ABSTRACT

Mullins (2005) defines organisational behaviour as the study and understanding of individual and group behaviour and patterns of structure in order to help improve organisational performance and effectiveness. Cole (1998) states that organisational behaviour is a term applied to the systematic study of the behaviour of individuals within work groups, including an analysis of the nature of groups, the development of structures between and within groups and the process of implementing change.

The definitions indicate that the principal issues addressed by organisational behaviour are:

• Individual behaviour and performance at work;
• The nature and working of people in groups;
• The nature of social structures and organisation design at work;
• The processes involved in adapting behaviour to meet changing conditions.

There is close relationship between organisational behaviour and management theory and practice. Some writers suggest that organisational behaviour and management are synonymous, but this is something of an over-simplification because there are many broader facts to management.

Key Words: organizational behaviour, external environment, individual behaviour, sociological approach, organizational culture.

INTRODUCTION

The variable outlined above provides parameters within which a number of interrelated dimensions can be identified – the individual, the group, the organization and the environment – which collectively influence behaviour in work organizations.

Organizations are made up of their individual members. The individual is a central feature of organisational behaviour and a necessary part of any behavioural situation, whether acting in isolation or as part of a group, in response to expectations of the organisation, or as a result of the influences of the external environment. Where the needs of the individual and the demands of the organisation are incompatible, this can result in frustration and conflict. It is the task of management to integrate the individual and the organisation, and to provide a working environment which permits the satisfaction of individual needs as well as the attainment of organisational goals.

The Group

Groups exist in all organisations and are essential to their working and performance. The organisation comprises groups of people and almost everyone in an
organisation will be a member of one or more groups. Informal groups arise from the social needs of people within the organisation. People in groups influence each other in many ways, and groups may develop their own hierarchies and leaders. Group pressures can have a major influence over the behaviour and performance of individual members. An understanding of group structure and behaviour complements knowledge of individual behaviour and adds a further dimension to organisational behaviour.

THE ORGANISATION

Individuals and groups interact within the structure of the formal organisation. Structure is created by management to establish relationships between individuals and groups, to provide order and systems and to direct the efforts of the organisation into goal-seeking activities. It is through the formal structure that people carry out their organisational activities in order to achieve aims and objectives. Behaviour is affected by patterns of organisational structure, technology, styles of leadership and systems of management through which organisational processes are planned, directed and controlled. The focus of attention, therefore, is on the impact of organisational structure and design, and patterns of management, on the behaviour of people within the organisation. For example, McPhee (1996) refers to the growth in the nature and importance of organisational structures and their essence, and for greater emphasis, on business-to-business (B2B) depth or group interviewing as part of an insight into business and organisational behaviour.

ENVIRONMENT

The organisation functions as part of the broader external environment of which it is a part. The environment affects the organisation through, for example, technological and scientific development, economic activity, social and cultural influences and governmental actions, the effects of the operation of the organisation within its environment reflect in terms of the management of opportunities and risks and the successful achievement of its aims and objectives. The increasing rate of change in environmental factors has highlighted the need to study the total organisation and the processes by which the organisation attempts to adapt to the external demands placed upon it. Increasing globalisation means that organisations must respond to different market demands and local requirements. Globalisation impacts on organisational behaviour, and places greater emphasis on processes within organisations rather than functions of the organisation.

APPROACHES TO ORGANISATIONAL BEHAVIOUR

These different dimensions provide contrasting but related approaches to the understanding of human behaviour in organisations. They present a number of alternative pathways for the study of subject and level of analysis. It is possible, for example, to adopt a psychological approach with the main emphasis on the individuals of which the organisation is comprised. Psychological aspects are important but, by themselves,
provide too narrow an approach for the understanding of management and organisational behaviour.

It is also possible to adopt a sociological approach concerned with a broader emphasis on human behaviour in society. Sociological aspects can be important. A number of sociology writers seem set on the purpose of criticising traditional views of organisation and management.

The study of behaviour can be viewed in terms of three main disciplines - psychology, sociology and anthropology. All three disciplines have made an important contribution to the field of organisational behaviour.

Psychologists are concerned, broadly speaking, with the study of human behaviour, with traits of the individual and membership of small social groups. The main focus of attention is on the individual as a whole person, or what can be termed the ‘personality system’, including, for example, perception, attitudes and motives.

