



Chapter 1

Introduction: A New Model of Learning Blending Employability Skills, International Focus and Multimedia Elements

Michael Butler and Ed Rose



A free sample chapter from *Introduction to Organisational Behaviour*
Edited by **Michael Butler** and **Edward Rose**
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Key Learning Outcomes

By the end of this chapter you should be able to:

- state the benefits of reading this textbook and introduce a new model of learning, blending employability skills, international focus and multimedia elements
- understand why we have focused on employability skills
- relate employability skills to an international focus
- utilise the multimedia elements of the chapters
- be ready and energised to read the book.

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Introduction: a new model of learning

Confronted with a crowded selection of organisational behaviour textbooks, you may wonder why you should choose this one. The editors believe that this book addresses a significant gap in the market. Today's undergraduates face tremendous competition for jobs and need to set themselves apart from their rivals who, in today's marketplace, could be from anywhere in the world. A new organisational behaviour textbook must be relevant to the modern generation of students. This book focuses on three unique selling points which will help students to transition into the workplace and to improve their learning:

- It improves students' prospects for employability in a competitive work environment by emphasising the development of key skills.
- It relates employability skills to an international focus, given the mobility within the global workplace.
- It enhances the learning experience by integrating the textbook with a wide range of innovative online materials to help modern and sophisticated students to learn in a way that suits their approach to study.

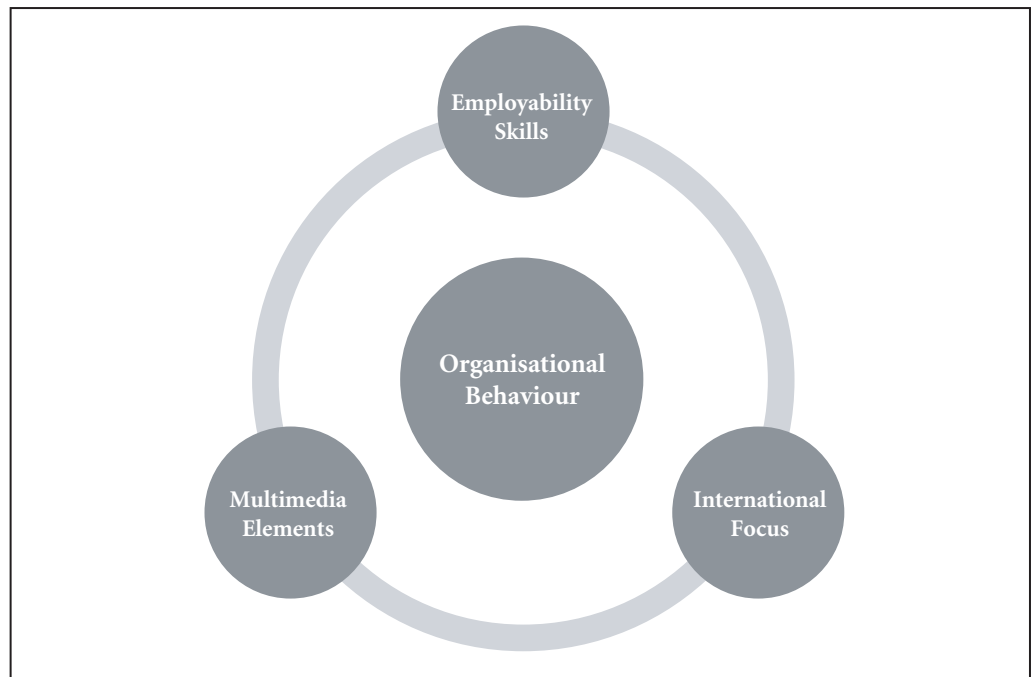
The three unique selling points lie at the heart of the publication strategy of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD). This is why the editors saw a unique opportunity and synergy between our aspirations and their practical achievement through the CIPD and this book. The partnership also brings a more creative, interactive and visual approach to the presentation of ideas about organisational behaviour.

Blending improving employability skills with adopting an international focus and integrating multimedia elements is a new learning model, which clearly differentiates this textbook from rival books (Figure 1.1). It is important to be aware that Coffield (2000) points out that there are a range of learning models – Coffield (2000) identifies 10. The focus is on employability skills because of the growing consensus that the issue has to be addressed within higher education, especially its interconnections with global ideas about how to manage and lead, all underpinned by recent research on pedagogy in learning and teaching. All these issues are discussed in the following sections.

Because organisational behaviour is core to virtually all undergraduate business degrees, there are a number of topics that must be included as standard, and the textbook reflects this. Nevertheless, we are enhancing the reader experience by introducing contemporary real-world issues – the new learning model. In tackling core topics and up-to-date issues, we assume that students have no prior knowledge of organisational behaviour. Authors use clear explanations to get students started, although they do engage with critical debates in order to get students thinking analytically.

