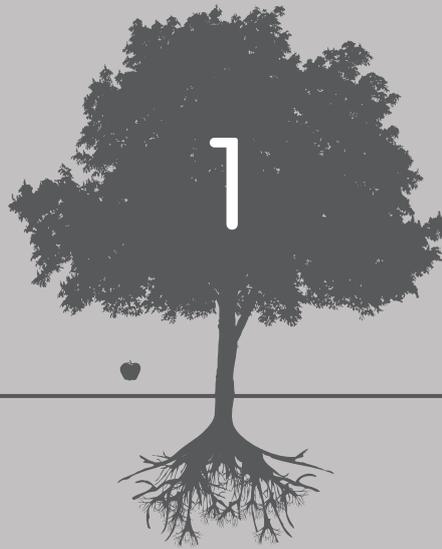# INTRODUCING MANAGEMENT AND BUSINESS RESEARCH

1

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

To appreciate how views of management and its research have evolved over time.

To understand what is distinctive about management research.

To gain insights into the personal and situational factors that affect success in doing research.

To appreciate different modes of management and business research and how they link to different levels of study.

INTRODUCTION

This book provides comprehensive coverage of research methods in management and business research. It is written for people who have to conduct projects and research studies as part of educational qualifications, which can range from undergraduate to doctoral levels. It is also intended for consultants and others who need to conduct research as part of their normal work. The book covers both the practical techniques for conducting research, and the philosophies and assumptions underlying these techniques. This introductory chapter starts with some reflections on the nature of business and management research, we then provide guidance on the skills and resources required to conduct good research, and we finish with an outline of the content and presentation of the book as a whole.

THE NATURE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUSINESS RESEARCH

We cover methods relevant to both management and business research because there is a great deal in common between the two areas. Indeed the differences are relatively small and cover things such as style, setting and emphasis. Thus management research may concentrate on the nature and consequences of managerial actions, often taking a critical edge, and covers any kind of organization, both public and private. On the other hand business research is more likely to focus on determinants of corporate performance, with an emphasis on private sector organizations. Given these differences we use the two terms interchangeably in the book, but on occasions where there is a significant difference we explain the implications.

There are three features of management and business research that have influenced the structure and content of this book. The first is a long-standing tension between the use of qualitative and quantitative methods in conducting research, and the fashion has swung back and forth over the last few decades between the two. When our first edition was published in 1991, quantitative methods were in the ascendancy, with an emphasis on hypotheses, measurement and statistical analysis. At that time we tried to redress the balance in favour of qualitative methods. Increasingly there is acceptance that we need both qualitative and quantitative methods to answer some of the major questions of management research; consequently the third edition provided extensive treatment of quantitative methods to a more advanced level, and this fourth edition looks more at the logic for mixing methods within the same studies. The philosophical logic for choice of methods is covered in Chapter 2, and guidance on the use of qualitative and quantitative methods form the core of the book from Chapters 6 to 10.

A second feature is the ongoing debate about whether management research should lead to developments in **academic theory**, or whether it should lead to solutions of practical problems. The former, referred to as **pure research**, conjures the image of the white-coated scientist studying companies and their employees from a distance; the latter, known as **applied research**, suggests researchers in grey suits or overalls working

with managers and employees to understand the strategies and practices. The arguments for and against each style of research and the practical consequences of their implementation are reviewed in Chapter 3.

The third feature is that management research is usually political. This is because most studies take place within formal organizations that have distinct boundaries which are controlled from within. Hence access to companies and employees depends on senior managers being convinced that the potential benefits will outweigh the costs. They may require a say in how the results will be used and disseminated, and there is always the danger of research data and results being used out of context to strengthen the case of one group against another. Researchers can also come under pressure to provide positive stories about the companies they study, often as a condition for being allowed further access. This means that the researcher should be prepared to confront ethical issues, and to navigate complex political relationships. In Chapter 4 we provide guidance on these matters.

