Topic Contents

Topic 1

Introduction

Aims

This topic aims:

- to provide an overview of the course in terms of general themes and focus.
- to define and explain 'management' and 'organisation' – the core concepts of the course.
- to consider the nature of knowledge and theory in the fields of management and organisation.

Objectives

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

- provide definitions of 'management' and 'organisation' and explain what is meant by these terms;
- discuss the different levels of organisational analysis;
- explain the multidisciplinary nature of management and organisation theory;
- list basic concepts of theory and method.

Introduction

As it is unlikely that you have studied management before, it is important to establish some of the themes and concepts that will concern us during the next few months.

The course has two central focuses, as is clear from the title Management and the Modern Corporation. Throughout the course we will be interested in exploring the nature of management in its contemporary organisational setting, so we will always have these two notions – management and organisation – at the heart of our thinking.

As you will see, in the modern business world it is virtually impossible to think of one of the notions without the other. Our aim, like that of many social scientists before us, is to study the nature of management and organisation in the real world and to try to construct reliable knowledge about these subjects. In Topic 1 we will draw your attention to important aspects of constructing reliable knowledge in the social sciences and explain some of the essential terms and vocabulary that goes with understanding the nature of management and organisational knowledge.

As you progress through the course you will get used to the style of writing you need to employ and you will become aware of good practice in setting up an argument – this means looking at elements such as defining key concepts, for example. (NB: In Topic 1 we follow a similar logic as we outline and explore different topics.)

General themes of BBA0010

As you work through the course you will become familiar with the following themes:

1. Management in historical perspective

2. Management as organisational function and social process

3. Management in terms of dilemmas and choices

Management in historical perspective

The course unfolds in a broadly chronological order, starting from the early ideas and theories of so-called 'classical' management thinkers of the first decades of the 20th century. We shall see in Topics 3–6 that many of the early ideas were fairly simple and functional. We then move through important theoretical developments in thinking about management and organisation – e.g. systems thinking after the Second World War (Topic 7) and structural contingency thinking in the 1960s and 1970s (Topic 8) – to arrive at more recent ways of understanding modern management processes (e.g. culture in Topic 9, politics in Topic 10).

During the second half of the course you will have the opportunity to think more deeply about the nature of modern management, but you will always be able to understand the intellectual origins and development of these contemporary issues.

Management: organisational function and social process

There are many ways of looking at the nature of modern management and organisation. From one perspective management is quite simply a technical business activity that serves to control large, complex work organisations (or corporations) as efficiently as possible. This is a practical, functional approach that informs a good deal of management and organisational thinking. At the same time, however, sociologists have been interested in exploring

Key Concepts

In this topic we will examine the concepts listed below. Look out for them as you work through the material.

- management
- organisation
- social structure
- social process
- theory
- empirical knowledge
- quantitative methods
- qualitative methods
- positivism
- phenomenology
- normative knowledge
- positive knowledge

management as a complex social role within the structure and process of an organisation that is situated (or embedded) within particular national contexts.

The last sentence in the paragraph above makes management sound complicated but we will unravel the ideas and concepts involved in management slowly during the course. For the present you only need to understand that we will be drawing your attention to the wider social aspects of managing and organising.

Organisations exist within the wider societal context (the United Kingdom, United States, Germany, China and Brazil, for example, offer very different societal contexts) and management exists within different organisational settings (according to, for example, industry, size or history of organisation). Management and organisation are therefore very complex social phenomena that need to be understood as products of these wider social and cultural factors.

Management in terms of dilemmas and choices

Another way of looking at modern management is to analyse it in terms of the problems and dilemmas faced by managers of large corporations in the late 20th and early 21st centuries.

It is generally agreed that management in the early 20th century was intellectually and practically more straightforward than management in the early 21st century. Part of the reasoning behind this is that the modern context of business has become more dynamic and more complex. However, it is also clear that the knowledge we have generated about management itself influences the nature of problems that management faces nowadays. For example, as social scientists we have come to appreciate that organisations have cultures (see Topic 9), which has made the practical problems of managing organisations more complicated. When managers have to manage an internal change (see Topic 18), therefore, their task now includes managing cultural change.

