

## What is Management Research?

Why do we inquire into activities of wealth creation? At its most general, this inquiry is defined by its aim: to become more aware of and find meaning in, social experience. From such awareness comes the possibility of influence, both within the institutional structures and objects we encounter, create and use, and over our own development in terms of character and conduct. Using this influence we can satisfy what Alfred Whitehead (1929a: 14, 23) calls our three-fold urge: 'to live, to live well, to live better'; and so to transform life into a potentially good and better life. Managerial research is a particular and increasingly important form of such influence; its concerns being those aspects of social life that are broadly concerned with the production and distribution of material wealth through some form of social organization, whether an entrepreneurial venture, a corporation, a public department, a profession, an occupation, and so on. Often the term 'management' relates to an improvement in performance, however this may be determined, but the root of the word comes from the French *main* meaning 'to handle and direct something', whether it is simply the taking and application of decisions, or more broadly, a concern with the possible effects of such decisions. As a practice of handling action, management has become increasingly pervasive, touching many sections of many societies, almost like a transformational force akin to how engineering came to pervade the nineteenth century. What is handled can include a multitude of things, from physical objects and production and distribution spaces to human emotions such as dissent or expectation. In covering all manner of such objects, procedures and actions, managers are not restricted to a particular craft or locale – they can practise their skills across many different organizations in many different places. Once the preserve of private companies, management initiatives are now experienced in a myriad of organizational conditions: voluntary organizations, government offices, schools, prisons and international advisory bodies to name a few. Developments in communication, production and distribution technologies have served to catalyse this institutional a range. They have made possible a division of labour, a separation of agency and ownership, and a geographical reach that has meant this production and distribution of goods, services and knowledge rarely occurs in one place under the auspices of a single person. Our products are made by many hands and machines, our services can be delivered from remote places, our organizations can be owned and influenced by many different interests and our knowledge arises from many sources. With this separation between imaginative judgements, planning, ownership and execution comes an increasing need for co-ordinating wealth-creating effort across activities, times and spaces, and hence a need for managers. As economies grow in terms of net product, as material expectations rise, as managerial behaviours become increasingly sophisticated, and as the shareholder form of such economies becomes increasingly the norm, these management activities are becoming ever more pervasive.

While there is broad recognition of the basic nature and extent of such management activity, and so its being an area of our personal and social lives worthy of study, what is far less certain

## THE SAGE DICTIONARY OF QUALITATIVE MANAGEMENT RESEARCH

is how we should understand, present and judge it. It is to pursue this understanding, presentation and judgement that the field of management research is devoted, a field that, from tradition, has been occupied by a number of disciplines from the social sciences. So to understand what we mean by managerial research we have to understand both what we mean by social science and why management as an activity is amenable to such scientific study. Among those who study managers, the activity of management and the wider organizational structures and effects complicit with managerial endeavour, agreement across the disciplines has proved difficult to reach. Psychologists, sociologists, mathematicians and anthropologists each have their own setups in the field of management studies, setups whose own traditions, paradigms, worldviews and tools cast the character and influence of management and managerial problems in particular forms. So where some researchers emphasize an overtly technical understanding of management as though it were akin to social engineering or eugenics, others emphasize its inherently political nature. Whether managers are akin to caliphs, architects, or technicians is open to constant debate. Some may deem the role inherently praiseworthy where others remain suspicious of or antagonistic to its influence. Similarly, where some researchers might argue that what they are studying are individuals and the cognitive patterns associated with subjective judgement and decision-taking, others regard the appropriate unit of analysis to be wider, sometimes objectifying forces, such as the structural influence of foreign direct investment, or the influence of non-negotiable cultural traditions. This variety of perspectives and approaches in the field can make any attempt to locate the edges of management research activity a messy one. This is why Whitehead's identification of the three-fold urge informing human inquiry is instructive. What defines a field is not so much common methods or units of analysis, but its influence on human problems. The influence he envisages coming from any form of broadly scientific activity is not despotic in its nature, but a self-control emerging from the capacity to see things anew, to envisage how the world is and so how it can be both different from the way it is, and better. It is this ability to see things anew that Whitehead argues as the root of good science, irrespective of the field or discipline. For a social science this ability involves researchers recognizing the intimate relationship between their perspectives and the experience of the ongoing problems people have. Social science involves researchers in an internal and ongoing relationship with the human experiences that form the raw material for the data by which they make sense of the social world. From a management research perspective, these problems can be those of managers and their colleagues, or those under the influence of managers, including the researchers themselves, or those in the thrall of management as an idea or even ideal. As life goes on, so the problems change; they are not fixed, universal or entirely tractable, and as social scientists the researcher's job is to reflect and attempt to make sense of this. It is only by recognizing this complicity with the phenomena they research that management researchers can realize the kind of influence that Whitehead talks about, because it is only from this recognition that management can be understood in terms of its potential rather than a formally defined field.

