

Chapter 0

Your study of organisational behaviour

If you do not know where you are going how will you know if you have arrived?

Learning outcomes

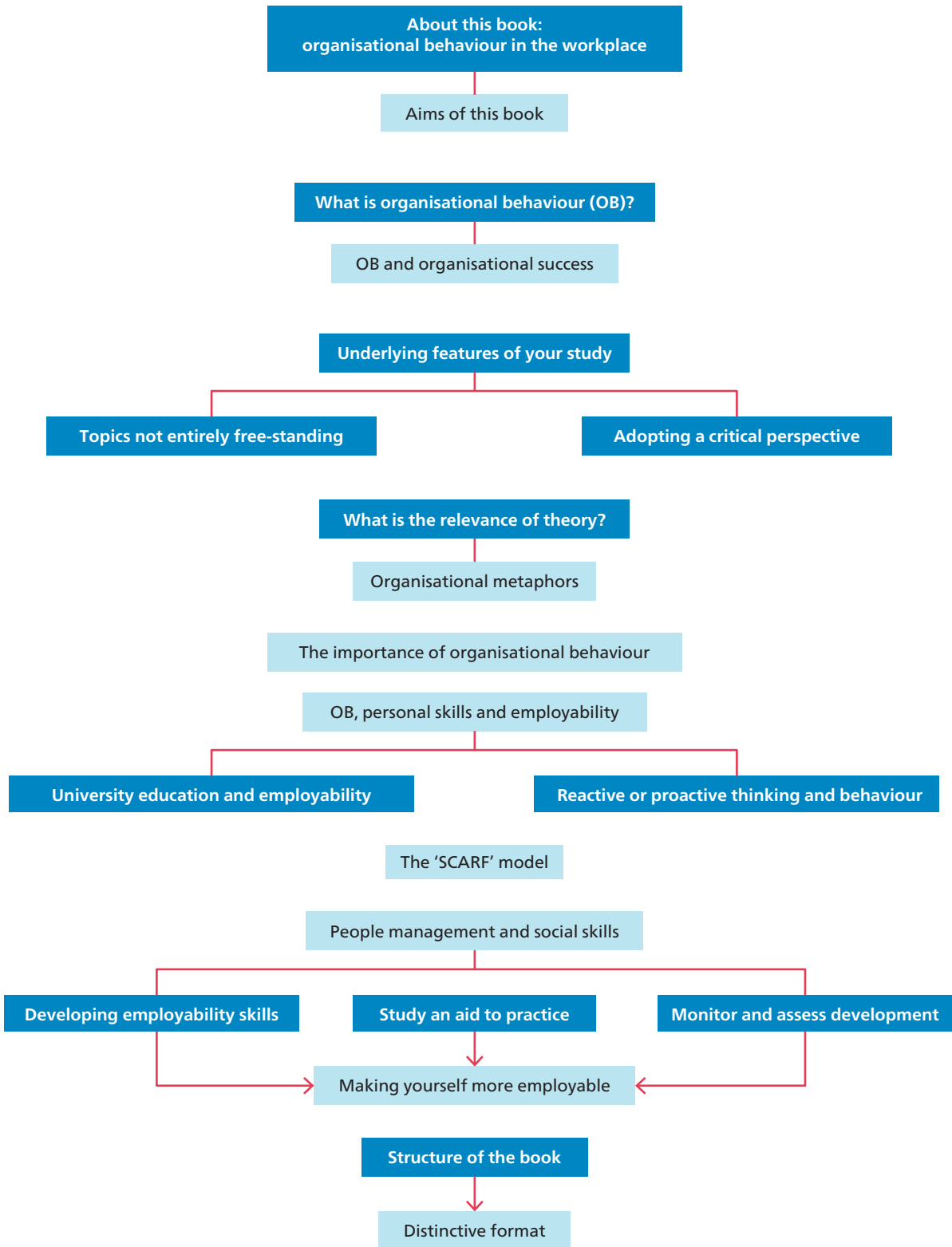
After reading this chapter you should be more aware of:

- the meaning, nature and scope of organisational behaviour;
- the importance of social skills and employability;
- the structure, main features and contents of the book.

Outline chapter contents

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Overview topic map: Chapter 0 – Your study of organisational behaviour





The hidden depth of an iceberg with up to 90 per cent of total mass below the surface

About this book: organisational behaviour in the workplace

This is an introductory text for those readers of organisational behaviour or related subjects interested in improving organisational performance through the behaviour and actions of people at work.

The activities of an organisation are directed towards the attainment of certain goals and also have social implications. Organisational behaviour is a wide and essentially multidisciplinary field of inquiry and should not be considered in a vacuum but related to the broader organisational context and external environment.

The concepts and ideas presented in this book provide a basis for contrasting perspectives on the structure, operation and management of organisations, and interactions among people who work in them. A central theme of the book is the nature of the people–organisation relationship.

Aims of this book

The aims of this book are to:

- indicate ways in which organisational performance may be improved through better understanding of the behaviour and actions of people at work;
- increase awareness of, and sensitivity to, personal skills and employability.

What is organisational behaviour (OB)?

At its basic, **organisational behaviour (OB)** is concerned with the study of human behaviour. It involves the understanding, prediction and control of behaviour of people within an organisational setting. The meaning of the term is not always clear and there are a number of closely related study areas with often similar descriptions such as organisational analysis, work psychology or organisation development but common definitions of organisational behaviour are generally along the lines of:

the study and understanding of individual and group behaviour and patterns of structure and management in order to help improve organisational performance and effectiveness.

Study of organisational behaviour is usually interpreted more about the people within the work situation but it is difficult to divorce completely from broader social situations.