To expand on the intended approach and level of the book: it moves student discussion from A-level standard – or the international equivalent – to provide a balance between a managerialist approach and an employee perspective. Both approaches are subject to critical evaluation – that is to say, a weighing up of the strengths and weaknesses of the approaches and how they might privilege certain world views which should not necessarily be taken for granted. 'Bottom-up' analysis is included in the relevant chapters. One example is how the managerialist approach might disenfranchise certain social groups – for instance, women senior managers. A further example would relate to conflict as perceived by both employer and worker.

Figure 1.1 A new model of learning, blending employability skills, international focus and multimedia elements



The book does not include separate chapters on human resource management (HRM). However, the obvious links between organisational behaviour and HRM are highlighted as appropriate throughout the text.

The issues of employability skills, international focus and multimedia integration are discussed in more detail below.

EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS

Employability is a hot topic from all points of view – the teachers', the students', the employers' and recent government policy, whether devised by parties on the right or the left of politics. In 2009, the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) – one of the UK's government departments – issued a policy document titled *Higher Ambitions*, which seeks to clarify the future of universities in a knowledge economy and is already being widely implemented in higher education (Butler, 2010). *Higher Ambitions'* clear aim is on improving employability skills (BIS, 2009: 4):

In order to attract a greater diversity of students, more part-time study, more vocationally-based foundation degrees, more work-based study and more study whilst living at home must be made available. This is a core aim of these proposals, and our wider skills strategy.

Employers believe that universities ought to develop the employability skills of students (Cassidy, 2006). This is because they perceive that future graduates will overcome the relative lack of managerial and technical skills in the workplace (Wilton, 2008). Students also target skills development, expecting the teaching of professional skills to enhance their employability (Connor and Shaw, 2008). Such unified activity has contributed to 'institutional improvement that enhanced student learning and involved faculty development' (Hurtado, 2009: 28).

The underpinning philosophy of our book is to focus on employability skills, defined as the development of future managers and leaders who realise that managing is about getting

things done through other people. More specifically, managing and leading people involves understanding individual needs, integrating people in effective teams, so that they achieve organisational goals. Leading and managing change takes place in all types of organisations, whether private, public or in the third sector – for example, non-government organisations (NGOs) – or UK- or globally based.

The book endeavours to develop future managers and leaders who may often operate within environmentally challenging contexts and who therefore require a secure foundation of relevant knowledge that can be used as they build their career. The knowledge provided by the book and acquired by the student can be deployed through the development of relevant skills and practice. Established theory is linked to emerging research, and the practical implications of this for organisational behaviour are explored.

Employability skills are specifically addressed through exploring the textbook's learning features and by linking organisational behaviour to key skills. Through these features we seek to improve students' prospects for employability by making them more competitive, when compared with other students.

Textbook learning features

Each chapter includes the following learning features:

- Case problem boxes – Each chapter starts with a case problem ('Practitioner insight') box, in which a practitioner describes a real-life organisational challenge. Students are invited to read the chapter and then go back and decide how they would approach this situation themselves, utilising the ideas they have learned during the chapter.
- Review questions – These are designed for students to assess their understanding of the central themes, including employability skills, within a chapter.
- Discussion questions – In order to consolidate critical thinking skills, authors ask review and discussion questions: these are for students to respond to on their own or as part of a team because the capacity to move between individual and teamworking is a central business and organisational competence in modern workplaces.
- Identifying ethical implications boxes – In light of the growth of corporate governance as a central concern for organisations and business schools, especially in the wake of the contemporary financial crisis and retrenchment management, each author addresses ethics in the context of the chapter content.
- Applying theory to practice boxes – These are up-to-date examples of organisational practice to illustrate the link between theory and practice.
- Taking your learning further boxes – Authors suggest seminal papers and books to extend students' reading (with links to the seminal papers on the website); these include examples related to employability.
- Best and worst organisational practice boxes.

Linking organisational behaviour and key skills

An essential part of delivering the new learning model is to link organisational behaviour and key skills. Cotton (2001) argues that although employers are in general pleased with the technical skills of new graduates, they are less persuaded that the non-technical skills are at high standards – for example, teamworking, problem-solving, communication and attitude to work (Connor and Shaw, 2008).

Practitioners like David Farnham (Farnham and Smith, 2005), a CIPD Chief Examiner, echo Cotton's (2001) academic argument. Farnham notes that CIPD professional standards require students both to have knowledge of the subject and to demonstrate a critical understanding of

what they have learned, revealed through explanation, analysis and evaluation. Indeed, nurturing critical minds is part of a high-quality higher education (HE) experience (Malcolm, 2009) because ‘higher skills are keys to social mobility . . . as well as one of competitiveness’ (Lord Mandelson, 2009). Critical understanding is used by HR managers to deliver business performance, as expressed by Sacha Romanovitch, Head of People and Culture, Grant Thornton (2009: 39):

In an increasingly service-oriented economy the differentiation for a business usually comes down to its people. To provide an outstanding service to its clients any business needs to recruit and retain the best people – promoting and creating an effective working environment.