Take, for example, the problems that first prompted Frederick Taylor to associate inquiry into managerial life with a science. These included the problem of how to better control growing organizational size; how to instil order into workers and how to rid the influence of greed from investment cycles. Each of these problems was experienced by Taylor within a specific milieu, a shop or factory, set within a wider economic sector such as retail or steel manufacture, and within the even wider environs of the USA and international economies. Hence Taylor's problems were both local and global; there were immediate concerns of payment schedules set against the equally pressing backdrop of the changing demographics, technologies and economic aspirations of an increasingly internationalized workforce. His response was to insist management activities adopted clear and consistently applied methods (time and motion studies, psycho-physiological testing), planning (simple hierarchical structures, rationalized production systems) and standardization (task separation, common parts) (Guillén, 2006: 4). These

## WHAT IS MANAGEMENT RESEARCH?

responses meant factories became better organized and as a result more efficient as more units were produced with less material and labour. Yet the responses were also problematic. Far from enabling us to live better, Taylor's solutions were felt by some to be retrograde, confining the rhythms of work to the steady and monotonic pulse of a machine. For example, the heirs to the British Arts and Crafts movement grouped in associations such as the Industrial Research Fatigue Board thought the solutions of scientific management cheapened human life by ignoring the vital contribution humans made to the nature of products. Emotional and social well-being was being traded for supposed efficiency. In responding to his problems, Taylor was simply creating new problems: the growing urban workforce was abandoning the skills associated with self-sufficiency and creativity in exchange for a wage economy that tied them into a wider culture of dependency and idiocy. Swapping apprenticed crafts for repetitive tasks meant there was little room for personal engagement with and even interest in what was being produced. In turn, the self-management and group ownership solutions advocated by these exponents of Arts and Crafts were criticized for being anachronistic in tone and impractical in effect; and so the inquiry into desirable forms of production went on to try to reconcile drives for efficiency with problems of boredom, alienation and absence. With each arrival at a solution comes an invitation for new, critical departures.

Viewing this from Whitehead's perspective suggests that what matters is not that these early management researchers failed to find a lasting solution to their problems, but that as problems were met with solutions new problems arose warranting new insights. What defines managerial research activity is not the provision of definitive solutions that look to set habitual and seemingly natural limits to what we do and say, but the continuing interest in how an awareness of what we do and say can transform our practices of material wealth creation by posing alternatives – either reforming existing practices or creating alternate ones. It is as a result of providing such contrasts that researchers are able to distinguish how we live now from how we might live well and live better. If all social science does in providing explanations is to fix meanings concerning what exists, it quickly degenerates because of what Whitehead called fatigue; the ennui arising from repeated attempts at explaining 'the base matter' of life un-enlivened with any concern for why that life matters and in what ways it can be lived differently.