WHAT IS MANAGEMENT?

There are many views about what constitutes 'management'. Early civilizations demonstrated the ability to organize large scale activities that were efficient and effective: the Egyptians built the pyramids, the Chinese built the Great Wall and the Mesopotamians learned to irrigate the land to wall their cities. All these feats required a high degree of co-ordination, and although many had captive labour forces, there must have been sophisticated organization of their work. Formal records of production management techniques can be traced back to Mencius (372–289 BC). This Chinese philosopher dealt with models and systems, and pointed to the advantages of the division of labour, putting the concepts rediscovered over 2000 years later into perspective.

The modern use of the term 'management' derives from the USA, with the requirement for business and entrepreneurial skills in the early twentieth century when American industries and railroads were developing very rapidly (Lawrence, 1986). From these beginnings, management was put forward as an important subject that could, and should, be taught in business schools. The establishment of business schools led to greater systematization of techniques and knowledge, although much of this was based on the principles that managers had distilled from their own experiences. Two of the dominant figures during this period were Taylor (1947), who developed rational systems to simplify the organization of work and link rewards directly to effort, and Fayol ([1916] 1950) who classified the main functions that managers should perform, such as: planning, organizing, co-ordinating and controlling. Although this **classical** view of management has much face validity, later researchers were to show that these functions did not resemble what managers actually did in their work (Mintzberg, 1973), nor did it provide an adequate account of how they might get the best results out of their subordinates.

An early critique of the classical view was the **human relations** school, which demonstrated that workers were not necessarily motivated by rational incentives, and that they were more likely to be productive if managers took personal interest in them (Roethlisberger and Dickson, 1939), or if they were given more responsibility in their jobs (Herzberg, Mausner and Snyderman, 1959). Moreover these researchers suggested that a key role for managers

was to get employees to accept changes and improvements in the workplace, and this would be accomplished most easily if they got them closely involved in decision-making processes (Coch and French, 1948). The focus of this work was therefore on the non-rational aspects of human behaviour in organizations.

During the 1960s a view was developed that the key to effective management was the ability to take rational decisions, even under conditions of uncertainty (Simon, 1959; Cyert and March, 1963). This **decision theory** emphasized the techniques that could be used to analyse the impact of external factors on corporate strategy, and ways of reaching adequate decisions under conditions of uncertainty, even if they were not completely ideal. Quantitative methods of analysis and model-building still dominate the curricula of many business schools, especially in the USA and France.

The classical view has also been attacked by researchers such as Stewart (1967), Mintzberg (1973), Kotter (1982) and Hales (1986) who, as we have indicated above, found almost no evidence of managers behaving as they are supposed to do. Instead of standing back and directing enterprises strategically, most managers, even top ones, spend most of their time talking to people; they work long hours at an unrelenting pace; their work patterns are varied, fragmented and reactive; and there is rarely any time for planning ahead and anticipating crises. Consequently, those who follow the **work activity** view argue there is little point in trying to get them to behave according to the classical text books. Rather, managers should be helped to deal with the realities of their jobs through managing their own time and becoming more skilled at leading and negotiating with others.

The second line of attack came from employers, who suggested that the emphasis on analytic techniques is of limited value, and may even be harmful to companies. They argued that it was more important for managers to be entrepreneurial, to exhibit leadership, to provide collective visions and to mould the culture and values of the organization (Porter and McKibbin, 1988). This line has given rise to a view of management as a set of **competencies** which represent the skills that need to be demonstrated in the course of effective managerial work (Boyatzis, 1982; Silver, 1991; Evers and Rush, 1996).

During the 1990s there was an increase in the literature based on **critical management theory**. This came from various sources, including postmodernism, which rejects the rationality that is so strongly embedded in the idea of management (Hassard and Parker, 1993), social constructionism, which emphasizes that the most important part of management involves making sense of ambiguous and complex situations through conversations and dialogue (Weick, 1995; Cunliffe, 2002b) and critical theory, which tends to see management as an agent in maintaining wider power differences in society (Fournier and Grey, 2000). This has been largely a theoretical critique, and to date there have been few attempts to articulate appropriate methodologies for conducting empirical research into management from a critical perspective, other than Alvesson and Deetz (2000).