Clearly there is a multiplicity of interrelated factors that influence the decisions and actions of people as members of a work organisation. The scope for the examination of organisational behaviour is therefore very wide. There is also debate over the relationship between organisational behaviour, the human resource function, and management theory and practice.

Organisational Behaviour is one of the most complex and perhaps least understood academic elements of modern general management, but since it concerns the behaviour of people within organisations it is also one of the most central . . . its concern with individual and group patterns of behaviour makes it an essential element in dealing with the complex behavioural issues thrown up in the modern business world.

Source: Introduction to Module 6, Organisational Behaviour, Financial Times Mastering Management, FT Pitman Publishing (1997), p. 216.

However much of a cliché, it is still an inescapable fact that people are the main resource of any organisation. Without its members, an organisation is nothing; an organisation is only as good as the people who work within it. In today's increasingly dynamic, global and competitive environment understanding human behaviour at work and effective management of the people resource is even more important for organisational survival and success.

Vecchio suggests three reasons for studying organisational behaviour.

- **Important practical applications** that follow from an understanding and knowledge of OB and the ability to deal effectively with others in an organisational setting.
- **Personal growth** and the fulfilment gained from understanding our fellow humans. Understanding others may also lead to greater self-knowledge and self-insight.
- **Increased knowledge** about people in work settings, for example identification of major dimensions of leadership leading to the design leadership training programmes in organisations.¹

Watson reminds us that the biggest challenge and most fascinating aspect that we face when trying to analyse organisations is its essential ambiguity. Organisations do not actually exist. The organisation in which you work or study is not something you can see, hear, touch, smell, kick, kiss or throw up in the air.²

OB and organisational success

Sooner or later every organisation has to perform successfully if it is to survive. An understanding of organisational behaviour is essential for organisational performance and effectiveness. In order to study the behaviour of people at work it is necessary to understand interrelationships with other variables that together comprise the total organisation.

The study of organisational behaviour embraces therefore an understanding of the interactions among:

- the nature and purpose of the organisation;
- formal structure and role relationships;
- the tasks to be undertaken and technology employed;
- organisational processes and the execution of work;
- the human element, informal organisation and behaviour of people;
- the process of management as an integrating and co-ordinating activity;
- social responsibilities and business ethics;
- the external environment of which the organisation is part; and
- the need for organisation success and survival.



How would YOU attempt to explain the meaning, significance and scope of organisational behaviour to a fellow student studying engineering?

Underlying features of your study

It is important always to remember that it is people who are being managed and people should be considered in human terms. Unlike physical resources, the people resource is not owned by the organisation. People bring their own perceptions, feelings and attitudes towards the organisation, systems and styles of management, their duties and responsibilities, and the conditions under which they are working. Human behaviour is capricious and scientific methods or principles of behaviour cannot be applied with reliability. It is also widely observed that you cannot study the behaviour of people without changing it.

A noticeable feature of organisational behaviour is the invariable difficulty in identifying a definitive solution to a particular situation. The absence of one single, 'right' answer can make study of the subject complex and frustrating and even may bring into question the value in studying the subject at all. Consider however the attraction of study for your personal development and confidence; the opportunity to test your thoughts and ideas with fellow students in a non-threatening environment; and to help prepare yourself for the realities of the work situation and progression in your future career.

Topics in OB are not entirely free-standing

The use of separate topic areas is a recognised academic means of aiding study and explanation of the subject. In practice, however, the activities of an organisation cannot be isolated neatly into discrete areas of study. Topics studied in OB should not be regarded, therefore, as entirely free-standing. Any study inevitably covers several aspects and used to a greater or lesser extent to confirm generalisations made about particular topic areas. Reference to the same studies to illustrate different aspects of management and organisational behaviour serves as useful revision and reinforcement and provides a more integrated approach to your study.

The majority of actions are likely to involve a number of simultaneous functions that relate to the total processes within an organisation. In order to study the behaviour of people at work it is necessary to understand interrelationships with other variables that together comprise the total organisation.

Consider, for example

A manager briefing departmental staff on a major unexpected, important and urgent task. Such a briefing is likely to include consideration of organisational culture, organisation and role structures, management of change, levels of hierarchy and authority, forms of communications, previous experience, delegation and empowerment, teamwork, leadership style, motivation and control systems. The behaviour of the staff will be influenced by a combination of individual, group, organisational and environmental factors.



Explain fully what other possible considerations YOU see as important? What do you see as the priorities for decision or action?

Adopting a critical perspective

You are encouraged to adopt a critical perspective towards your studies. Be prepared to analyse, question and challenge what you read in the text. What do YOU think and believe? Be prepared to change any preconceived beliefs. Consider also whose interests are best served by the preferred 'best' answer: for example senior managers, the general workforce, shareholders, trade unions, community.

At the end of each chapter you will find group discussion activities to help provoke personal responses to what you have just read. You are of course entitled to your own views but be conscious of your own bias or prejudices. The extent to which your point of view persuades other people will be influenced by clear, logical reasoning and supported by academic evidence.

Draw upon the views of your colleagues to share experiences and test not only your assumptions and ideas but also your skills of group interaction and influencing

other people. References to the importance of skills throughout the text, together with the exhibits, case studies and assignments should serve to stimulate your awareness of the importance of underlying personal and employability skills necessary for effective performance.

You are encouraged to complement your reading by drawing upon your own observations and practical experiences. This can, of course, be from your university. You may also have work experience, even part-time or casual employment, in other organisations to draw upon. In addition, you will have contact with a range of other organisations such as supermarkets, local pubs and shops, bank or building society, fast-food restaurants, service station, doctor or dentist surgery. An analytical approach to contemporary examples from your own observations should help further both a critical perspective and your interest in the subject area.