During the course, you will become aware of management as a set of dilemmas to be confronted and choices to be made. We deal with these dilemmas and choices in predominantly historical terms in the first ten topics, while we consider contemporary dilemmas and choices in the last ten topics.

Journal

Journal 1.1

We have just said that the modern context of business has become more dynamic and more complex.

Think of as many factors as you can that have helped to create this increased dynamism and complexity. Consider these factors in terms of different types or categories – e.g. technological, economic, cultural and political.

When you have finished thinking about the question compare the factors you have identified with those suggested by Buchanan & Huczynski (7th edition, pp. 13-15).

🖥 *If you have access to the internet, you should complete this exercise in your online journal.*

Defining the main concepts

You will get accustomed to the way in which we define key terms before going on to write about them and develop an argument. When you write essays, for example, it is crucial that you follow the same good practice. As mentioned earlier, this course is constructed around exploring, explaining and understanding the nature of two complex social phenomena that are important to any management student. In this section, we define the main concepts of 'organisation' and 'management'.

What is an 'organisation'?

There are many definitions of the word 'organisation', but we take that offered by Buchanan & Huczynski in their textbook:

> An organization is a social arrangement for achieving controlled performance in pursuit of collective goals. (Buchanan & Huczynski 7th edition, p. 8)

From this definition, we can deduce a number of important conceptual features of our subject matter for the course.

Organisations are social arrangements

The word 'social' is important, because it says a lot about the kinds of problems that the process of organising involves. Organisations comprise many social actors, that is, many individuals with their own personalities, interests, values and objectives. These actors include managers and employees with various levels of education and training, with diverse motives and skills, and with very different the levels of expectation and aspiration concerning the work place. But they come together in the same social situation (usually a physical place) and, in order for the organisation to function properly, must cooperate at least to some minimal extent. Topics 9,10, 13 and 16 take up various aspects and implications of this insight.

Organisations have collective goals

Organisations are set up consciously and purposefully in order to achieve tasks that would not be possible, or not worthwhile, pursuing individually – for example, because of the scale or complexity of the necessary activities. As we shall see (e.g. Topics 10 and 19), saying that organisational goals are collective does not mean that everyone shares the same goals. Organisations, after all, are usually established and controlled by certain individuals in order to benefit themselves, not other people. But managers and employees must surrender to some minimal level their own personal goals and interests in order for the organisation to work.

Organisations control performance

This latter point raises the question of a controlled performance. The problem of controlling or shaping the behaviour of employees is at the heart of co-ordination by hierarchy. If many social actors come together in the organisation with different aims, interests and motives, how can their individual performances be controlled? How can people be persuaded, cajoled or even forced to act in the interests of the organisation? Of course there are no simple answers to this problem of control, and actual answers will vary across cultures, where different forms of control will be more accepted in different societies, and across time as social expectations of legitimate control change.

Now that we have explored what an organisation is we can move on to the question of defining 'management'.

Quick Summary

- Organisations are social arrangements: organisations comprise many social actors; individuals with their own personalities, interests, values and objectives
- Organisations have collective goals: they are set up consciously in order to achieve goals that would not be realistic for the individual
- Organisations control performance: controlling or shaping the behaviour of employees is at the heart of co-ordination by hierarchy

What does 'management' mean?

Many individuals and groups have attempted to define this concept. The classical theorists (Topics 3 and 4) – Fayol, for example – adopted a very formal prescription of what managers should do (see Topic 3), but we adopt a definition that is more open and processual (that is, one that focuses on management as a process).

> Management is the process of making, controlling and changing organisation, its structure and resources, in order to achieve collective goals.

This definition emphasises the links between the nature of management and organisation: one presupposes the other. While management as a function is necessarily involved in the nature of organisation, management as an occupational group (or profession) is specifically tied to the rise of large-scale organisation – the modern corporation – during the first half of the last century. The emphasis of management in modern society is on the rational control of financial, material and human resources in order to achieve organisational ends.