The view that has developed over the last decade is based on **process theory**, the idea of management as a process. This emphasizes learning processes, the creation and management of organizational knowledge (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995; Scarbrough, 2008), and the importance of power and politics underlying knowledge legitimation (Lawrence et al., 2006; Buchanan and Bryman, 2007). At a wider level there are links to strategic perspectives including absorptive capacity (Todorova and Durisin, 2007), the focus on change leading

TABLE 1.1   Seven perspectives on management

Views of Management	Period of Dominance	Key Features	Type of Theory
Classical	1910–1950	Functional activities	Normative
Human Relations	1940–1970	Motivating people and managing change	Normative
Decision Theory	1950–1970	Optimizing decisions	Analytic
Work Activity	1970s	What managers do	Descriptive
Competencies	1980s	Skills required for effective performance	Normative
Critical	1990s	Social construction and politics	Analytic
Process	2000s	Learning and strategizing	Analytic and Normative

to dynamic capabilities (Winter, 2003), and the idea of strategy as practice (Jarzabkowski, Balogun and Seidl, 2007).

The seven views summarized in Table 1.1 are by no means the only views about what management is, or should be; but they are important historically. It should also be apparent that these include different types of theory. Some are **normative**, in the sense that they specify what or how managers should do their work; some are **descriptive**, because they try to describe what managers do in practice; and some are **analytic**, because they take a particular theoretical perspective which emphasizes some aspects of work, at the expense of others.

In the context of the present book, there are three main implications from the above review. First, although we have presented the story chronologically, all seven perspectives co-exist and significant research is still being conducted within each one of them. Second, the perspectives here are illustrative rather than exhaustive; there are plenty of other perspectives that lead to a wide range of questions for management and business research. Third, the research methods are likely to vary considerably according to the view that the researcher takes of the focus of enquiry. If she is working within the decision theory school, she will seek to manipulate quantitative data that can simulate processes or predict the best courses of action; if she adopts the work activity view of management, then she might choose observational methods that provide a structured description of managerial activities and roles within real organizations; and if she is interested in management as a socially constructed activity, then she is more likely to be interested in gathering stories, narratives and conversations about management.

A key point here is that there are many different ways of conducting research into management and business, and one of the main aims of the book is to provide guidance on the criteria for choosing different methods. Chapters 2 and 3, in particular, provide both frameworks and advice to aid the research design process.

Management perspectives and research foci

For each of the seven perspectives of management described above, summarize in one sentence the way that research is most likely to be conducted. Work in small groups. We have already provided hints above for three of them.

● Classical

● Human relations

● Decision theory

● Work activity

● Competencies

● Critical

● Process

SKILLS AND RESOURCES FOR MANAGEMENT AND BUSINESS RESEARCH

There are both tacit and explicit skills involved in research. Although it is possible to develop formal skills and knowledge through training, these tacit skills can only be fully acquired through trial and error, and through working with others who are able to pass on their skills. This is where the relationship with the tutor or supervisor is very important, and if one gets the chance to work on a project with experienced researchers, this can be very valuable.

In this section we have listed what we believe to be the important qualities of researchers. These are based partly on our own experiences and partly on external sources such as the ESRC guidelines for research methods training (ESRC, 2009). We have classified the resulting personal qualities according to whether they comprise knowledge, skills or personal attributes. This classification is based substantially on Burgoyne and Stuart's (1976) work into the attributes of effective managers, because we think there are close parallels between managing and researching. The skills and knowledge areas are progressively more specific to the conduct of research. These are 'core' qualities, which are important in any form of research, and are listed in Exercise 1.2.

