise 2**

Using the text in the main book (pp. 15–17), prepare a students’ guide to undertaking case studies from one of the following two perspectives:

1. A first-year undergraduate with little or no work experience.
2. A mature part-time management student with considerable work experience.

This exercise is designed to encourage class members to consider the needs, attitudes and expectations of two very different types of students.

1. The first-year undergraduate may more easily be able to grasp theoretical concepts but will have little ‘real world’ experience.
2. The post-experience management students will have considerable anecdotal experience but may be unable to grasp as easily either the theoretical concepts or their application.

An additional parameter could be included to allow for those classes which may have a mix of management students, some of whom have only just graduated and some of whom may have no degree but considerable work experience (for example, a full-time DMS programme or a full-time MBA programme).

**Assignment 1**

Using the metaphors suggested by Gareth Morgan (main book, pp. 25–6), apply one or more to your own organisation. If you are not currently working, take any organisation that you know – this could be a sports club, the Students’ Union, or somewhere where you’ve worked during your vacation.

Prepare either a verbal or written (maximum 1500 words) report of your findings.
Specific objective
To allow students to take a new perspective on a familiar organisation.

Discussion point
Students could be encouraged to look at how the different perspectives offer different interpretations of organisational life. How can we choose among the variety of metaphors to help us make sense of our own experience of particular organisations? Are some perspectives true and others false? Or are some simply more easy to apply than others? How might two people who are looking at the same situation and using a different metaphor vary in their interpretation of what is happening? – use examples. How might these differences be explained and worked through?

Assignment 2
In small groups, using the text in the main book (pp. 33–9):

- Explain why certain business activities have become increasingly harmonised across the world.
- In what ways would you expect work organisations to vary in different societies? Will these differences always exist?

Present your findings to the other groups in whatever format you consider appropriate to the topic.

Assignment provided by Dr Ray French, University of Portsmouth.

Specific objective
This assignment introduces the particular organisational challenges of global training. It encourages students to consider both similarities and differences in the way business is carried out across the world.

In part 2 it introduces the idea of the impact of the external culture upon the way work is organised. It should therefore encourage students to look beyond the immediate boundaries of the organisation for some explanations of its activities.

Applications and discussion

Application 1
One of our students on our part-time MBA course came to the Stage 1 OB unit with a degree of trepidation and cynicism. A systems engineer by training, she expressed grave reservations about successfully completing a unit in ‘such a fuzzy, unquantifiable subject’. The introductory lecture, ‘The Nature of Organisational Behaviour’, did very little to change her opinion. In fact, if anything, it reinforced it – this was definitely a subject that Lyndsey felt uncomfortable with. A quick straw poll of the class showed that she was not the only one to feel this way – over 50 per cent of the students thought the same (we’d like to think that it was because they were all engineers and scientists rather than because we were lousy lecturers . . .).

Anyway, we ploughed on and about two-thirds of the way through the course Lyndsey came up to one of us after the lecture and said, ‘You know, it actually works!’ ‘What does, Lyndsey?’ (you get a bit gobsmacked after three hours of ‘Great Leadership Theories I Have Known’ . . .). ‘This whole thing,’ she replied. ‘I had to do a presentation on performance-related pay to the main board last week and to back up my point that we didn’t need it, I used all the research findings on motivation and money. The board ended up agreeing with me and said afterwards that it was largely because I could prove my points with research data – I’d never have done that prior to the course.’

Hopefully this not only provides an example of how OB can work in practice but it might also be useful to look at the model of attitude change here (see main book, pp. 328–32).
Application 2

Steve White is the head chef in a large London hotel. He’s been in the industry for twenty-five years, starting off as a ‘button boy’ (a kind of junior hall porter-cum-gopher) before moving into the kitchen and gradually working his way up. He’s been a head chef in various hotels for the last ten years and in his last three jobs he’s been recruited prior to the opening of the hotel so he’s been required to help design the kitchen, recruit his brigade, sort out menus and generally get the show on the road. There is a limit to how many times anyone can do this and, frankly, Steve is bored. He joined his current company because they seemed to offer wider opportunities than just kitchen work and, having opened the hotel, he is now looking to change.

Before we go any further and for those not intimately connected with the hotel industry, perhaps we ought to establish a few facts:

- Tradition says that ‘once a chef, always a chef’ – they’re experts in their own field but can’t (or don’t want to) move into any other.
- Rule 1 says that ‘the chef is always right’.
- Rule 2 says that if the chef is wrong, Rule 1 applies.
- Chefs are not, generally, known for their democratic approach to managing people. This can range from a slight raising of the voice when contradicted to hurling whatever is in the hand at the time (if you’ve ever been on the receiving end of a red-hot wok, as one of the authors has, you’ll know what we mean).
- Having said all that (and to avoid having one’s kneecaps filleted at the table and served with a vinegar and mustard timbale), chefs are known for their undying devotion to their craft. They are synonymous with training, development and maintaining their networks – all chefs know each other and can point to who they have trained and to who they have encouraged to leave for a promotion which they’ve organised.