We shall develop more on these themes of rationality and control in the next few topics. During the course, we shall gradually construct a more processual understanding of how managers actually go about their job of managing in a contemporary setting. We start this task in Topic 11, when we challenge the traditional formal definitions and consider what managers really do.

Journal ...

Journal 1.2

Management writers have identified ambiguities in the way we use the term 'management'. At one and the same time, 'management' can mean:

1. a technical function or activity within an organisation (e.g. allocation and control of resources);

2. the (group of) individuals associated with the technical function within a particular organisation;

3. the general occupational group (or profession);

4. the actual (social) process of managing.

Reflect upon these different meanings and think about how they are related to one another. Which meaning do you usually infer when you use the term? When you study 'management' (as in this course), which meaning should be the centre of attention?

Theoretical focus: Explaining structure and process

Management and organisation theory – the basic fields of knowledge of BBA0010 – have a multidisciplinary focus. In other words, they draw on concepts and theories from a wide range of social sciences. The central focus is on three major contributing disciplines – economics, psychology and sociology. Management and the Modern Corporation reflects this multidisciplinarity, although our emphasis is largely and consciously more towards the sociological. This means that we see both management and organisation as social structures and social processes – both at micro levels of organisation itself and as aspects of the wider economy and society.

Organisation and management as social structures

As a social structure, an organisation is understood to be made up of a number of definable constituent parts, which relate together in a stable, regular manner to produce some kind of 'pattern':

- Organisations are themselves social structures (e.g. comprising hierarchical and lateral relationships between departments – see, for example, Buchanan & Huczynski, 7th edition, Chapter 15).
- Organisations are also structural parts of wider socio-economic systems (e.g. an industry, or society in general).
- Seeing organisations as social structures emphasises the stable, even static qualities of work and management.

Organisation and management as social processes

As a social process, we understand organisation (i.e. organising) and management (i.e. managing) to arise from the ways in which social actors interact with each other to make things happen and get things done:

- Organisations are themselves social processes (for example, emerging from the process of managing work).
- Organisations are also constituent processes within a larger societal and economic process.
- Seeing organisation as social process emphasises the emergent, dynamic nature of work and management.

How should you approach the study of management?

As social scientists, we examine management by adopting a disciplined, organised and rigorous approach to our studies. As a scientific endeavour, we try to understand management and organisation just like any other observed pattern of human behaviour. We always ask three basic questions:

- What are its causes? (e.g. why is management like this?)
- What are its characteristic processes? (How do managers behave, what patterns do they exhibit?)
- What are its effects, consequences and implications? (What are the outcomes or results of these processes for both the individuals concerned and the organisations in which they work?)

Having asked these questions, we accumulate data and information in order to construct reliable knowledge on management and organisation.

In the next section, we go on to explore – in basic terms – what we mean by this.

? *Using whatever sources you have available, find definitions of what the respective disciplines of psychology, economics and sociology study – then think about how they might vary in their approaches to management and organisation.*

Knowledge, theory and method

How did the study of management first start?

As you progress through this course by exploring the topics and reading the textbooks, you should reflect upon how we have come to know what we know about management and organisation. Over the last century, we have built up a body of knowledge, which, while certainly open to challenge, has some degree of credibility.

For many years, the knowledge we had about management came directly from

successful managers who wrote down their experiences for others to share (see Topics 3 and 4). While definitely interesting, much of this 'knowledge' is actually not much more than one individual's organised reflection of his (for the most part these are the thoughts of men) personal experiences.

After the Second World War, there was a rapid expansion in scientific research into management and organisation, and, when we speak of organisation and management theory, it is to the findings of such research that we normally refer:

- earlier knowledge is often packaged under the label 'classical theory';
- over the last 50 or so years, social scientists have constructed what we now accept as a systematic body of knowledge that is both theoretical and empirical.

What does it mean to say that our knowledge is now 'theoretical and empirical'?

What does 'theoretical' mean?

