

**ORGANIZATIONAL  
BEHAVIOUR**  
AN INTRODUCTORY TEXT

**David A. Buchanan    Andrzej A. Huczynski**



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# **ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOUR**

## **AN INTRODUCTORY TEXT**

**David A. Buchanan    Andrzej A. Huczynski**  
University of Glasgow



ENGLEWOOD CLIFFS, NEW JERSEY    LONDON    MEXICO    NEW DELHI  
RIO DE JANEIRO    SINGAPORE    SYDNEY    TOKYO    TORONTO

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*British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data*

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Buchanan, David A.

*Organizational behaviour: an introductory text.*

1. Organizational behaviour

I. Title II. Huczynski, Andrzej

302.3'5 HD 58.7

ISBN 0-13-641069-3

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Prentice-Hall Hispanoamericana S.A Mexico

Prentice-Hall of India Private Ltd, New Delhi

Prentice Hall of Japan Inc., Tokyo

Prentice-Hall of Southeast Asia Pte Ltd, Singapore

Editora Prentice-Hall do Brasil Ltda, Rio de Janeiro

Printed and bound in Great Britain for

Prentice-Hall International (UK) Ltd.,

66 Wood Lane End, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire, HP2 4RG

by A. Wheaton & Co. Ltd., Exeter

## FOREWORD

Individuals learn about organizational behaviour mostly from their personal experience of organizations. They cannot avoid joining organizations. Having done so they must cope as best they may with sometimes capricious demands of bosses and adjust to what their peers say and do. The pursuit of valued personal aims in organizational settings and fulfilling obligations to respected others also play their part in the coping process. Given space to make choices and the courage to make them, the individual will also learn by experiencing the consequences of choosing. All these experiences provide raw material for generalizing about cause and effect; all individuals develop their own home made organization theories. We are all do-it-yourself social scientists. Even University social scientists behave in the University setting much as lay persons do. It is only as professional observers of organizations that they deploy to the full their tool-kit of methods of observation and theory building. We are all theorists of organizational behaviour because our mental and emotional balance depends on our making sense of and coping with our surroundings. We are also applied social "scientists" because our own organizational behaviour is driven to some extent by the theories we espouse, although it has been observed that some of us have "public theories" which we stress in conversation and argument, which are different from the, presumably, less reputable "private theories" that govern our actions. We sometimes change our theories when we see that they do not explain or predict events very well. More commonly, we derive personal comfort by attributing the unexpected to the moral, political or mental shortcomings of others. In this way our theories deteriorate into unsupported prejudices, less-than-wise 'saws' and dogmatic opinions.

Patently our organizations are far from being perfect instruments to accomplish the purposes for which they were intended. Since the theories of those who design and run them are learned by coping, one might expect that the attempts of professional social scientists to apply scientific rigour to the study of organizational behaviour would be welcomed universally. That is certainly not the case. The reasons are not hard to find. To the extent that the "discoveries" of social scientific enquiry resemble the learned prejudices and opinions of the practitioner, the latter may well judge that social science applied to organizations is the expensive and painstaking pursuit of the blindingly obvious. If the discoveries do not so correspond then they could be dismissed variously as "contrary to common sense", "impractical", "subverting of cherished values" or "political propaganda" - "pure jargon" or even as an

incomprehensible joke. My own experience is that the prejudices of many senior businessmen and Trade Unionists against academic social science still run very deep. The idea that social science findings should influence practice runs deeper still. We encounter the odd circumstance, or so it seems, that the systematic search for new knowledge about organizational behaviour, which is manifestly needed badly, is much less than warmly welcomed by those who could apply it with the prospect of improvement in the human condition, or whatever other valued ends they have in mind. The systematic collection of facts and opinions, social surveys as "raw material" for policy makers and as information for the interested citizen, is of course now commonplace. This is, however, far from accepting the construction which tested theoretical knowledge might put on such facts and opinions.

