Chapter 8

Putting Across Tangibility: Effectiveness of Case-Study-Based Teaching of Organisational Behaviour

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ABSTRACT

This chapter examines a case study-approach to teaching organisational behaviour. It explains the effectiveness of the use of case study in teaching the subject which is often termed theoretical and complex. The chapter advocates that the use of real life organisational cases can make the learning and teaching process more tangible and contribute to the development of critical thinking. The chapter specifically supports the view that there are aspects of organisational behaviour that are visible in both everyday life of individuals and groups. If lecturers could bring this up in the delivery of the OB curriculum, the learners, who are future managers and supervisors, could connect the learning experiences to reality, which could lead them to a better academic understanding and later effective practitioners.

INTRODUCTION

Organisational Behaviour (OB) is a critical management discipline now increasingly taught at various levels in the college and university curricula. Unlike other social science disciplines such as sociology and psychology, for which OB draws much of its theoretical foundations, Organisational Behaviour is relatively recent on the college curriculum agenda. However, it has risen to some prominence due to the higher status gained in recent years by business and management studies within
which it sits. There is a growing interest in the field and that can be perceived when one considers the growing number of degrees in universities and colleges that offer OB as a core module. Despite the growing availability of OB in curricula at both college and university levels, there is some apprehension about the subject due to the perceived theoretical aspects (Tambyah, 2008). The practical applications of the disciplines are often shadowed by the extensive coverage of theoretical perspectives (Sowmya, n.d.). It is evident that there is a drive to demonstrate that OB meets the criteria for eligibility as a valid social science field. Nonetheless, it must not be disremembered that the subject has a strong and close link to industry; thus, there is also pressure to make the field and its teaching relevant to industry. This pressure is particularly plausible in an era with heightened emphasis on skills development, careers and employability (Coe et al., 2014). Employability has been on higher education curricula and frameworks for several years, particularly in the UK and the United States (Mason, Williams and Cranmer, 2006). In the UK, university and college rankings are not based solely on teaching quality and research but also on graduate employment figures. This pressure signifies that a greater preparation of the graduates through a synergy between the curriculum and the world of work is necessitated. An approach for achieving a balance between pure academic interests and the needs of industry is to operationalise the teaching of Organisational Behaviour using a case-study based approach to teaching. Such an approach provides insights into real life organisational issues and exemplifies behaviours at work in firms and creates a framework for problem-based learning. Organisational Behaviour as a subject that looks at human behaviour and interactions at work is strategically placed to achieve a significant increase in graduate employability by adopting a strategy to connect the students and the world of work at an early stage. Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2004) posit that education is context specific and delivery and outcomes must fit that context. Modern higher education is situated in an economic context that emphasises tangibility, skills and interpersonal attributes, which are largely human attributes embedded in the Organisational Behaviour discipline.

This chapter examines current issues in the teaching of the topic of OB, and the accessibility of its knowledge base to the diversity of learners involved. The chapter additionally explores the contours of a case-study or problem-based approach to delivering the Organisational Behaviour curriculum that fulfils the employability agenda as well as strengthening the critical thinking and reflexivity among learners. The chapter considers how the OB curriculum could utilise existing technological potentials to create a rewarding experience in which both teachers and learners engage the wider landscape of stakeholders.
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