Rating skills and qualities

Rate yourself on each quality using the following 1 to 4 scale:

4 Possess to a high degree

3 Possess to a moderate degree

2 Possess to a limited extent

1 Have virtually none of these

(Continued)

(Continued)

Knowledge/awareness	Skills and abilities	Personal qualities
1 Different assumptions about the world ☐	7 Planning, organizing and managing one's own time ☐	13 Self-awareness ☐
2 Qualitative and quantitative research methods ☐	8 Searching libraries and online data sources ☐	14 Clarity of thought ☐
3 Range of research designs ☐	9 Interviewing and observation ☐	15 Sensitivity to events and feelings ☐
4 Immediate subject of study ☐	10 Analysing and interpreting data ☐	16 Emotional resilience ☐
5 Related subjects and disciplines ☐	11 Arguing views orally and in writing ☐	17 Creativity ☐
6 Key networks and contacts in chosen research area ☐	12 Gaining support and co-operation from others ☐	18 Learning from experience ☐
Total ☐	Total ☐	Total ☐

If you have managed to rate yourself on the above qualities, then any ratings below 3 may be cause for concern (with the possible exception of item 5). What to do about any apparent deficiencies is, of course, a different matter. As a generalization: knowledge can be acquired by reading and talking, or by attending courses; skills can be acquired through practising them, either in a simulated or a real environment; and personal qualities can be acquired, with much difficulty, through life or educational experiences. This book certainly cannot offer everything. It provides a reasonable coverage of items 1, 2, 3, 8, 9 and 10; and it touches on 6, 7, 12, 13 and 18. As for the rest, they may be acquired most easily by working with other researchers, in the form of apprenticeship suggested by Turner (1988).

Beyond a certain point, however, specialization begins to creep in. One form of specialization depends upon whether the researcher is following a primarily quantitative or qualitative path. Those following the quantitative path will need to have high levels of skill in areas such as survey design, sampling methods and statistical analysis; those following the qualitative path may need to be skilled at conducting in-depth interviews, making field notes, coding and interpreting transcripts, and so on. But there is a trend towards more mixing of subjects and methodologies as will be explained further in later chapters. Thus quantitative subjects may be tackled with qualitative methods, as in behavioural accounting; and qualitative subjects can be tackled with quantitative methods, such as frequency counts in textual analysis. In Chapters 6 to 10 we give extensive guidance on the choice and application of qualitative and quantitative methods.

Support and supervision

Supervision is important both to provide technical guidance and as a structure for the research activity. On taught courses tutors will normally work with small groups of students. These can be organized either in action learning sets where the members will be looking at different topics but taking the opportunity both to support each other and to learn from their experiences, or as group project teams where members are working together on the same task. In the case of group projects there is the added challenge of having to work as a team, which requires division of roles and co-ordination. We discuss further some of the challenges of team working in Chapter 4.

For those working towards research-based degrees such as MPhil or PhD the relationship with the supervisor is crucial. In contrast to taught courses, there is usually an opportunity to negotiate about supervision, so it is worth knowing something about the success rate of a supervisor. Phillips (1984) studied the characteristics of successful supervisors. In addition to having relevant specialist knowledge, she identified practical aspects of the relationship: the better supervisors tend to set regular, and realistic, deadlines, although they do not interfere too much with the detail of the work. A responsive style seems most appropriate if the researcher is to be encouraged to become autonomous and independent, and it helps if the supervisor is prepared and willing to respond quite rapidly to any problems or to written work. Availability is very important, and for this reason the star researcher with a string of brilliant publications, but who is never available for consultations, may not necessarily be the best supervisor! Ideally there should be mutual commitment between the two parties, and this can sometimes be formalized as a supervision contract.