Bear in mind that opportunities to develop personal skills are not always immediately apparent but embedded into your course of study. Adopt an inquisitive and enquiring mind. Search for both good and bad examples of organisational behaviour and people management, and the **manner** in which concepts and ideas presented in this book are applied in practice. Make a point of continually observing and thinking about the interpersonal and work-based skills exhibited. Use this awareness and knowledge to enhance development of your own employability skills and aid career progression.

W1A – A British comedy television series aired on BBC 2 in September 2017

This entertaining programme follows the life of Ian Fletcher, who works at the BBC as the 'head of values' – a role that requires him to redefine the entire BBC brand and tasked with clarifying and defining the core purpose of the BBC across all its activities. The series of half-hour programmes makes fun of ludicrous jargon and political correctness; and is a spoof about such subjects as structure, open-plan, hot-desking, communications, meetings, social interactions, stereotypical behaviour, inclusivity and other aspects of organisational behaviour.

The programme provides an amusing and stimulating way of thinking about the subject area. Despite the implausibility of the programme, it is easy to relate to what can actually happen in work organisations.

There are a number of references to the programme on the internet and it is available to buy on DVD.

What is the relevance of theory?

You should not be put off by the use of the word 'theory' in your studies. Most rational decisions are based on some form of theory. Theory provides a sound basis for action and contains a message on how people might behave. This may influence attitudes towards actual practice and lead to changes in patterns of behaviour. Theory further provides a conceptual framework and gives a perspective for the practical study of the subject. Together they lead to a better understanding of

factors influencing patterns of behaviour in work organisations and applications of the process of management.³ *McGregor* maintains that theory and practice are inseparable. Every managerial act rests on assumptions, generalizations, and hypotheses – that is to say, on theory. Although our assumptions are frequently implicit, sometimes quite unconscious, often conflicting; nevertheless, they determine our predictions that if we do a, b will occur.⁴

Patching suggests that all managers who think about what they do are practical students of organisational theory.

Theory is not something unique to academics, but something we all work with in arriving at our attitudes, beliefs and decisions as managers. It seems obvious to most of us that some theories are better than others. Many managerial discussions which we undertake in meetings focus upon trying to agree upon which theory will be best for a particular decision.⁵

Organisational metaphors

Organisations are complex social systems that can be defined and studied in a number of ways. However one looks at the nature or disciplines of OB it is important to remember as *Morgan* points out:

the reality of organisational life usually comprises numerous different realities.

Through the use of metaphors, *Morgan* provides a broad perspective on the nature of organisations and organisational behaviour and identifies eight different ways of viewing organisations – as machines, organisms, brains, cultures, political systems, psychic prisons, flux and transformation, and instruments of domination. These contrasting metaphors aid the understanding of the complex nature of organisational life and the critical evaluation of organisational phenomena.⁶

Metaphors offer an interesting perspective on how to view organisations. They provide a broader view of the dynamics of organisational behaviour and how to manage and design organisations. However, *Morgan* points out that these metaphors are not fixed categories and are not mutually exclusive. An organisation can be a mix of each and predominantly a combination of two or three metaphors. Furthermore, these combinations may change over a period of time.

A number of writers use metaphors to help describe organisations. For example, in discussing the role and logic of viewing the organisation in terms of metaphors, *Drummond* raises questions such as what an organisation is like and the power of metaphors in shaping our thinking, but also points out that all metaphors are partial and no metaphor can explain fully a particular phenomenon.⁷

The metaphor of an iceberg

A convenient way to perceive the organisation is an iceberg. For example, *Hellriegel, Slocum and Woodman* suggest: 'One way to recognise why people behave as they do at work is to view an organisation as an iceberg. What sinks ships isn't always what sailors can see, but what they can't see'.⁸