Sociologists are more concerned with the study of social behaviour, relationships among social groups and societies, and the maintenance of order. The main focus attention is on analysis of social structures and positions in those structures - for example, the relationship between the behaviour of leaders and followers.

Anthropologists are more concerned with the science of mankind and the study of human behaviour as a whole. As far as organisational behaviour is concerned, the main focus of attention is on the cultural system, the beliefs, customers, ideas and values within a group and the comparison of behaviour among different cultures - for example, the importance of Muslim women wearing trousers to work. People learn to depend on their culture to give them security and stability, and they can suffer adverse reactions to unfamiliar environments.

The contribution of relevant aspects of psychology, social and anthropology aid our understanding of the behaviour of people in work organisations, and underpin the field of organisational behaviour. Behavioural science attempts to structure organisations in order to secure the optimum working environment. It is concerned with reconciling the needs of the organisation for the contribution of maximum productivity, with the needs of individuals and the realisation of their potential. Emphasis is on the application of relevant aspects of psychological and sociological theory and practice, and cultural influences, to problems of organisation and management in the work situation.

In terms of the applications of behavioural science to the management of people, we need also to consider the relevance and applications of philosophy, ethics and the law.

ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

Psychologists say that every individual has what they call personality. An individual personality is made up of a set of relatively permanent and stable traits. When we describe someone as warm, innovative, relaxed or conservative, we are describing personality traits. An organisation, too, has personality which we call its culture.

Organisational culture is a system of shared meaning within an organisation that determines, in large degree, how employees act (Robbins and Coulter, 1996). Organisational culture represents a common perception held by the organisation’s employees. Just as tribal cultures have rules and taboos that dictate how members act toward one another and outsiders, organisations have cultures that govern how their
employees should behave. In every organisation, there are systems or patterns of values, symbols, rituals, myths and practices that have evolved over time. These shared values determine, in large degree, what employees see and how they respond to their world. When confronted with a problem, the organisational culture restricts what employees can do by suggesting the correct way with which the organisation solves the problem.

Research suggests that there are seven dimensions that, in aggregate, capture the essence of an organisation’s culture. The dimensions are: -

- **Innovation and risk taking:**
The degree to which employees are encouraged to be innovative and to take risks.
- **Attention to detail:**
The degree to which employees are expected to exhibit precision, analysis and attention.
- **Outcome orientation:**
The degree to which managers focus on the result or outcomes rather than on the techniques and processes used to achieve those outcomes.
- **People orientation:**
The degree to which management decisions take into consideration the effect of outcomes on people with the organisation.
- **Team orientation:**
The degree to which work activities are organised around teams rather than individuals.
- **Aggressiveness:**
The degree to which people are aggressive and competitive rather than easy-going.
- **Stability:**
The degree to which organisational activities emphasise the maintaining of the status quo.

However, organisations differ from one to another on the strength of their cultures. Organisations with strong cultures have key values which are intensely held and widely shared. Such organisations have greater influence on employees than do those with the weak cultures. The more employees accept the organisation’s key values and the greater their commitment to those values, the stronger the culture is. Whether an organisation’s culture is strong, weak or somewhere in between, depends on factors such as the size of the organisation, how long it has been around, how much turnover there has been among employees and the intensity with which the culture was originated. One study of organisational culture found that employees in firms with strong cultures were committed to their firm than were employees in firms with weak cultures. The firms with strong cultures also used their recruitment efforts and socialisation practices to build employee commitment. An increased body of evidence suggests that strong cultures are associated with high organisational performance.
CONCLUSION

The conventional view about culture and climate is that they exist at different levels. Culture is usually taken to be very deeply embedded in subconsciously held values, beliefs and have basic assumptions and so many organisational members that might not be aware that a culture exists let alone how it affects their behaviour. Conversely, climate tends to be regarded as more of a surface phenomenon, with easily identifiable effects on behaviour. Although subculture can exist within organisations, culture tends to be viewed as a persuasive phenomenon, whereas micro climate tends to be regarded as more inevitable because many of the important factors directly influence climatic conditions in which the group is located. The antecedents of climates are better understood and it is usually assumed that climates change more quickly than cultures.
REFERENCES