The focus in this textbook is on generic and transferable skills.

Drawing on this work, the editors selected the key skills in the list below to be addressed by the contributing authors:

- creative skills
- developing critical thinking skills
- emotional intelligence, empathy, sympathy and listening
- leadership, coaching and mentoring
- making presentations
- negotiating, arbitration and conflict resolution skills
- personal development planning
- professional judgement, decision-making and problem-solving
- reflective learning
- social responsibility
- teamworking
- time management.

Each chapter ends with some tips on how the topic could be linked to the skills, outlining why each skill is important, and giving some advice on how to develop this skill. The website includes activities for these skills. Not every chapter relates to every skill, but by the end of the book, all the skills have been discussed. The list is not exhaustive, but does help students in their quest to manage and lead people effectively, as individuals, in teams, or in an organisation.

INTERNATIONAL FOCUS

We have made a deliberate choice to have an international focus because of the mobility within the global workplace. Mintzberg and Gosling (2002) argue that in educating future managers and leaders, it is important to break down borders. For them, education goes beyond globalisation. They say: ‘To broaden people beyond geographic borders means not only to teach about globalisation, but also to provide a truly balanced international experience’ (Mintzberg and Gosling, 2002: 67). This is part of the reason why a Master’s programme they run operates in five different business schools. The International Master’s Programme in Practising Management (IMPM) (www.ipm.org) operates in the Indian Institute of Management, INSEAD, Lancaster University School of Management, McGill and a collaboration of faculties from Japan and Korea.

Mintzberg and Gosling (2002) also break down borders in a way that supports the previous arguments about employability skills. Educating managers and leaders goes beyond teaching: ‘Learning occurs where concepts meet experiences through reflection’ (Mintzberg and Gosling

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2002: 66). This is a blended strategy in which formalised knowledge is linked to personal experience by confronting old beliefs with new ideas – a process enhanced by collaboration.

One of the editors, Butler (2008), developed the ideas of Mintzberg and Gosling (2002) by writing a personal case history of a visit to Harvard Business School in which he enquired how a lecturer keeps learning about teaching as a quality assurance process to improve learning and teaching. He proposed ‘six activities of reflective imagination’ as a means of keeping learning:

- Question educational processes.
- Review the international dimension (as a means to critique the educational process by looking for alternative and world-class good practice).
- Link concepts and experiences.
- Know yourself by changing routines.
- Return to how educational processes can be improved.
- Use imagination to create and convey insights.

In this book there are examples of multinational organisations and organisations that operate in other countries. There are also discussions of established Western economies and developing emerging countries.

Examples of how we achieve an international focus are:

- drawing on international authors who are experts in their field
- using international case studies – this is a direct consequence of having a wide range of authors
- highlighting the need for cultural sensitivity to avoid miscommunication in interpersonal interactions.

A good example is Chapter 11 on *Decision-making*. One of the co-authors, Keith Bezant-Niblett, is an Assistant Director at the James B. Henry Center for Executive Development, the Eli Broad Graduate School of Management, Michigan State University, USA. He was able to source a case study about Nathan M. Bisk, Chairman of Bisk Education, who built up an organisation in the USA that has become a world leader in online education. Because of this international perspective within the chapter, the chapter goes on to consider the cultural context of decision-making. The authors are a product of European and North American traditions, and as a consequence the concepts selected for the chapter reflect those traditions, although their application is global.

MULTIMEDIA INTEGRATION

The editors are aware of the changing needs of students, and our ability to improve their international employability can only be nurtured by helping modern and sophisticated students to learn in a way which suits their approach to study. Together with the CIPD, the editors decided that the best way to share contemporary ideas about organisational behaviour is through both the standard textbook format and by integrating it with digital media, thus creating a multimedia approach – a blended strategy. In doing so we are joining a growing international trend (Senior, Butler, Wood and Reddy, 2009).

In 1998, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching in the USA commissioned an investigation into the current state of undergraduate teaching in the United States, headed up by the then President of the Carnegie Foundation, Professor Ernest Boyer. In terms of this textbook, the five-year investigation advocated using information technology creatively, arguing that undergraduate students should use (and also be exposed to the creative use of) technological advancements – competent graduates need more than just a working knowledge of standard software packages (Boyer, 1997: 5). The Boyer Report met with mixed success. It has ‘done a lot

of interesting things' but the agenda for change had not become 'part of the real value system of research universities, and it's really time to do something about it' (Wilson, 1998: 13).