So to avoid fatigue the field of management inquiry and its associated disciplines needs to concern itself with problem-solving activities and hence the distinct and alternate perspectives that ensue when attempts are being made to solve these problems. It is in this spirit that we have edited this dictionary. The inclusion of different worldviews, methodologies and methods reflects the range of disciplinary influences, each of which serves in some way to encourage and assist researchers in their inquiry. Taken as a whole, the variety might appear bewildering. With each worldview and methodology come different background emphases, different techniques to be learnt and different data to be 'collected'. Yet in our experience this 'critical mess' of views, methods and data (Gartner and Birley, 2002) is the stuff of doing good research. Judging appropriate moves in the field requires a familiarity with different views, methods and data because from such familiarity come skills of discernment and hence the ability to go on and do research that matters and in ways that broach both alternate forms of practice and new practices. One common thread around which much of this variety is wound in this dictionary, however, is the term 'qualitative'. The entries cover largely non-statistical approaches to data collection and analysis. The definitional split between qualitative and quantitative research enjoys widespread currency among the social science community, and in using the term in our dictionary title we continue to accept it as one that endures.

Yet perhaps too much is made of these being opposing approaches. For example, we would argue that the logic or framing that defines the research questions of social scientists using structured equation modelling is the same as that of those using discourse analysis, or semiotics; relevances are identified, categories assigned, theories are proposed that researchers believe will

## THE SAGE DICTIONARY OF QUALITATIVE MANAGEMENT RESEARCH

create a particular truth, and audiences are spoken to, irrespective of the methodologies or even worldviews adopted. What does distinguish the approaches is the manner in which experiences are highlighted and how they are sifted. Quantitative work tends to limit its range to finding out what exists from a perspective of distance (isolating variables) and of averaging phenomena through numerical proxies, whereas qualitative work looks to find what exists by involvement and hence accepts the ensuing messiness and difference of using rich descriptions. Both approaches are prescriptive in so far as comparisons are made with other situations (both real and imagined), yet where quantitative approaches seek legitimacy in causal weightings of significance, qualitative work uses exemplary stories or cases. Qualitative work typically requires researchers to involve themselves with those they are studying in some way; a dialogue is created, whether cursorily and at some physical remove (as in short telephone interviews or postcards, for example) or through sustained engagement (as in participatory research). There are of course exceptions: archive work in business history, for example, is often conducted without such direct engagement, though data analysis is still conducted from a narrative text. Similarly, some quantitative work also involves engagement, the collection of survey data being an obvious example.

The distinction is useful in so far as it suggests differing views as to what management research is for. Those exclusively using quantitative methods will tend to emphasize the importance of getting accurate representations (data) of what we mean by the social that can be analyzed for patterns from which theories concerning managerial activity can be stated and then re-tested for robustness, both in different conditions and over time. What are significant for the researcher using quantitative approaches are the patterns that can or cannot be established between isolated variables. Qualitative work also shares a desire for scientific rigour in making accurate representations, as well as being minded to focus on the problems being experienced by managers and their organizations. Yet it remains distinctive in its approach to delivering on these aims. Quantitative research tends to be oriented to large groups of problem situations – such as understanding how to organize wealth-creating institutions so as not to materially disadvantage critical constituent interests – and there are common elements that are few and significant enough to isolate as separate phenomena on the assumption that the propositions by which they are explained afford possible orientations towards possible futures. Yet these propositions are nothing more than tendencies, ones that often pertain in fairly strict *ceteris paribus* conditions, of the kind: increasing regulatory surveillance reduces scope for malfeasance (Knight, 1921: 8). Fluctuations, modifications and accidents are excluded, and it is these that qualitative work picks up on, arguing that much is missed by way of understanding, and hence influence, if the only views and approaches being used are those that require an explicit limiting of what constitutes scientific engagement. To get at the exceptions, the outliers, and to convey the depth and richness of managerial and organizational life, qualitative research places more emphasis on words than numbers; it requires research converse with the researched in some way, and that attention is given to the experiences as they are experienced as much as to the manner in which experiences can be abstracted and compared. A branch of qualitative research labelled under the term 'action' approaches take this engagement one stage further, working to establish collaborative inquiry, often using managers themselves as collaborators and sharing the collection and analysis of data to ensure the implementation of findings.