From our own experiences, the supervisor role can be quite tough, too, because students often move beyond the existing knowledge of the supervisor during the course of the project. In the case of a doctoral thesis this is almost an inevitable consequence of the requirement for originality in a PhD thesis. But also in postgraduate and undergraduate dissertations, which involve tackling broad-based problems, the work will often fall outside the specialist area of the supervisor who therefore has to rely on generic supervisory skills such as asking challenging questions or pointing the student to alternative sources of expertise. There is also a delicate balance to be struck between providing critical feedback that highlights weakness in a piece of work, and providing praise and encouragement in order to motivate the student.

In addition to tutors and supervisors it is worth considering alternative sources of emotional support. One of the best forms of support can come from colleagues, either through naturally occurring friendships, or through constructing a 'support set' – a group of four or five researchers committed to meeting regularly every few weeks to discuss their research progress and problems. It helps if the members of this set are working in related fields. The set may have a tutor (or set advisor) who can help with organization, and possibly provide specialist advice and support. The members of the set should be able to use it to 'bounce' ideas off each other and, particularly for those who are researching part-time, to provide contact with others who may be going through similar experiences of doubt, confusion and disillusionment as themselves. Furthermore it is important to recognize the potential for support outside one's immediate institution. In particular, those wishing to develop academic careers will need to develop links within the broader community through attending conferences, and this is another area where the supervisor should be able to help.

Problems with supervision

Find out the procedures you have to follow in your institution if you are having difficulties with your supervisor. This information should be easily accessible on your institution's intranet. Remember supervisory problems are matters of serious concern and should be dealt with as soon as possible to avoid the situation escalating.

Style and creativity

In the previous section we explained why support is a key factor in the successful completion of research work. Here we focus more on ways of ensuring that the research will be of good quality and will contain some originality. We argue that this is determined largely by the personal style and approach adopted by the researcher.

A fascinating study into the personal factors that contribute to discoveries in medicine is provided by Austin (1978), an American neurosurgeon, who had become dissatisfied by the trite explanations provided by scientists about how great discoveries occur. He identified three factors that seem to underlie the 'blind luck' that is apparent in many discoveries:

- First, the researcher needs to be *in motion*. Nobody trips over anything while sitting down. The greater the curiosity, resilience and persistence of the researcher, the more likely he or she is to find something of significance.

- Second, he or she needs to have a *prepared mind* and be ready to see new relationships and solutions. This means being aware of past research that has been conducted through searching the literature and talking to other researchers, while at the same time being prepared to think outside existing frameworks and knowledge.

- Third, there needs to be *individualized action*. This means encouraging distinctive, even eccentric, hobbies and lifestyles. In particular, the researcher should try to take a broad interest in people and other disciplines. Creativity is often born from associations and links made across traditional boundaries.

The illustration that Austin uses is the discovery of penicillin by Alexander Fleming in 1928. In an interview after the Second World War, Fleming commented that the discovery of penicillin was almost entirely a matter of luck: 'like winning the Irish Sweepstake'. But Austin shows that this was not only a matter of blind luck. Fleming, by all accounts, was a tireless researcher; his great aim being to discover a new antiseptic, and even after the penicillin discovery he was extremely busy making and selling antibacterial vaccines. Thus he was a man who was continuously *in motion*.

But it was his *prepared mind* that enabled him to note the effect on colonies of bacteria when a stray spore of a rare mould fell by accident onto his culture dish. Nine years earlier he had discovered the bacterial enzyme Lysozyme when, 'whilst suffering from a cold, his own nasal drippings had found their way into a culture dish. He noted that the bacteria round the mucus were killed and astutely followed up the lead' (Austin, 1978: 74). The

parallels between these and other experiences would be easy to perceive. *Individualized action* enters into the story because Fleming was a keen swimmer and water polo player. He had chosen to train and work at the old St Mary's Hospital not because of the excellence of its scientific facilities, but because it had a good swimming pool. The laboratories were basic, badly equipped, cold and 'contaminated by organisms swirling in and out of the London fog' (Austin, 1978: 92). This made them a particularly good breeding ground for bacteria and stray spores! In this example it is possible to see how natural chances can be enhanced, and Austin suggested that major discoveries are most likely to take place when several factors coincide. This is what he calls the 'unifying observation' of the Fleming effect.