Back to our bored Steve . . . he’s now been at the hotel for two years (and is breathing a sigh of relief because he now can’t be sacked without a good reason). He’s seen two food and beverage managers (his immediate boss) come and go and he is looking for something else. The hotel manager approaches him one day and asks him if he would like the job of food and beverage manager. He jumps at the chance because he knows that he can promote his existing sous chef and still keep control in the kitchen whilst furthering his own career.

A few weeks later a former colleague of his rings him up to congratulate him on his promotion and to ask how things are going. He replies: ‘I hate it. I have to wear a suit all day, carry a bleep, I’m at the beck and call of everybody, the bar and restaurant staff don’t understand where I’m coming from and I’ve had two waitresses and one barman in tears – I’m thinking of jacking it in.’

Can you see where the psychological contract might fit in here? When he joined the company Steve clearly had his own psychological contract, as did the company. Where did it go wrong?

Application 3

Sit cross-legged on the floor, circle your thumb and forefinger together and repeat after us: ‘OB is dynamic, OB is exciting, OB is real-world related . . . ’. Not working? OK, follow one set of the following instructions:

1. Tune in and follow regularly any soap opera, drama or other series. Each week, take one concept of OB and apply it to whatever you’re watching. Some suggestions to get you going might be:
   (a) *London's Burning* (leadership, informal groups, organisational bureaucracies, organisation culture).
   (b) *Neighbours* (attitudes, motivation, perception).
(c) *Casualty* (non-profit organisations, groups, informal leadership, motivation, attitudes).
(d) *The Original Star Trek* (leadership, groups, cultural differences, perception, personality).
(e) *Blind Date* (perception, personality, attitudes).
(f) *Coronation Street/Brookside* (all of the above and then some).
(g) *Question Time* (attitude change, communication).

2 Take any novel or play and analyse it in OB terms. As an example, let’s take *Hamlet*:

(a) *Hamlet* thinks the rest are out to get him (perception, personality).
(b) *Ophelia* (the female love interest) is infatuated with Hamlet (attitude and motivation, gender stereotyping) but doesn’t know if he feels the same (perception).
(c) *Gertrude* has recently remarried and so remains Queen (organisation theory, motivation).
(d) *Polonius* wants everyone to like him (attitude, perception).
(e) *Horatio* tries to pour oil on troubled waters and protect his friend (perception, attitude, motivation).
(f) *The gravediggers* have a lousy job to do but manage to make the best of it (job satisfaction, motivation, attitudes).
(g) *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern* are trying to cope in a turbulent and changing environment and to stay together without having to do the Elizabethan MBA (motivation, attitudes, perception, groups, organisational cultures).
(h) *Fortinbras* – the ‘born leader’ (leadership, motivation, personality).
(i) *The ghost of Hamlet’s father* – is he there at all? (perception, attributes, personality, paranoia?).
(j) ‘Something is rotten in the state of Denmark … ’ (organisational misbehaviour!).

Try it with Ibsen, the Ring Cycle or Peter Rabbit – it throws a whole new light on them!

**Further reading**

Multiple-choice questions

1 (Chapter 2, p. 20) Organisational behaviour is primarily concerned with the study of:
   (a) the behaviour of work organisations
   (b) the behaviour of people within an organisational setting
   (c) the process of management
   (d) none of the above

2 (Chapter 2, p. 23) When studying organisational behaviour it is necessary to provide a multidisciplinary, behavioural science approach. The three main disciplines involved are concerned with:
   (a) personality systems, management and structure
   (b) personality systems, social systems and cultural systems
   (c) management, leadership and groups
   (d) cultural systems, perception and personality systems

3 (Chapter 2, p. 27) An instrumental orientation to work, as identified by Goldthorpe et al., indicates that individuals define work:
   (a) in terms of groups activities where there is an ego involvement with work groups. Non-work activities are linked to work relationships
   (b) as a central life issue with an obligation to the work and the organisation. There is a close link between work-related and non-work-related activities
   (c) not as central life issue but as a means to an end. There is a clear distinction between work-related and non-work-related activities
   (d) as none of the above.

4 (Chapter 2, p. 28) To ensure continuous improvement of organisational performance and effectiveness, the core focus of management must be on:
   (a) the improvement of the people–organisation relationship
   (b) the needs and expectations of individuals
   (c) the informal organisation
   (d) objectives and policies of the organisation

5 (Chapter 2, p. 33) Improvements in communications, technology and increasing competition have led to the needs for an increasingly ______ approach to management.
   (a) concentrated
   (b) international
   (c) differentiated
   (d) all of the above