If we were to map out in some way the objectives of managerial research covered by both quantitative and qualitative approaches, then, broadly speaking, these would occupy either end of a dimension that ranged from reporting what exists to an active involvement with trying to improve upon what exists. The social theorist Walter Runciman suggests this range can be parsed into four related activities: reportage, explanation, description and evaluation (Runciman, 1983; Schatzki, 2005b), with quantitative approaches typically (though not exclusively) bunching around reportage and explanation, and qualitative extending across all four.

## WHAT IS MANAGEMENT RESEARCH?

### Reportage

Reporting events offers what Runciman calls a primary understanding; the use of established words to present what exists and what happens. Here there is no attempt at explaining the social world, only recounting observed phenomena in standard 'factual' terminology using analytic definitions. So reporting on the corporate governance structures of a particular firm might, for example, involve: listing the company officers; drawing an organogram of who is responsible for what; outlining the regulatory frameworks and the actions required to comply with such, and so on. There is no attempt to explain why the governance system is in place, or to describe what life is like living with the system, or to suggest improvements to it. Reportage involves breaking a phenomenon into elemental parts in order to have a clearer understanding of how those parts are made up, how they relate to one another, and how they are influenced by other phenomena.

The problem with limiting management research to reportage is that it is notoriously difficult to avoid the use of words that carry with them assumptions as to why one event or experience is of significance and others are considered peripheral, or even go unnoticed. Facts, notably those associated with social science, are not uncontested in the way that they can simply be reported; in the main they are observer-dependent phenomena; to exist they have to be experienced by subjects. As Searle (2005) remarks, this observer-dependency does not preclude the possibility of having an objective science of these facts because we can still make true and false claims concerning such phenomena. What it does preclude, however, is equating physical facts (phenomena existing independent of human intentionality such as water) with social facts (phenomena that arise from, or have arisen from, the interestedness to human beings). So, to go back to the corporate governance example, the reporting of regulatory structures will require the researcher to identify significant parties to such structures, primary among which will be shareholders. Shareholders exist because of a widespread web of existing activity and tradition in which the idea of having owners who are removed from daily managerial activity, who have the mobility to divest and re-invest, and who have an interest in maximizing capital returns, has become a sensible and even desirable condition. Reporting on the existence of shareholders carries with it an attempt to define them: for example, as those who carry the residual risks associated with wealth-creating activity. Yet no sooner are words such as 'residual', 'risk' and 'wealth' used than the definition begins to become contentious. Are longer-term shareholders different from short-term ones in terms of the quality of the risks they carry and the kinds of ownership they exert? Don't others, such as employees with pensions, also carry residual risk without being shareholders? Is the risk accepted by shareholders extendable to those who have pledged to buy shares at some point in the future? To approach questions such as these it is not sufficient to simply report on events and define terms. As we have already argued, what is of interest to management researchers are not formal definitions per se - which are never absolute - but what gives rise to the fact of phenomena like shareholders. To report on the existence of shareholders is to invoke an entire grammatical background of word use by which the *activity* of shareholding has come to make sense. The meaning of the word is indistinct from its use within this wider grammar, meaning any sustained effort to report events inevitably slips into explanation, description or evaluation.

### Explanation

Explanation is the lifeblood of scientific research. It realizes what Runciman calls a second-order understanding, in which the facts stemming from observations and experience are interpreted in some way by aligning them with presuppositions and theoretical ambitions. What is disputed is the character of such alignment; specifically whether the explanation of social