A theory is a set of interrelated propositions that attempts to explain how some part of the world works. To put it simply:

> a theory tries to sort out causes, processes and effects (as we said earlier) that hold true across a number of concrete situations.

One possible set of general theoretical propositions, which we will encounter in more detail in Topic 8 (as structural contingency theory), is as follows:

1. Organisations are social systems that seek to optimise the degree to which the production of goods or services is routinised; that is, organisation seeks to eliminate uncertainty.

2. Management routinises tasks by designing formal structures.

3. The organisation's environment is its major source of uncertainty.

4. Managers must design internal structures that are appropriate for dealing with the uncertainties arising from the environment.

The above theoretical propositions about management and organisation serve to explain why organisations have the structures they do:

- the basic cause of organisational structures is the nature of the organisation's environment (e.g. how uncertain is it?);
- the restructuring of the organisation is the mediating process, the design of which is a variable;
- the consequence (effect) of structure is higher organisational performance.

What does 'empirical' mean?

We need to study real managers and real organisations to find out whether our theoretical propositions are actually true. Knowledge is 'empirical' to the extent that it is based on observations of how the real world works.

In practice, we need somehow to observe the relationships between uncertainty, the environment, management, organisational structures and performance. In short, we need to adopt some research method to do the following:

- obtain data;
- generate findings that will in turn allow us to make judgements about how the factors interrelate.

Research methods

There are a variety of different ways in which we can study relationships empirically:

Quick Summary

- We examine management by adopting a disciplined, organised and rigorous approach to our studies
- Over the last 50 years, social scientists have constructed a systematic body of knowledge that is both theoretical and empirical
- There are a variety of different ways in which we can study relationships empirically:
  - » Quantitative research
  - » Qualitative research

1. We could find some way of measuring 'environmental uncertainty', 'organisational structure' and 'organisational performance', for example, and collect data for (a sample of) 100 organisations to see whether the measured relationships are statistically significant.

2. Alternatively, we could ask managers how they make decisions about restructuring, and from their expressed views deduce something about relationships between the environment and organisational performance.

Quantitative research

The first of the approaches above is essentially quantitative (based on measuring structural variables and generating empirical data) and positivist (studying relationships between variables as if they existed independently of social actors).

Qualitative research

The second approach above is qualitative (based on non-measurable factors and generating empirical materials) and phenomenological (studying relationships through the ways in which social actors themselves perceive those relationships).

If we collect empirical data about structural relationships, or empirical materials about how social actors understand those relationships, and find support for the theoretical propositions, we have generated some important knowledge about organisation and management.

Task...

Task 1.1

In this section, you have encountered some important but difficult words and ideas.

Pause now and have a look at your textbook (or other sources) to create your own definitions (that is, in your own words) of the following terms:

■ Theoretical	■ Hypothesis
■ Empirical	■ Causation
■ Theory	■ Research method
■ Concept	■ Validity
■ Knowledge	■ Reliability
■ Science	■ Positivist
■ Variable	■ Phenomenological

If you have access to the internet, you should complete this exercise in your online journal.

See possible answers on page 32

? *Now think of three different research methods, which you could use to examine the relationship between environment, organisational structure and organisational performance. Consider how the findings of the three methods might differ.*

Levels of study

Over the years, management and organisational scholars have studied and explained behaviour at a number of different levels:

1. Individual
2. Group or sub-unit
3. Organisational
4. Inter-organisational

We now explore the levels one by one.

Individual

At the most micro-level of analysis, we are interested in the basic human components of work organisations:

*   managers and employees
*   attitudes to work
*   motivation
*   reactions to managing and being managed

Only when we can understand what makes managers, workers, secretaries, etc. tick, can we put together a true picture of the organisation. For example, in Topic 16, you will come across important ideas about how to design jobs in order to increase the motivation of individuals at work.

Group or sub-unit

Once an organisation grows beyond a certain size, it is socially inevitable and logistically necessary to break it into smaller interrelated operating units.

Researchers are interested in studying the sub-units of organisations as either:

*   formal departments, sections, occupational or task groups;
*   informal, social groups.

Consider the following story, based upon qualitative, participant observation research in the 1940s.