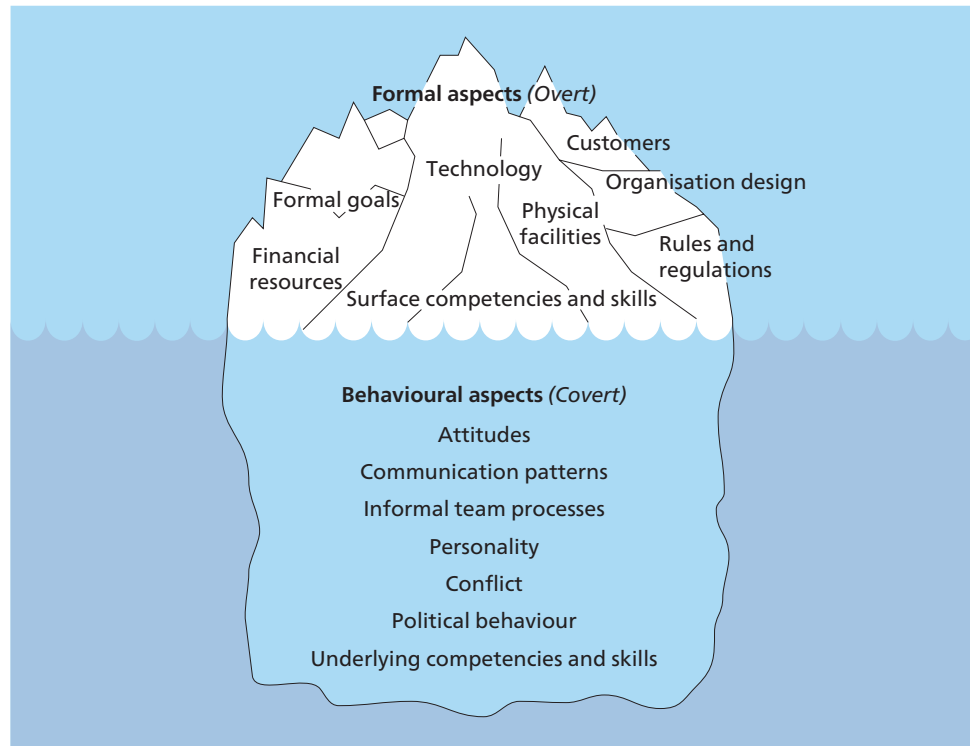


Figure 1 The organisational iceberg

Source: From Hellriegel, D., Slocum, J. W., Jr. and Woodman, R. W. *Management*, eighth edition, South-Western Publishing (1998), p. 6. Reproduced by permission.

The overt, formal aspects focus only on the tip of the iceberg (organisation). It is just as important to focus on what you can't see – the covert, behavioural aspects (see Figure 1).

The shadow side of organisations

Egan refers to the importance of the shadow side of the organisation: that is, those things not found on organisation charts or in company manuals – the covert, and often undiscussed, activities of people which affect both the productivity and quality of the working life of an organisation.⁹ As *Howes* points out, the fiercest battles of the workplace may seem trivial yet they are nothing of the sort. 'Forget disagreements over strategies or policy – many of the bitterest workplace battles are fought over the prosaic matters of air conditioning and in-office music.' Underlying and unresolved disputes can brew animosity and resentment, and halt production.¹⁰



What metaphor would YOU use to help describe your university and/or any other organisation with which you are familiar?

The importance of organisational behaviour

As part of the *Financial Times Mastering Management* series, Wood, in his discussion of the nature of organisational behaviour, suggests that in its concern for the way people behave in an organisational context, organisational behaviour can be regarded as the key to the whole area of management. The study of behaviour in organizations is not just important, it is vital. It is the one area that can bring the collective wisdom of human history into the decision-making calculus of developing managers. The more technical a manager's training, the more important organisational behaviour becomes.¹¹

Opportunities and challenges for managers

Robbins and Judge remind us there are few, if any, simple and universal principles that explain organisational behaviour but that understanding organisational behaviour has never been more important for managers than it is today. In short, there are a lot of challenges and opportunities today for managers to use OB concepts. For instance:

- Increasing age of typical employees in more developed countries;
- Greater number of women in the workplace;
- Broader ethnicity of people at work;
- More temporary workers reducing organisational loyalty;
- Demands for increased flexibility and coping with rapid change; and
- Working with and managing people in uncertain times.¹²

OB, personal skills and employability

An increasingly important feature of OB is the relationship with enhancing personal skills and employability within the workplace. The Confederation of British Industry (CBI) point out that in an increasingly competitive employment market, employers are looking beyond simple academic achievement when considering applicants for a job or internship. Many now expect to see evidence of other skills and achievements that boost someone's attractiveness as a potential employee.

Businesses want graduates who not only add value but who have the skills to help transform their organization in the face of continuous and rapid economic and technological change. All graduates – whatever their degree discipline – need to be equipped with employability skills.¹³

A summary of factors bearing on the increased importance of interpersonal skills at work is given in **Figure 2**.

Recent years have seen attention given by the government and other employment and professional bodies to the importance of the supply and application of skills attainment for the prosperity of the UK economy. *The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD)* point out that in today's competitive and