Unfortunately not all researchers are destined to make major discoveries. The bulk of research is much more humdrum. This is true both for the social and natural sciences. Many sociologists have carried out detailed studies of the way that the natural sciences progress, and the consensus is that it is a gradual process, with much hard graft and very few genuine breakthroughs. Latour and Woolgar (1979) demonstrated in a classic study of a biological laboratory how scientific 'facts' emerged through a process of debate, which was linked to the career strategies and progress of individual researchers. Similarly, the study by Law (1994) into the management and organization of a particle physics research laboratory shows the impact of factors such as funding, politics and status hierarchies on the way scientific knowledge is produced and recognized. He also commented reflexively on his debates with colleagues and various changes of heart in the course of doing his own research study. These issues will be considered in more depth in Chapters 3 and 4.

LEVELS AND OUTCOMES OF MANAGEMENT RESEARCH

As suggested at the outset, this book is intended to aid research at different levels, including undergraduate, postgraduate and doctoral degrees, and funded research projects. We also mentioned the distinction between pure and applied forms of research. In this section we extend the pure/applied distinction in relation to the different outcomes of research, and then discuss how they may link to different levels of research.

One of the key features of *pure research* is that its results are openly disseminated through books, articles, conference papers or theses, addressed mainly at an academic audience. Dissemination is seen as a major responsibility for the researcher, and career progress for academics depends on getting the fruits of their work placed in the most prestigious journals, which is seen as proof of the quality of the work. *Applied research* is intended to lead to the solution of specific problems, and usually involves working with clients to identify important problems and deciding how best to tackle them. There are a number of variants of applied research including: **best practice research**, where other 'leading' companies are surveyed in order to assess how they have tackled, or solved, the same problem (Burgoyne and James, 2006); **action research**, which involves making changes within an organization or its parts in order to understand the dynamic forces within it; and **engaged research**, which requires close collaboration between academics and practitioners (Van de Ven and Johnson, 2006).

The results of applied research always need to be reported to the client, who is likely to evaluate the quality of the research in terms of its usability. But there is always the potential

to publish the results of applied research in practitioner or professional journals provided the results can be shown to have wider significance, although this possibility often raises questions of commercial confidentiality and the need to maintain good relationships with the initial client. In Chapter 4 we discuss in more detail issues such as ethics, confidentiality and the control of information.

The pure/applied distinction is similar to the ideas of Gibbons et al. (1994) who describe two forms of research: **mode 1** research, which concentrates on the production of knowledge by detached scientists working from single disciplines and focusing on theoretical questions and problems; and **mode 2** research, which is often trans-disciplinary and is characterized by the production of knowledge through direct engagement with social practice and problems. Some scholars argue that management research should follow the latter approach with an emphasis on practical application (Tranfield, 2002), others suggest a compromise position where both theoretical and practical work is required, which is sometimes characterized as **mode 1½** research (Huff, 2000).

Different types of research also tend to be linked to different levels. At *undergraduate* levels, research is likely to be specific and bounded, either as an assignment from tutors or as a question posed by a client. Common tasks include small market research studies, or interview-based studies of employee attitudes, and hence an emphasis on applied research is most likely. In most cases a single method will be used and this may also be specified in advance. The opportunities for choice are mainly around how a method is used and how results are interpreted and communicated. In most cases undergraduate research projects are conducted in teams because this creates economy of scale from a teaching point of view. It also means that significant projects can be undertaken in a short period of time, and students should benefit from combining their skills when working as teams.

Research conducted as part of a *postgraduate* degree will normally have greater scope, and more time will be available. Again, applied research is likely to dominate, with evaluation research being one of the easiest options. This involves looking at some system or practice that already exists and making recommendations for how it might be changed and improved. If the project seeks to create or learn from organizational change it will assume features of action research. Involvement in change can lead to rich and interesting results, and it may be a valuable experience for people seeking work in consultancy.