The authors of this book are not alone in remarking that the same scepticism does not arise in the case of the experimental sciences (such as physics) or in the case of science-based arts such as engineering, medicine and weather forecasting. The "wonders" of science as reflected in modern electronic information processing machines, manufacturing robots, deep sea oil exploitation and new healing drugs and treatments are readily judged as "good"; as further evidence of the acceleration and consolidation of mankind's conquest of nature and as creating wealth for further investment and consumption, actually and potentially adding to the material quality of life, to greater leisure and improved health. Examples of the disastrous economic and social concomitants of some scientific and technological advances, as in Concorde and some aspects of space exploration, are readily accepted as the inevitable price of progress.

Our social arrangements on the other hand, and especially those for the smooth absorption of technological change are full of conflict and inefficiency, as even a cursory glance at the media shows. We never speak of the "wonders" of social science. Management, which should surely be one of the arts based on social science is far from being so anywhere. There are of course exceptional managers who use social science findings and methods. Most managers are trained initially to be technologists, engineers, accountants and financiers. Such training as they might receive in psychology, social psychology and sociology is usually too short, too late and too dangerously superficial. Those managers whose professional bias is apparently to social science, eg personnel specialists, tend to be regarded not as expert advisors on the diagnosis and prognosis of organizational ills, but rather as dissolvers of organizational impediments to the pursuit of economic and technical goals, or tidiers of the human mess left by ill considered organizational decisions on economic, structural and procedural matters.

There are several plausible explanations for the pretty dismal failure of the social science of organizations to establish itself as a legitimate scientific endeavour, an acceptable basis for the art of management in whatever sphere (business, hospitals, trade unions, political parties, the Civil Service) and as part of the tool-kit of the well informed citizen.

In the first place the social sciences, like the experimental and applied sciences, have in their development spawned many specialisms and sub-specialisms, experimental psychology (which is more like the physical sciences), social psychology (where experiment is difficult), occupational psychology, cognitive psychology, psycho-analysis, macro-sociology, urban sociology, industrial/organizational sociology, social anthropology, cultural anthropology and so on. Each discipline develops its own academic networks, its own journals and jargon and insofar as its members are interested in behaviour in organizations, they look at those aspects of it which would enable them to make fresh discoveries within the boundaries of their sub-discipline, focussing on problems defined as central to it, and using and developing ideas, models and methods of investigation designed to advance knowledge of such problems. The audience for the reports of these discoveries and methods are mostly other researchers and eventually the students who will be taught from monographs, articles and textbooks containing knowledge which has been 'received' by the discipline. To the lay student (eg manager, or a Trade Union official; or the man in the street) the task of fitting the pieces together to arrive at a composite perspective on organizational behaviour, is almost impossible. It is difficult even for a specialist to keep up with what is going on in other specialisms whose field of study is behaviour in organizations. Small wonder they stick to their own DIY theories.

*Secondly*, the research has for the most part addressed itself to the empirical study of theoretical puzzles without much thought as to whether the solutions to the puzzles would cast light on difficulties and issues as experienced by practitioners. The social scientist should not I think attach himself to any one organizational group, managers for example, and take their problems (as they define them) as the sole object of investigation. Rather, he should define his own problems (puzzles) but try to ensure that as far as possible that they are recognizable as likely to throw light on the difficulties of practitioners, that the methods used to collect and process data are understandable and accessible and that the language in which the results are published is easily translated into practitioner parlance.

For example, one of the puzzles sociologists, social anthropologists and social psychologists, myself amongst them, have addressed is "why and in what circumstances do working groups tend to establish output norms regarded by others as restrictive?", and much is known now about this phenomenon. An associated problem/issue for managers, trade unionists, work group members could be "what would be the consequences of a unilateral attempt by management or unions where such norms exist and are considered restrictive to try to diminish worker control? What would happen if this were attempted by reorganizing the work, the technical layout, the procedures for allocating work and recording performance, and the pay system? Would these consequences be worth avoiding?" Faced with such an issue a knowledge of the research findings would enable focussed diagnostic questions to be asked and a course of action planned.