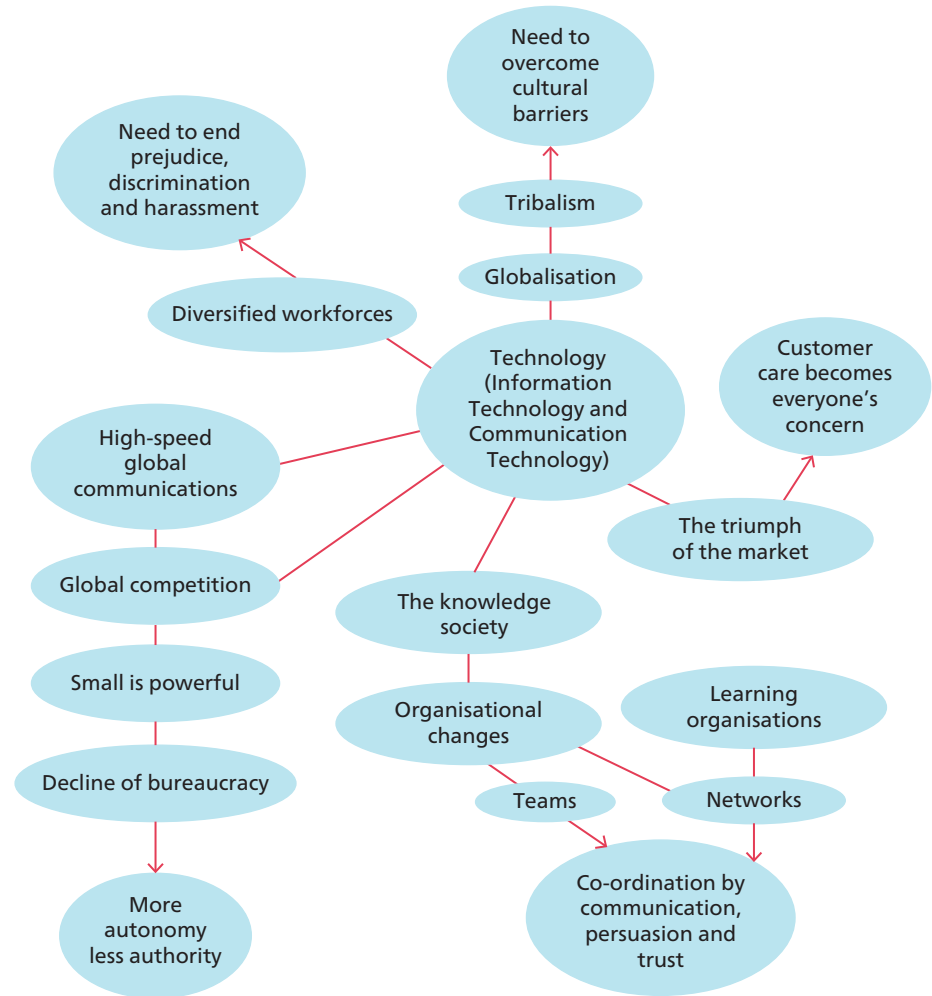


Figure 2 Factors bearing on the increased importance being placed on interpersonal skills at work

Source: Maureen Guirdham, *Interactive Behavior at Work*, 3rd edition, Financial Times Prentice Hall (2002), p. 8. Reprinted and electronically reproduced by permission of Pearson Education, Inc.

fast-changing world, the skills and capabilities of the workforce are vital to economic sustainability and growth. Workplace skills include the ability to:

- communicate with others;
- write and understand reports;
- perform numerical and analytical tasks;
- use computers to help solve problems.

Skills are important for both economic growth and prosperity, and for individuals and organisations. For the individual, skills determine their employment and earning potential. For organisations, skills are vital to meeting both current and future business demands. To be successful and competitive, businesses must ensure their talent and succession planning takes into consideration what skills need to be sourced, nurtured, developed and retained now, in order to create successful and productive workforces of the future.¹⁴

University education and employability

(The former) UKCES reports that higher education is well placed to play its part in helping to overcome the well-documented skills challenge. 'Collaborations between employers and universities have a significant role to play in providing the supply of highly skilled people to meet demand from businesses now and in the future.'¹⁵ GOV. UK refer to the need for a better connection to bridge the gap between education and work.¹⁶ The Prince's Trust also point out the human cost of skills shortages that could affect levels of productivity and morale among existing workforces.¹⁷

Reactive or proactive thinking and behaviour

Increasing competition, the pace of change and greater demands upon people at work has arguably led to more reactive thinking and behaviour. Many work situations of course require the ability to provide a quick and spontaneous response. There is however a danger of being caught too much by surprise and moving towards management by crisis. When you need to 'react' then this suggests you have lost the initiative.

By contrast, a proactive approach requires planned thought and anticipation of future events. *Edward de Bono* refers to proactive thinking as 'deliberate thinking' – this is not when we are driving or looking at documents sat at a desk or taking part in a discussion. Deliberate thinking means setting aside some time to do nothing other than thinking about a defined focus.¹⁸ To be proactive you need to see the bigger picture, think about what is likely to happen and react in advance. Developing the ability of proactive thinking takes time and is energy consuming. *Misselhorn* suggests the difficulty with being proactive is that most of our behaviour from habit, familiarity, established routines and procedures do not require us to be proactive. The quickest and easiest routine works most of the time.¹⁹



Do YOU see yourself as a proactive thinker? How important is it if colleagues are reactive or proactive thinkers so long as they contribute fully to the activities of the team?

The 'SCARF' model

David Rock suggests that 'more people than ever are being paid to think, instead of just doing routine tasks'. Based on neuroscience studies, Rock has proposed a model of five domains of human social experience. In the same way as the brain reacts to primary threats and rewards the same happens also to social situations.

The five social concerns that drive human behaviour are, our:

Status – relative importance to others

Certainty – ability to predict the future

Autonomy – sense of control over events

Relatedness – sense of safety with others

Fairness – perception of fair exchanges between people.²⁰

The aim of the model is interaction with other people in a way that minimises threats and maximises rewards. The five domains have clear relevance to the work situation discussed in later chapters, for example:

- position within the hierarchical structure and role relationships;
- clarity with expectations about your work and avoidance of stress;
- opportunities for autonomy and flexibility;
- interpersonal relationships and group working;
- the psychological contract.

You may find the SCARF model a useful framework of analysis and discussion as you proceed through your studies.

People management and social skills

Unlike technical or practical skills, social skills are more intangible. They are difficult to get a firm hold of, or to define and measure clearly. Social skills are often associated as 'soft skills' and regarded as a natural part of human behaviour. As a result, a common concern with attention to the skills shortage is lack of focus on people management, social skills and interpersonal behaviour. For example an important aspect of working with other people and leadership skills is an awareness and acceptance of individual differences and diversity.

Developing your employability skills

Increasingly, graduate recruiters are placing greater emphasis on key interpersonal and social skills, and attitudes. A first step in working harmoniously and effectively with other people is to know and understand yourself and the skill of self-management. Reflecting honestly on your personal strengths and weaknesses should help develop your level of competence. You cannot expect to influence the behaviour or actions of other people until you can effectively manage yourself. The continual development of employability skills as part of your university education and lifelong learning is important for:

- progressing your personal confidence and self-awareness;
- developing harmonious interpersonal relationships with colleagues and external contacts;
- initial attractiveness for appointment with a potential employer;
- maintaining a competent level of work performance;
- enhancing work motivation and job satisfaction; and
- helping to safeguard your career progression.

Many employers have structured programmes for the continued development of their staff. Your longer-term employment prospects will be enhanced when you are able to demonstrate a genuine and enthusiastic commitment to your own personal development.