Doctoral dissertations need to produce theoretical contributions with some degree of originality, and this suggests that they need to contain significant elements of pure research. Although doctoral studies may include both applied and action research, the theoretical contribution is a necessary condition for the award of a doctorate. These contributions may include the discovery of new ideas, the invention of new procedures and methods, the replication of existing studies in new contexts, or the application of new theoretical perspectives to existing research questions.

Funded projects are usually conducted by experienced researchers, but face many of the same choices as projects conducted for university degrees. Required outputs will depend on the expectations of the funding body: if funding is provided by a company there may be an emphasis on applied research, and if it is a research council then there will be an emphasis on pure research.

We summarize in Table 1.2 the main links between types and levels of research. We will discuss in more detail in the next three chapters the many factors, both political and

TABLE 1.2   Types of research most likely to be associated with different levels

	Undergraduate Level	Postgraduate Level	Doctoral Level	Funded Projects
Applied Research	**	**	*	**
Action/evaluation Research	*	**	*	*
Pure Research		*	***	***

philosophical, which can influence the way research is designed and conducted in practice. We also review in Chapter 11 both strategies for demonstrating a 'contribution', and how the evaluation criteria might vary with different contexts.

The examples above have all assumed that research will involve the collection of **primary data** directly by the researchers. The value of primary data is that it can lead to new insights and greater confidence in the outcomes of the research, which is very useful for students wishing to use their research experiences as a basis for subsequent careers in management or consultancy practice. Consequently it is normally expected that dissertations at undergraduate, postgraduate and doctoral levels will include some primary data.

However, some subjects such as economics and finance rely more on public or corporate financial data and statistics. This is known as **secondary data**, and the skill of the researcher is demonstrated by exploring new relationships and patterns within this existing data. Another form of secondary data is represented by published literature, and all research studies need to demonstrate familiarity with existing literature both to ensure that the research is not merely repeating something that has already been done, and to provide an opportunity to build on what has been done before. In Chapter 5 we discuss both sources and strategies for using secondary data, especially in the form of literature surveys, which are commonly used to underpin primary data collection.

IS MANAGEMENT RESEARCH DISTINCTIVE?

At the start of this chapter we outlined three features of management research that have influenced the shape and content of this book. Here we identify three other features that give a distinctive flavour to management research, particularly in contrast to some of the other social sciences.

First, the practice of management is largely *eclectic*: managers need to be able to work across technical, cultural and functional boundaries, and they need to be able to draw on knowledge developed by other disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, economics, statistics and mathematics. The dilemma for the researcher, then, is whether to examine management from the perspective of one discipline (mode 1), or

whether to adopt a trans-disciplinary approach (mode 2). The former is often seen to be the safer course for those who wish to gain respectability from academic peers, whereas the latter is more likely to produce results that are of use to practising managers. Moreover, the danger of eclectic approaches to research is that they may incorporate underlying assumptions that are incompatible with each other, which is why we devote the next chapter to reviewing the philosophical underpinnings of research approaches and methods.

Second, managers and other employees tend to be highly *educated*. Most managers have undergraduate or MBA degrees, and many specialists, particularly in research-oriented companies, have PhDs – thus they have similar educational backgrounds to the researchers who would study them. This means that they will be more likely to appreciate the value of research-based knowledge, and have clear views about the appropriate directions of research. It also means that researchers cannot assume that they have the premium on expertise, and this opens up the possibility of the joint production of knowledge – combining the insights and expertise of both managers and researchers. Of course, this challenges traditional assumptions about the objectivity of researchers, and presents intriguing problems about the ownership of scientific knowledge.

Third, there is often an expectation that research will lead directly to *action*. The expectation comes both from employees and managers in exchange for offering access and support, and from funding agencies that look for potential economic benefits from management research. This has led to a variety of ways whereby researchers engage with both practice and practitioners, as will be discussed in the next section.