Another puzzle relates to technical innovation; "in what circumstances and for what reasons are technical innovations likely to be impeded in implementation by whom and at what cost to whom?". The associated issue/problem is "what would be the most effective way, given the circumstances, to organize the introduction of new technology in a way that minimizes the costs and maximizes the benefits to everyone involved?". In this case the seekers of solutions to the puzzle have also evolved systematic ways to resolve the issue - some of which have been tested in action. Reference is made to these in parts 4 and 5 of this book.

*Thirdly*, organizations themselves divide into specialisms and sub-specialisms, R & D, marketing and Sales, Purchasing, Finance and Accounting, Management services, Personnel, Manufacturing for example and within them, sub-specialisms like Production Planning and Control, home sales, overseas sales, project management and training and career planning, to name just a few that might exist in a medium to large manufacturing concern. Each of these professional activities is based on a body of knowledge useful in its application to the organization, each having its own procedures for advancing it and each having within it assumptions and theories about organization behaviour.

A production planner for example confronted with the perfectly reasonable idea that up-to-date knowledge of social psychology could be an essential part of his mental tool-kit might be puzzled to know why, since the out-of-date knowledge of social psychology that might be implicit in his professional behaviour seems to serve him very well and no-one that he respects is pressing him to change it. He might also have a view of organization which inclines him to the view that 'people problems' are of no concern to him but are the province of the senior management and the personnel specialist. To spread through and across the specialisms a common knowledge-based and continually updated approach to organizational behaviour is a different task and a lengthy and expensive one in which the calculable short-term costs are more sharply in focus than the possible long-term benefits.

For all these reasons it is best to introduce those who will work in organizations early in their professional training as engineers, accountants, scientists or whatever to the fields of knowledge which contribute to our understanding of organization with especial emphasis on the methods used to observe behaviour and to analyse it and to arrive at a conclusion. These can be the basis on which diagnostic questions can later be framed. Particular research findings are important but less so since these will be under greater challenge subsequently than the methods.

There are those to be found particularly amongst the designers of the professional curricula, who argue that the course time tables are already too crowded to admit more than a short superficial treatment of what 'after all is somebody else's professional stuff', and who also prefer to place such studies at the very end of a professional course as an add-on on the grounds that it is not easy to understand about organizational behaviour until one has reached some level of professional maturity: and that the methods of the professional

discipline must come first as well as the induction into the profession, its mysteries and its preservation.

That, to my mind is a mistaken view (I might add that I also believe that social science professionals should be introduced early to science and technology). It signals to the student what is important and what isn't and leads to the tendency mentioned in the text of this volume for scientists and engineers to regard the psychological and social sciences as less exact and less intellectually exacting. Any reader coming fresh to them via this book will find that this is very far from the truth.

Buchanan and Huczynski have done valuable service in giving teachers in higher education a text on which to base an introduction to organizational behaviour. They accurately report the research methods and findings of those social and psychological sciences which study organizational behaviour from every aspect and level - individual, group, organization - and match them to the issues that could well be of concern to the practitioner. The matter in this book should I think be presented in parallel with and not before or after professional studies and as far as possible integrated with them. The 'maturity' argument is spurious because even schoolboys "know" about organizations in the sense of having experience in some of them and so having something to start with.

One day the necessary task of developing a new comprehensive discipline of organizational behaviour which integrates the methods and findings of those disciplines which have something significant to say about it will be completed. It is encouraging that so many steps are now being taken in that direction. This book is one of them. It tackles the three obstacles to the acceptance of the social science of organization discussed above and unlike so many others, it has a special British, even Scottish, flavour both in its examples and in its encouragement of the participation of students in the process of learning, in itself a valuable skill for future work in organizations.