Study as an aid to practice

Study is an aid to practice. A theme of this book is to provide an integrated view embracing both theory and practice. The ideas and concepts discussed provide you with opportunities to explore the underlying skills associated with the study of organisational behaviour.

As you progress through your studies, reflect upon what you have read and about the importance of social skills including:

- personal awareness and how you project yourself;
- openness to diversity, equality and inclusion;
- perceiving and understanding other people;
- written, verbal and non-verbal communications;
- social interactions with others and teamworking;
- personal organisation and time management;
- coping with change;
- coaching and mentoring; and
- working in a multicultural society.

Monitor and assess your development

It is recommended strongly that you maintain a portfolio of what you have learned, your personal development and the employability skills that you have attained or enhanced during your course of study. This can provide a useful basis of discussion with a potential employer. You may find it useful to assess progression of your personal skills and employability by reviewing your learning and development under the following broad headings, **see Figure 3**.

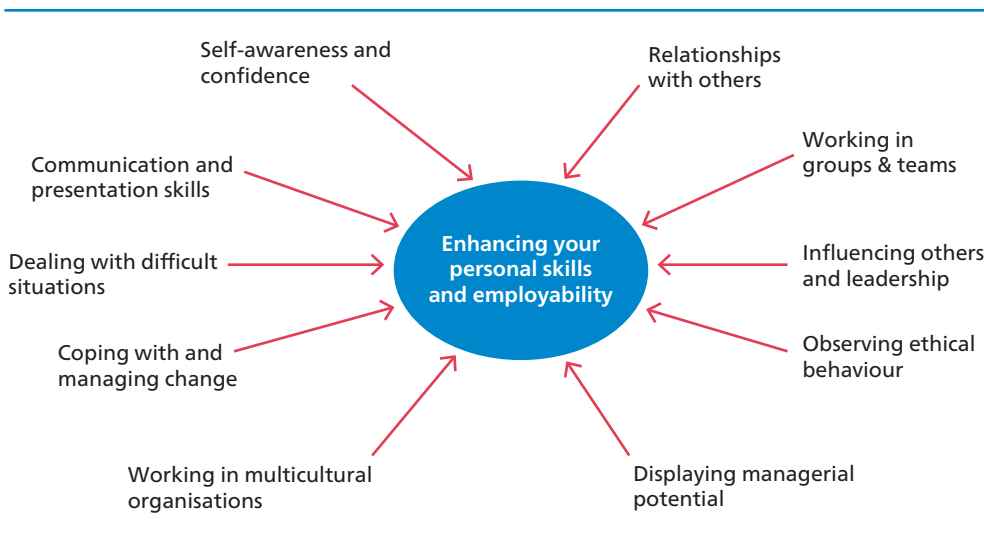


Figure 3 Broad headings for personal skills and employability

Making yourself more employable

Furnham points out educational qualifications are only one aspect of a person's assets they bring to the work situation and there are a number of other important fundamental issues considering a young person's employability. *Furnham* suggests five virtues employers want in all employees.

- Hardworking and productive, a conscientious work ethic, and to pitch up and pitch in. Honest, reliable and dependable.
- Smart, bright, curious, fast learners and not plodders. Inquisitive, widely read, interesting in understanding.
- Concept of rewardingness, warm and trustworthy, sensitive and well-adjusted, sociable and sufficiently altruistic.
- Signs of being leader-like, able to make decisions for which they are accountable and with good judgement. Taking initiative and the strain when it counts.
- Have the big picture and globally minded and who look ahead. Anticipate and adapt to the future without being a victim.

Some jobs require more than others and the desirable characteristics are not weighted equally but all five characteristics are important.²¹

Personal skills and employability exercise

Critical self-reflection is a positive activity that can challenge narrow preconceived thought processes, encourage creativity and provide a valuable personal learning and development experience.

At the end of each chapter is a 'Personal Skills and Employability Exercise'. This is designed to encourage you to think about further development of your social and work-based skills.

The appendix at the end of the book provides a review of features within the text that relate to employability skills. You are encouraged to ask yourself the extent to which you have enhanced your personal awareness and knowledge, and are better prepared to demonstrate your employability skills and aid your career progression.



How comfortable do YOU feel about the level of your future employability skills? How specifically do you hope to enhance your level of skills through the study of OB?

A summary of personal skills and employability is set out in the concept map, Figure 4.