The informal work group

During the late 1940s, George, Ike and Sammy worked in an engineering factory that was situated in a large American industrial city. The factory, which engineered parts for diesel engines, used machinery that is fairly archaic by today's standards. The three workers operated machines that stamped or cut forms out of sheets of metal. As a work group, they were fairly isolated from the rest of the factory, and were only loosely supervised by a foreman whose responsibilities stretched over a number of other workshops. Their 'clicking' work was routine and repetitive, each man performing standard operations on metal objects. The group of three had worked together for some time and had a good record of productivity. They had over time developed their own habits.

Every day, Sammy would bring in his lunch box, and place it behind him on a shelf. Inside the lunch box would be a banana. Every day, at a certain hour, Ike would creep up behind Sammy, surreptitiously open the lunch box, and, with a whoop of delight, he would snatch the banana and shout out: 'BANANA TIME'. Ike would proceed to gulp down the banana, amidst Sammy's futile protests and a general sense of hilarity. Sammy's protests were met by George's remonstrations, to the effect that Sammy was making a lot of fuss about 'only a banana'.

As quickly as the episode began, it would end. Soon, everyone would return to work and wait for the next part of the day's social activities. The group also indulged in 'peach time' and 'window time', and spent much time telling stories and jokes.

With only minor variations, this pattern of behaviour occurred every working day – except for two weeks after George had had a serious quarrel with Ike, when all such social activities stopped.

NB: The activity at the end of this topic looks more deeply into this example.

Organisational

The organisation itself can be studied as the unit of analysis, constituted by the relationships between the various subgroups and individuals.

How do organisations behave in different circumstances? Socially, economically and legally, organisations are important units of social behaviour, resulting from environmental pressures, their internal processes and the decisions made by their senior managers.

Structural contingency theory, mentioned earlier (and considered in more detail in Topic 8), is an example of this level of analysis.

Inter-organisational

At the most macro level of analysis, we can study those societal units created by the ways in which groups of interdependent organisations interact. We can, in other words, study 'populations' of organisations, which make up important sectors of society, or industries within the economy (sometimes called organisational fields or organisational domains). We shall come back such inter-organisational analysis in Topic 14.

Our field of study is large and complex and involves social scientists in studying all levels of behaviour from the macro-societal to the micro-individual.

? *How might psychologists, sociologists and economists be interested in these different levels of analysis?*

Positive and normative theory

Whether we are psychologists, sociologists or economists, no matter what the level of analysis of our empirical research (and independently of whether we adopt positivist or phenomenological approaches to our studies), organisation and management theorists aim to contribute something important to society.

Some of this organisational research is purely academic (descriptive or positive), while much of it is applied or applicable to business and industry.

We can distinguish two basic types of knowledge or theory:

- positive knowledge
- normative knowledge

Positive knowledge

Such knowledge belongs to the community of academic research and is solely or mainly involved in expanding our understanding of management and organisation for its own sake. Its aims are like those of pure natural science.

[NB: You should not confuse this use of the word 'positive' with the term 'positivist', which refers to a particular methodological stance (see above).]

Normative, or prescriptive, knowledge

From the perspective of the management practitioner, the importance of research lies less in the development of knowledge for its own sake and more in its relevance for managing organisations and increasing organisational performance:

- applicable, practical knowledge of how organisations work allows managers to make better decisions and to make more efficient use of scarce resources.

As the body of organisational knowledge expands and improves, it gives us a more reliable base from which to make our organisations operate more effectively for humankind. As Kurt Lewin (see Topic 18), a famous social psychologist, once wrote, "There's nothing as practical as a good theory". In this sense, pure empirically based knowledge is the foundation of all knowledge. To make a comparison, you can't build a bridge without empirically generated principles of physics.

The knowledge that has accumulated over the last century is in the process of continuous improvement and authors of this course have themselves been active researchers in the field.

? *Spend a little time thinking through what Lewin could have meant when he said, "there's nothing as practical as a good theory".*

Task 1.2

Task ...