## THE SAGE DICTIONARY OF QUALITATIVE MANAGEMENT RESEARCH

phenomena can operate causally from which emerge law-like connections between actions, the intention 'behind' the action and the generative conditions of the intention itself. Why we humans think, say and do things has been explained with reference to conscious, unconscious or subconscious mental states, reasons, beliefs, norms and principles, structures, dispositions, communal agreement, rules, habitus, grammar, social structures. A scientific explanation will typically err towards a dispassionate identification of elements held in some form of serial alignment. It is out of these recognized patterns that theories can be built, and then tested through their application to other phenomena. Those theories that are continually able to fit these other phenomena come to be general or even grand theories whose truth status no longer requires constant verification and that gradually become part of the background assumptions by which future research is conducted. Most social science does not aim for theories that provide such a level of law-like coverage and predictability (Schatzki, 2002). Even economics recognizes the need to constantly absorb apparent contradictions between its assumptions and observed phenomena (recognizing goods of ostentation, for example, as those for which demand rises because of a high price) and accepts that some of its theories, like its curves, run almost asymptotic to the world (as indicated by the frequent use of *ceteris paribus* conditions).

Another indication of the distinct nature of social science is that where laws are created they are typically embellished with literary effect. So we have, for example, the political scientist Roberto Michels identifying 'The Iron Law of Oligarchy'. The adjective 'iron' is an implicit acknowledgement that the theory itself is a rhetorical creation: its insight (in this case, the tendency for elite groups to always emerge from within institutions, no matter how radical and egalitarian the framing ideas of the institution) is suggestive, rather than exhaustive and predictive, precisely because it retains its connexion to the open-ended phenomena under investigation. Michels' law arose from an impressive and sustained analysis of a number of political parties in pre-First World War continental Europe. From these cases came an explanation as to why revolutionary and worker parties became apologists for policies that contributed to the expansionist aspirations of an imperialist and demonstrably anti-working-class German empire. Once formed, the parties became increasingly absorbed into institutional politics, and so to the demands of compliance and representation from which skilled elites emerge. The predictive element of the theory is such that were the conditions of the cases to be found experienced by human beings elsewhere, then the emergence of such elites would be likely. The law has an 'iron' quality not because the phenomenon is inevitable in all cases, but that in some it is very likely and the effect has an 'iron-like' grip on those experiencing it.

Again, to go back to Searle's (2005) point about the nature of social facts, the reason social laws work is not because they predict events, so much as convey tendencies that resonate with those who might have, or are currently, or even are about to, experience them. To understand a simple social performance of the kind: person X is performing action A because of reasons 1 and 2, and requires an assessment not only of the collective intentional framework distinguishing the type of action being undertaken, along with the physical form and range of the tools being used, but also an evaluation of what counts as a correct or sensible performance. It is a mistake of management researchers if they assume their categories capture the social world as it is because the world in which they are interested is human, and hence not easily reduced to abstract planes, fixed entities and stable relations. No matter how abstracted, the data of managerial research carry with them the residue of volition, of judgement, and hence the possibility that they could have been, and could be in the future, different (Ghoshal, 2005). What are being explained in social science are not objects and their relations but objects that are assigned what Searle calls 'status functions':

... where the objects cannot perform the function in virtue of their physical structure alone, but only in virtue of the collective assignment or acceptance of the object or person as having a certain *status* and with that status a function. (Searle, 2005: 7-8, emphasis in original)

## WHAT IS MANAGEMENT RESEARCH?

Ascribing status functions fundamentally casts the nature of the phenomena being dealt with – human being–action–object arrangements – as non-predictable. As Schatzki (2002) argues, those who claim explanations are in fact law-like in the same way as the second law of thermodynamics are wrong, but not because there is inadequate fit between the law and phenomena (exceptions can always be empirically observed), but because fundamentally human action is not predictable and so it makes no sense to attempt to divine the kind of predictive, tight theories common to explanatory modes in natural science. Any achievement in social science, whether reportage, explanation, description or evaluation, is never complete; what Cooper (2005) calls the ‘aboriginal potential’ of human life always spills over the edges of these grammatical containers. To study managerial life effectively requires that researchers acknowledge the empirical existence of will. So in looking to explain managerial life they must avoid the presumption that the experience of being a human being can be pinned down to the perspective a researcher might have on this human being (Callon, 1999).