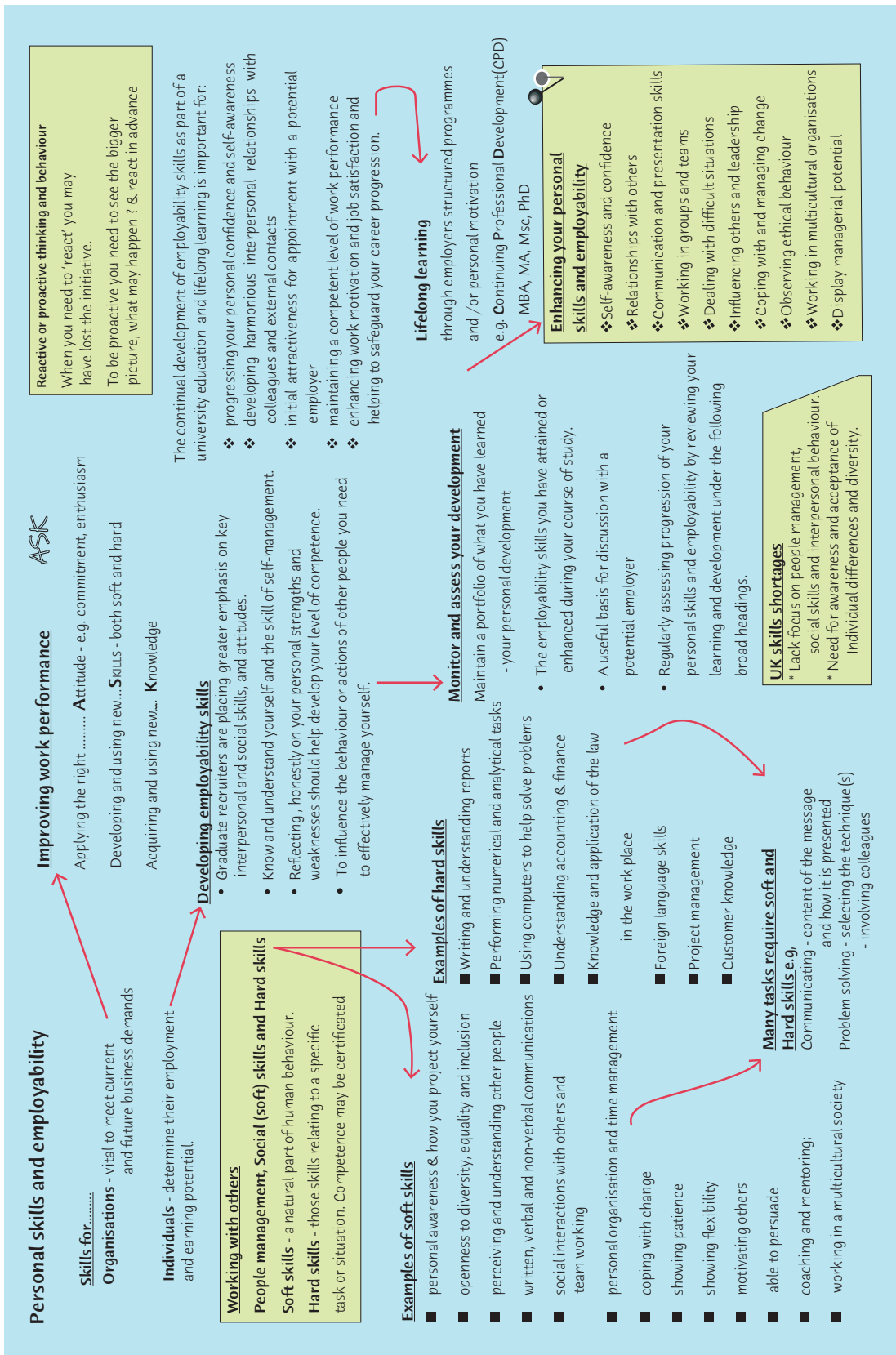


Figure 4 Personal skills and employability
Source: Copyright © 2018 The Virtual Learning Materials Workshop. Reproduced with permission.

Structure of the book

For those familiar with previous editions of *Management and Organisational Behaviour* the revised structure of this edition entails attention to re-ordering throughout the text. Focus is on the overall plan of the book and sequence of contents between and within chapters.

In response to reviewer feedback this edition provides a clearer focus on undergraduate students of organisational behaviour. Efforts have been made to provide a text of manageable size and enhanced readability.

There is a logical flow to the sequencing of topic areas which follow the accepted broad pattern of individual, group, organisation and environment. In addition to this chapter the book is structured in five sections with seventeen chapters all within a broadly similar word count.

Chapter 0 Your study of organisational behaviour



Part 1 Organisational behaviour and work

Chapter 1 The people-organisation relationship
Chapter 2 The work environment
Chapter 3 Organisational conflict and stress



Part 2 Focus on the individual

Chapter 4 Personality and diversity
Chapter 5 Learning and development
Chapter 6 Perception and communication
Chapter 7 Work motivation and satisfaction



Part 3 Focus on groups and leadership

Chapter 8 Working in groups and teams
Chapter 9 Leadership in work organisations
Chapter 10 Managing people at work



Part 4 Focus on the workplace

Chapter 11 Organisational theory and structure
Chapter 12 Patterns of structure and workplace design
Chapter 13 Technology in the workplace
Chapter 14 Organisational control and power



Part 5 Focus on organisational environment

Chapter 15 Organisational culture and change
Chapter 16 Strategy, corporate responsibility and ethics
Chapter 17 Organisational performance and effectiveness

Distinctive format

Each chapter of the book is self-contained **with appropriate cross-referencing to other chapters**. This provides a flexible approach. Selection and ordering of chapters can be varied to suit the demands of particular courses of study or individual interests.

The book is written with a minimum of technical terminology and the format is clearly structured. Each chapter is supported with illustrations and practical examples and contains:

- **learning outcomes and outline chapter contents** at the start of the chapter to help you see what you will be reading and monitor progress through the book;
- **overview topic map** provides a visual representation of flow of main contents and links with other chapters. The collection of maps may be helpful for study and revision purposes;
- **'You' critical review questions** throughout the text to encourage your own critical thinking and reflection of what you have just read;
- **pictorial concept map** provides a 'mind map' of an important topic featured in the chapter (you may find a similar idea helpful for your studies and revision);
- **summary of key points** as a reminder of the chapter contents and an aid to revision;
- **group discussion activities** to encourage critical review and feedback, and experience of small group discussions in an open and non-threatening environment;
- **organisational behaviour in action case study** gives valuable insights into a practical real world situation and with tasks to encourage further thoughts.
- **personal skills and employability exercise** with clear objectives to encourage you to think about the personal skills you will need in your future career;
- **Critical Thinking Zone** to encourage reflections on a particular topic in the chapter;
- **detailed notes and references** enable you to pursue further any issues of particular interest.