Read the extended summary of 'Banana Time' by selecting the 'Case Study' button on the right and then answer the questions below:

1. What does this story mean?

What does this story demonstrate and in which ways is it important to organisation and management theorists? Would you consider the story to be about the irrationality of people in work organisations, or about organisational 'misbehaviour'? Do you think that banana time had any significance for the work carried out by the group or was it just horseplay with no relevance?

2. Managing employee behaviour

How should management respond to these workers? After all, they are patently wasting company time. Should managers increase supervision to prevent such rituals taking place? Should they fire all these workers, or only Ike for his anti-social behaviour? Should they split up the group? Can management learn anything positive from research findings like this?

3. Examine your own behaviour

Can you think of any examples of your behaviour with friends at school, college or work that have similarities with the behaviour of Ike, George and Sammy?

When you have answered the questions go online to do the Journal exercise and to exchange your views with other colleagues on the course.

Case study

Banana time: job satisfaction and informal interaction

An account of the research article by Donald F. Roy

Introduction

Donald Roy spent over two months as a participant observer, working as a machinist in a machine workshop, which was part of a company making diesel engines for tractors. The company was located near Chicago, in the United States. Roy became part of a small group of workers who performed a number of very repetitive operations on metal components, using shaping and forming machines. His report was, however, more concerned with the behaviour and dynamics of the group, rather than with the technical aspects of the work processes.

The paper was published in Human Organisation in 1960, although the fieldwork was conducted just after the Second World War. It now constitutes a classic study of work and work groups.

The work group

The work group comprised Roy himself, acting covertly, and its three original members:

> George, a stocky fellow in his late 50s, operated the machine at the opposite end of the line; he, I later discovered, had emigrated from a country in South-Eastern Europe. Ike, stationed at George's left, was tall, slender, in his early 50s, and Jewish; he had come from east-

ern Europe in his youth. Sammy, number-three man in the line and my neighbour, was heavy-set, in his late 50s, and Jewish; he had escaped from a country in Eastern Europe just before Hitler's legions had moved in. All three men had been downwardly mobile in occupation in recent years.

The work group itself was fairly isolated in the factory, and supervision was infrequent. Roy initially experienced the work as "a grim process of fighting the clock", and in this machine work, faced a "dismal combination of working conditions …[in the shape of] an extra-long workday, infinitesimal cerebral excitation, and the extreme limitation of physical movement". In the early days of the job, Roy survived the experience by developing his own 'games' with the work, setting himself goals, creating as much diversity in the tasks as possible, etc.

Soon, however, Roy became aware of a whole range of social activities that was going on between the other members of the group. As he developed this awareness, he also got drawn into those activities.

Informal social activities: 'times' and 'themes'

At first, the interactions just seemed to be nonsensical 'jabberings', made more so because of the strong foreign accents. He witnessed what seemed to be 'occasional flurries' of horseplay and banter that were so childish and simple that he paid little attention.

> For example, Ike would regularly switch off the power at Sammy's machine whenever Sammy made a trip to the lavatory or to the drinking fountain. Correlatively, Sammy invariably fell victim to the plot by making an attempt to operate his clicking hammer after returning to the shop.

A simple pattern of behaviour developed; Sammy would express indignation and reproach, Ike would smirk with satisfaction, and George would mildly scold Ike. Roy was fascinated because Ike never tired of the tedious trick and Sammy never learned to check the power to his machine!

Roy's article was named after one of the activities, which the operators themselves referred to as 'times' and which occurred regularly in one of the work breaks. In addition to 'coke time', 'window time' and 'peach time', Roy's article celebrates 'banana time'.

Roughly one hour after peach time, social activities centred on a banana, which Sammy always brought into work. Every day, Sammy would place his lunch box, containing the banana, on a shelf behind his workstation.

Each morning, Ike would snatch the banana and call out 'Banana Time!', and proceed to [gulp] down his prize while Sammy made futile protests and denunciations. George would join in with mild remonstrances, sometimes scolding Sammy for making so much fuss … Sammy never did get to eat his banana, but kept bringing it for his lunch.