We summarize the features that make management research distinctive in Table 1.3. Admittedly each is not unique to management research: the problem of multiple disciplines exists in educational research; the wider dissemination of higher education means that the expertise of lay people must be recognized in many fields, including health research; and the link to action is apparent in design sciences. But the combination of all three at the same time within management research suggests that some of the traditional assumptions and practices in social research may well need rethinking. This is what we do in this book, and it is something that is being taken further in the Sage Series on Management Research.

TABLE 1.3　Implications of distinctive features of management research

Key Features	Implications for Management Researchers
Management research methods are eclectic	Researchers need to be aware of different underlying assumptions.
Managers and employees are highly educated	Managers will have academic interest in research process/results and may want to contribute to the direction of work.
Action is a frequent outcome of management research	Research results may both derive from, and lead to, practical action. Both traditional analytic research and action research are legitimate activities.

CONCLUSION

In this opening chapter we have discussed a number of ways of understanding management, we have also considered what makes management research distinctive both in form and in the demands it places on the researcher, and we have reviewed the skills and support that the researcher is likely to require to achieve successful outcomes. Some key points/lessons that we have wanted to emphasize in this chapter are:

- The diversity of perspectives on management and business research.

- The need to negotiate and maintain adequate support.

- The importance of self-awareness and development of personal skills.

- The need for awareness of politics and underlying assumptions in management research.

This volume is intended to be self-sufficient in a number of ways. It provides extensive coverage and guidance in relation to: philosophical and political perspectives (Chapters 2 and 4); designing studies and reviewing literature (Chapters 3 and 5); generating and analysing both qualitative (Chapters 6 and 7) and quantitative data (Chapters 8 to 10); and writing and communicating research results (Chapter 11). This coverage should be sufficient for most research projects at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Naturally, additional techniques may be appropriate in some specialized areas of research and we provide guidance on further reading about these. The book also provides basic grounding for the first year of doctoral training, although doctoral students will also need to refer back to original sources, and to develop their own critiques of methods and underlying philosophies.

  The book is furthermore intended to be self-sufficient pedagogically. That is, we provide a range of examples and exercises across all the chapters, which can be used for individual review and for group discussion in classrooms. There are additional exercises in the accompanying website (www.sagepub.co.uk/easterbysmith), and this provides further guidance to teachers in using these exercises with different groups of students. We are also developing an organic metaphor for the processes of research: this is the idea of a tree that absorbs nutrients from the ground which it distributes through the trunk and into the leaves and fruit. We will introduce this progressively, starting with the next chapter.

EXERCISE
1.4

Schools of thought about management

We have described seven views of management above, but there are others, such as 'mushroom management' (where you keep everyone in the dark and every now and then you open the door and drop a pile of shit on them!). Working in small groups share your experiences of managing or being managed: use this to invent a new label, or school of thought, about management. Be prepared to explain and justify to other groups.

FURTHER READING

Grey, C. (2005) *A Very Short, Fairly Interesting and Reasonably Cheap Book About Studying Organizations*. London: Sage.

As it says on the label, this book provides a succinct overview of theories of management and organization, and it is reasonably priced. It adopts a critical view in the sense that it has a slight preference for the perspectives of those who are managed, rather than the managers themselves.

Marshall, S. and Green, N. (2007) *Your PhD Companion: A Handy Mix of Practical Tips, Sound Advice and Helpful Commentary to See You Through Your PhD*, 2nd edn. Oxford: Cromwell Press.

Mintzberg, H. (2005) *Managers Not MBAs: A Hard Look at the Soft Practice of Managing and Management Development*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.

Henry Mintzberg made his reputation from demonstrating the inadequacy of classical views of management and the nature of managerial work. This book continues his argument that managers are less in need of the analytic skills taught on traditional MBAs, and more in need of process and intercultural skills. In particular, it looks at ways in which managers can best learn these skills and abilities.