Tom Lupton  
Manchester Business School  
January 1985



## **Acknowledgements**

We would like to thank Dr E. A. Johns of Slough College of Higher Education and Giles Wright of Prentice-Hall for their consistently helpful and valuable comments and advice. We would also like to thank the other anonymous reviewers whose suggestions have enabled us to improve the text.

## Guide to the book

This book has three objectives:

1. To provide a basic introduction to the study of human behaviour in organizations for students with little or no previous social science education. This book is intended to serve as a starting point for further study in the area. We hope to stimulate interest in the subject and an enthusiasm for more knowledge.
2. To make the subject matter of social science applied to the study of organizations intelligible to students from various different backgrounds.
3. To confront and overcome the prejudice that some natural science, engineering and other professional groups of students hold regarding the importance and value of social science to their own spheres of activity.

This text is aimed primarily at readers new to organizational behaviour and to social science. Organizational behaviour is currently taught at various levels and on courses where the main subjects are not social sciences. Accountants, lawyers, engineers, teachers, architects, data processing specialists, personnel managers, bankers, hoteliers, surveyors and nurses, for example, often have no background in social science, but find themselves studying organizational behaviour as part of professional examination schemes.

We have written this book mainly for British students, but have tried to stimulate awareness of the cultural and political factors that affect the applicability of social science research findings across cultures. Most texts in this field are American, and the American contribution to the field has been great. But American experience does not always travel well to other parts of the world. Social science theories can be culture bound in ways that natural science cannot be, as laws and traditions vary from country to country.

We have written this book from a multidisciplinary social science perspective. Our understanding of organizations is derived from several social science disciplines. Most organizational behaviour texts adopt either a managerial or a sociological perspective. Our readers are not all going to be managers or sociologists, and many people beyond these two occupations need an understanding of organizational behaviour. If one is going to work for, work with, resist or subvert organizations, then one needs to know why and how they exist and function.

We have used a format and style more structured than commonly found in applied social science texts. Each chapter begins with a list of the key concepts to be covered, and a set of objectives for readers to achieve. The aim of these

features is to encourage an active approach to the text. We have attempted to make the book interesting by using novel, varied and unusual material. Examples, illustrations, exercises and cases are used to break up the pace, rhythm and appearance of the text and make it more digestible. We hope to challenge readers by inviting them to confront real, practical and theoretical problems and issues for themselves. Readers are invited at several points throughout the text to stop reading and to consider controversial points, individually or in group discussion.

The style and content of the book reflect the teaching approaches that we use in our own courses in organizational behaviour. We would not teach to a text like this, but teach *from* it. We expect that this text will be used:

1. To introduce basic concepts and theories to students beginning their study of social science and organizational behaviour, to enable them to turn more quickly to specialized and advanced texts in the field.
2. As a basis for discussion. Many of the issues covered are controversial, and we have in general avoided presenting personal or popular resolutions. There are no "right answers" to organizational behaviour questions. We have throughout the text presented contrasting perspectives and ways of thinking about the issues involved.

We have attempted to avoid jargon, and to explain terms clearly where appropriate. Ideas and theories build systematically through the text, from individual psychology, through group social psychology, to organizational sociology and politics. Each chapter attempts to cover practical as well as theoretical ground, to demonstrate the practical relevance and use of social science ideas. Theories and concepts are not simply presented here in an academic vacuum.

Each chapter is self contained. The understanding of one is not dependent on a prior reading of others, although in practice the topics are closely interrelated. The book can be used as the basis of a one year course which covers two parts of the book a term for the first two terms and one part in the third (summer) term. The material does not however have to be covered in the sequence in which it appears in the text, and individual lecturers may wish not to cover some of the material that is introduced here.

We have listed at the end of each chapter the main sources that we have found useful in understanding the topic covered and in writing the chapter. The needs and interests of the teachers and students who will use this book are likely to be wide. We leave to them the responsibilities for selecting and consulting further works.

David A. Buchanan  
Andrzej A. Huczynski  
Glasgow, 1985

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