Like the other activities, Roy came to look forward to these times, and the verbal exchanges that followed.

The social activities had certain common themes that kept recurring. Serious conversation would descend rapidly into nonsensical chatter, which would just as quickly revert to seriousness. Sammy was generally the butt of tricks and tomfoolery ('kidding' themes), while George would be paternalistic and 'superior', bringing activities back to order and chastising the makers of the scene. Certain sayings would be chanted – "Ike is a bad man, a very bad man! George is a good daddy, a very fine man!"

George's superiority was echoed daily in the 'professor theme', whereby George claimed status and esteem by referring to his daughter's marriage to a college professor. In fact, Roy soon learned that the professor theme had a particularly 'solemn' importance.

One day, Roy was larking around with Ike and persuaded him to throw doubt upon George's connection with the professor. Just for a laugh (Sammy was on holiday, so there was no natural target for his humour), Ike made a negative comment, effectively questioning George's social status. George was furious! Following this comment (Roy called it 'Black Friday') and for over two weeks, none of the social activities took place. All the 'times' ceased, even on Sammy's return – and George forced the others to concentrate on the job.

Roy wrote of the way in which boredom and despair set in, as the tedium of the work took over once more, and the grim process of fighting the clock recommenced. It was with great relief, therefore, that the times and themes reasserted themselves and the rituals of informal social activity appeared once more in the workshop.

> Source: Roy, D. F. (1960) 'Banana time: job satisfaction and informal interaction', *Human Organization*, 18(4), pp. 156–168.

Summary

In this topic, we have spent time introducing the nature of the course you are about to undertake. Much of what we have said will appear strange, even difficult at this stage. Management and organisational theory has a language of its own, and part of being a management student involves becoming conversant with its words, concepts and theories. You have now begun this task.

More specifically:

- you have learned about the scope and content of the course;
- you now have a clearer idea of what we mean when we talk about management and organisation;
- you understand that our topic can be studied using various methods and at various levels of analysis;
- you have a better idea about the kinds of knowledge that management and organisation theorists aim to generate in their research.

 Main concepts and themes covered in this topic:

> *Management, organisation, social structure, social process, theory, empirical knowledge, quantitative methods, qualitative methods, positivism, phenomenology, normative knowledge, positive knowledge.*

The next topic takes further our arguments about the nature of management and managing, examining in particular the problem of organisational control.

Possible answers

Task 1.1

Theoretical

Describing statements or approaches that attempt to explain some part of the real world at a general or abstract level (see 'theory').

Empirical

That which is based on observations of how reality works.

Theory

A set of general propositions that attempts to explain the ways in which (some part of) reality works.

Concept

An abstract way of capturing the general qualities or characteristics of some delimited, or narrowly bounded, aspect of the world.

Knowledge

Ideas that are accepted by a particular community at a particular time to be true or justifiable.

Science

An approach to acquiring knowledge based on relating general, abstract (theoretical) propositions to what (empirically) can be observed to happen in reality.

Variable

An operationalised concept – one that has been converted in such a way that it can be observed and/or measured in the real world.

Hypothesis

An empirical proposition, which relates two variables together in a causal way.

Causation

The notion that two events, A and B, are connected in such a way that B cannot happen without the occurrence of A: A 'causes' B.

Research method

A technique available to a researcher that can be used to study or observe empirical reality.

Validity

The extent to which the data or materials collected give an accurate (valid) reflection of what you want to study – are you actually studying what you intend to study?

Reliability

The extent to which the findings of the research are independent of the person (his/her values, biases, preferences, etc.) who collected them – to what extent are the findings objective (rather than subjective)?

Positivist

A social scientific perspective that presumes that the social world can be studied like the natural world, that 'social reality' exists as an object external to the social actors who comprise it. Social reality comprises 'social facts' that can be explained independently of social actors.

Phenomenological

A social scientific perspective that presumes that the social world is fundamentally different from the natural world, in that it is socially constructed and sustained by the social actors who comprise it. Social reality can only be explained by understanding how social actors perceive and enact it.