Similar issues are facing the UK. Many undergraduate students embrace information technology to such an extent that they are described as 'digital natives', compared to their teachers who are termed 'digital immigrants' (Prensky, 2001). At the Technologies in Learning and Teaching Conference (TILT 2008), Sir David Watson (Director, Institute of Education) stressed that the need for the digital natives to develop a broad collection of skills that had employment value was probably the single biggest factor affecting the higher education sector.

The digital native student enters the higher education sector with an 'information-age mindset' (Frاند, 2000: 15) and has distinctive characteristics. Workstations are no longer libraries, although they are used, but also mobile phones because they have the ability to access the Internet from any place on Earth. As with computer games, many students want to learn by constant trial and error, by testing out their learning online as often as they want. This approach is anathema to the digital immigrant, who is used to poring over books and instruction manuals before starting a task. Multitasking is a way of life and may occur at every level of the students' day. For example, they may text questions regarding a lecture or coursework to their peers while at work, and they use social networking sites to create study groups – the singular mode of information transfer is simply inefficient.

We view learning and teaching as a symbiotic relationship between the teacher and the learner, and the book – with its supplementary resources – underpins this relationship by addressing the needs of the digital native student. The book includes a number of innovative learning features that will engage students. We note below the teacher and student resources which accompany each chapter, and highlight the videoed practitioner interviews and access to CIPD resources.

Teacher resources

Each chapter is supported by a range of online teacher resources, although the specific numbers of each item might vary according to the learning needs identified by individual authors:

- 10 PowerPoint lecture slides including figures and tables from the book
- 20 test bank questions
- 3 tutorial activities
- answers to the discussion questions in each chapter
- 2 additional case studies – one long, one short – each accompanied by questions and solutions
- 3 additional assignment questions.

The editors are aware that different teachers have different needs. Teachers who have just started teaching organisational behaviour and who would like as much support as possible could use the lecture slides, the test bank questions, the tutorial activities and the answers to the discussion questions. In other words, the website offers resources to help to teach an organisational behaviour module from scratch.

Teachers who have taught organisational behaviour before and have already developed a range of their own teaching resources might find additional resources that they can add to their own. The additional case studies and assignment questions help in these circumstances.

Student resources

Within and at the end of each chapter, in order to consolidate student learning, there are a range of student resources, taking a multimedia approach. Again, the specific numbers of each item might vary to match the different learning aims and objectives of the chapters:

- 5 review questions
- 5 discussion questions
- between 5 and 10 annotated suggestions for further reading (books or articles)
- 1,000 words on how the topic relates to different key skills
- an Ethical implications box
- Applying theory to practice boxes
- Taking your learning further boxes
- Best and worse practice boxes – one of each
- 3 to 4 web links to seminal papers
- 3 to 4 other web links, including to YouTube.

At the end of the book, listed by chapter, are glossary terms relevant to each chapter, and references for students' assignment writing and further reading.

Videod practitioner interviews

Perhaps the most innovative feature is the videod practitioner interviews which can be accessed online to make teaching more interactive and experiential. It has already been noted that each chapter starts with a case problem ('Practitioner insight') box, in which a practitioner describes a real-life organisational challenge. Not only can students read the chapter and then go back and decide how they would approach the described situation themselves, but during a lecture or tutorial activity, the teacher can ask the students for ideas and solutions and then show them a short 10-minute video linked to each chapter. These videos are interviews with the practitioners featured in the chapter. The practitioner explains how he or she actually did deal with the organisational challenge. The video interviews are also available as Word files.

The interviews connect students directly with the world of work because they are examples taken from real organisational life. By 'practitioner' we mean anyone participating in organisational activities. They can be from any function, at any level, and comprise any stakeholders within and between organisations, including customers, service users or people browsing the websites of organisations they might buy from.

The interviews connect with a student's current experience. Examples are from organisations, products, services and brands that they can relate to. There are also examples from outside organisational settings.

Because the textbook is published by the CIPD, in addition to the videod practitioner interviews, we have had access to the CIPD's research publications and recent issues of *People Management* so that they can be incorporated without the usual permissions fees into the chapters. We have also had access to key skills video clips.

Conclusion: the next steps

This chapter has focused on the three unique selling points of the textbook – blending employability skills, international focus and multimedia integration – to propose a new model of learning. These benefits will help students to transition into the workplace and to improve their learning.

By adopting employability skills and its associated strategies as a learning model, it is anticipated that student conceptions of learning will move more quickly to being a sophisticated approach to study (Butler and Reddy, 2010; Butler, 2010). Drawing on ideas about deep and surface

learning (Entwistle, 1990; Martin and Saljo, 1976), if students have a sophisticated conception of learning, knowledge and evidence, they adopt a deep approach in order to reach their own understanding of material and ideas. If students have an unsophisticated conception, they adopt a superficial approach and memorise or acquire facts in order to merely meet course requirements or to respond to external influences.

We hope that you are now ready and energised to read more chapters.

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