This is not, however, to abandon theorizing, but to understand the concepts and theories generated by social scientists as useful ways of punctuating and understanding experience rather than covering it. The French social theorist Pierre Bourdieu, for example, uses an abstract and universal concept he terms the ‘field’: a unified social space whose elements are the forces of power such as prevailing interests that impose themselves upon people as they occupy the field, and the struggles that ensue as people with differentiated means confront one another on the field. Fields, it is argued, can exist as different forms (there are fields of power, and more specific fields associated with politics, or education) and across different societies (the French fields are distinct from Chinese ones), yet the field (in conjunction with other concepts such as *habitus*, which Bourdieu uses to refer to those basic dispositions of character that we have and carry through our lives) allows a social scientist like Bourdieu to explain the relational conditions by which the interests of any one individual or group come to be distinct among others, without being confined to those conditions (Bourdieu, 1998: 31–34). Bourdieu’s concepts and theory can be argued against, but as social theory, and so any critique might be centred upon the clarity of his concepts (how can a field be a unity without being itself grounded in wider, unifying social forces?) or the theoretical implications (with so much emphasis on social structures, is there any room for individual judgement?). Bourdieu is suggesting concepts such as his are useful when trying to explain the practical problems faced by all people and groups when, in social conditions, they attempt to demonstrate the desirability of their interests. Others might have different concepts or even homonyms with different meanings and emphases – the sociologist Norberto Elias, for example, also uses the concept *habitus* but argues for a less ‘structural’ interpretation of what it means to be unthinkingly disposed to do something in a certain way. What matters, then, is that theoretical explanation resists the tendency to assume concepts somehow reveal and then represent the social world, when their explanatory power rests with their helping us to describe and redescribe it in potentially novel ways.

### Description

As well as reporting and explanation, social science is engaged with what Runciman calls descriptions, where the researcher aims to try to realize what those being studied thought of both themselves and the events in their lives. Descriptions don’t aim to convey the quality of the experiences directly, they still rely on concepts to account for and compare it. The aim is to grasp in some way what it is like to be the people under investigation and to go through the experiences as they go through them. This requires an imaginative effort on behalf of the researcher to appreciate meanings and understandings from within the field. Usually associated with ethnomethodology (small-scale or micro-interpersonal practices) and ethnography (larger-scale, culturally bound practices), the concern is for a richly textured and typically ongoing investigation that looks to interpret meanings and understandings associated with the actions, events and mental

## THE SAGE DICTIONARY OF QUALITATIVE MANAGEMENT RESEARCH

states under investigation, rather than explain them. Schatzki (2005b) calls this a practical understanding; the researcher is looking to act in ways that those under investigation can appreciate. This can even extend to being able to participate somehow in their spontaneous or unreflective habits; a direct comprehension of what it means to practically engage in their lifeworld. It also requires of the researcher an acceptance that they are themselves versed in a specific practice of inquiry; social science is first of all a practice, and only second an intellectual endeavour, involving researchers in submitting to the traditions and values whereby others within the practice recognize that it is research that is being done (Piore, 2006). To describe others' practices requires some form of reflexive engagement with the actions and thoughts that make up one's own practice because only then can some form of blending take place sufficient for the researcher and the researched to become complicit with each others' experiences.

In addition to being self-reflexive, the associated difficulty in description is appreciating the veracity, integrity and scope of the accounts given by those being studied. It also assumes that respondents themselves know the reasons for their actions or whether, as is often the case, they might need help to make sense of and articulate the views they hold, how they were formed and how they might be changed. Typically, more is required for a description to be authentic than simply repeating verbatim the account of those involved. Inherent within any account of experience are ambiguities associated with the rise and fall of things being studied (employees and employers don't always remain in post, firms go bust or merge with others bringing new dynamics and values into play, research access can be closed off and so on) and with the narrative demands of researchers having, in effect, to tell stories. According to the literary theorist William Empson (1947: 48), this persisting ambiguity of meaning and understanding arises because when studying other human beings what is apparently said and done need not be what was actually said or done, or be entirely what was said or done, or even be accepted as what was said and done. There could have been possible indecision about what was meant; the deliberate intention to mean a number of things; the fact that statements and events can be read with different meanings; and the fact that the practice of research can itself change the nature of experiences under observation. Researchers have to acknowledge and negotiate all of these, while recognizing the double bind that these types of ambiguity might equally apply to their own writing, conversations and presentations. This sense of ambiguity is not something to be avoided necessarily, but worked at. This pushes the demands of description away from those associated with dispassionate rigour and towards what Latour (2005: 135) calls giving 'vigorous accounts' free from the comfort of empty, technical abstractions.