Words set in **colour** throughout the main text indicate inclusion in the **Glossary**.

Critical Thinking Zone

Reflections on The Shadow Side of Organisations



In this zone, we critically evaluate the shadow side of organisations and examine whether the covert, informal aspects of organisational behaviour enable or hinder the completion of day-to-day business activities.

An organisation houses a complex menagerie of individuals, each of whom has their own social constructions of reality, their own perceptions of, and commitment to, the workplace and the idiosyncratic roles they play within it. They also have their own set of norms, values, assumptions and, arguably, personal agendas, which may or may not be congruent with, or aligned to, the espoused culture and deeply ingrained way of doing things that have evolved over time.²² According to Linstead *et al.*,²³ these covert, hidden elements of the organisational iceberg metaphor²⁴ are often ignored, suppressed or overlooked by managers and the organisation at large because they are invisible, and therefore undiscussable, unmentionable

and elusive.^{25,26} These elements conflate to form the shadow side of the organisation.^{22,23,25}

Exploring the Shadow Side

The metaphor of the organisation possessing a shadow side was developed by Bowles²⁷ from the work of the eminent Swiss psychologist, Carl Jung. Jung's original thesis posited that everyone's personality has a shadow side (one of the four archetypes²⁸), which is a composite of subconscious positive and negative characteristics that are unacknowledged, repressed, buried deep in our psyche and thus hidden from ourselves and others.²² Arguably, recognising that we all have a Jungian shadow side enables us to understand how the metaphor can be applied in an organisational setting. Deeply entrenched social constructions and perceptions of reality, along with covert individual and collective assumptions, norms and values create and perpetuate shadow behaviours (such as the interplay of power and politics and enforcement

of personal ideologies and agendas²⁵) that are hidden within the organisation's metaphorical psyche.²⁷ Stacey²⁹ professes that the shadow coexists with the organisation's formal/legitimate system in a dynamic, covert, social, political and psychological melee. Both are in a constant state of flux and tension with each other and are maintained through a series of socially constructed negotiations and transactions that enable business activities to be undertaken²² and political deals to be brokered.²⁵

Life in the Shadows

Shadow behaviours are a fact of organisational life. They can be categorised as 'light' behaviours, which include corridor conversations, personality clashes and power struggles³⁰ and 'dark' behaviours, such as inappropriate absenteeism, suboptimal performance and bullying, which are injurious to both the organisation and individuals and may result in financial consequences.^{23,31} In studying these behaviours, it may be rather tempting for us to view the shadow as exclusively possessing negative traits that are potentially damaging to the organisation and its members. However, Egan²⁵ and Pheiffer *et al.*²² concur that the shadow can be a positive force and achieve things that the organisation's legitimate system cannot. *How* is this possible? Egan and Nicholls³⁰ suggest that the shadow can enable managers to perform their jobs more proficiently by engaging in 'accepted', though unconventional, behaviours (e.g. political game playing and wheeling and dealing) that are not an espoused part of the culture and therefore not sanctioned or endorsed by management. Furthermore, Egan and Nicholls proffer that the shadow initiates and effects change by enabling the status quo to be challenged and in doing so, unearths deep-rooted assumptions, values and beliefs that may be restricting the organisation from moving forward.

Can the Shadow be Managed?

Bowles and Linstead *et al.* concur that the shadow *cannot* be managed, due to its unmentionable, undiscussable and invisible nature. Further, Bowles caveats that any attempt to control it would not only be futile but also strengthen its fervour and drive it deeper into the organisation's metaphorical psyche. Ostensibly, the organisation is a social network, through which shadow behaviours such as gossip, rumours and the grapevine thrive and survive. According to Egan and Nicholls, the network is an informal, unofficial information-sharing medium that enables knowledge and other intel, which may otherwise be bound in red tape, to be disseminated throughout the organisation much faster than through official, legitimate

channels. From a managerial perspective, one can appreciate the desire to control shadow social network behaviours, particularly as they can be a double-edged sword, cutting through the bureaucracy on the one hand and sabotaging and opposing change programmes and strategic goals and objectives on the other. Rather than trying to manage or control the shadow, Nicholls advocates that managers should embrace it as an omnipresent cultural facet and part of established organisational behaviour in the workplace. Similarly, Pheiffer *et al.* suggest that appreciating the shadow's presence can help managers understand the nature of, in this instance, politically-motivated behaviours, and the ways in which they can be leveraged to help the organisation experience growth through change, especially if it is in a state of apathy or decline.³²

The Shadow: An Organisational Reality

To conclude, the shadow is an organisational reality that has the capacity to both enable and hinder the completion of day-to-day business activities. The shadow side of organisations is unlike any other system, procedure or process that can be measured, deconstructed and reconstructed, but its omnipresence can be felt at every level and in every aspect of organisational behaviour in the workplace. Arguably, the shadow is not wholly light or dark, but has shades of grey. In accommodating the grey areas, McCabe³³ advocates that it may provide organisations with a lens through which they can create new states of consciousness and, in turn, identify and utilise alternative ways to behave, organise and govern themselves in the dynamic, global business environment.

Questions

Having read the above, answer the following questions.

1. *Critically discuss* the most *significant* features of the organisational shadow. *What* implications do they have for organisational behaviour in the twenty-first century workplace?
2. Bowles suggests that any managerial attempts to control the shadow are futile. *To what extent* do you agree with his view?
3. *How* can a knowledge and appreciation of our personal shadow help us to understand the complexities and interplay of shadow behaviours in the workplace?

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