### Evaluative

In becoming immersed in these accounts there are moments when the evaluative backgrounds informing both the practice of research and those being researched come to the fore. This is brought out most clearly when considering the difference between instrumental and expressive action. Typically, explanations and descriptions of what motivated someone to act in the ways they did accord with identifiable reasons whereby an action is undertaken in order to bring about a state of affairs. In considering these reasons and aims, some form of evaluation as to their desirability becomes possible; consideration of the instrumentality of the action gives way to consideration of the expectations and values inherent within it. To understand the desirability of the act is to understand how its outcome contributed in some way to human well-being. This awareness of contribution takes the researcher from a concern with how social meaning arises (conceptual clarity and explanatory structures) towards a concern with the relation between meaning and flourishing. The problems being addressed are not just those of what, why and how phenomena occur, but whether the occurrence is acceptable.

## WHAT IS MANAGEMENT RESEARCH?

Evaluative analysis exposes research to the vagaries of historical and social relativism. What counts as a contribution to well-being in one era or society might be considered somewhat ineffective or damaging in another. The Christianized and patrician provision of homes, schools and credit systems favoured by many early industrialists in the UK, for example, might be regarded less favourably in a social climate suspicious of tithed belief systems. That Robert Owen found good reasons for building worker communities around his factory at New Lanark was tied into his wider evangelising concerns with encouraging temperance, diligence and rectitude, into his oscillating feelings of self-confidence, and into his being accepted to a greater or lesser degree by his peers as an individual whose business activity constituted a worthy and worthwhile enterprise (Podmore, 1906/1971). To analyze the activity of Robert Owen requires that researchers understand and tease out the multiple criteria and standards of the practices of industrialism and philanthropy by which such improving action can be assessed. As already mentioned, not all of Owen's actions can be assessed instrumentally. In addition, there were expressive actions that evoke an attitude that cannot be explained or described with reference to outcomes. Robert Owen did not create *New Lanark* simply because he wanted to make profits or secure a better and more god-fearing life for his workers. The enterprise was also a direct expression of belief – a sentiment. To evaluate expressive action requires the researcher to recognize the difference between conditions of rationality (the criteria and standards by which outcomes can be assessed in the light of prevailing norms, values, rules, and so on) and conditions of intelligibility (the criteria and standards that transcend historical and social context in so far as they are shared by researcher and researched alike). As with descriptive achievements, evaluation requires the researcher to develop a sympathy with the researched that is distinct from that of being simply an observer. Here the practical understanding has an ethical hue, hence its being *phronetic*, an ability to appreciate how the goods being pursued constitute the right goods. To understand Robert Owen is to evaluate his idea of the good, as well as describe and explain it.

	<b>Reportage</b>	<b>Explanation</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
Question type	What exists or happened	Why does it exist or happen?	What was the experience like?	Was it desirable?
Informing spirit	Clarity	Coherence	Comprehension	Improvement
Adverbial mode of inquiry	Inquisitive	Systematic	Imaginative	Ethical
Aim of inquiry	Representation	Objectivity	Depth	Progress

By discussing Runciman's distinctions between reporting, explanation, description and evaluation we are suggesting that management research should not be idealized as being one type of activity above all others, but an amalgam of these four, the mix and admixture of which the researcher has to broker. The entries in this dictionary constitute one tool for doing this, affording introductions on the views and approaches others have taken, and taken on, so as to report, explain, describe and evaluate what is significant about wealth-creating activity.