

Office Practice

LECTURE : 1

TOPIC : Office Work

AIM : To understand what is an office and its functions

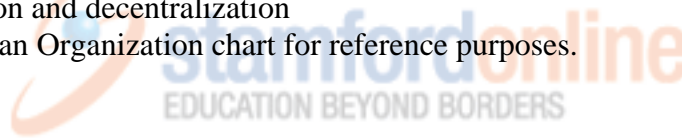
LEARNING OUTCOMES:

After completing this chapter you should be able to understand:

1. The functions and responsibilities of each department
2. The functions of an office
3. Office centralization and decentralization

TOPIC OUTLINE:

- 1.1 Types of Departments with individual functions and responsibilities
- 1.2 Functions of an office
- 1.3 Centralization and decentralization
- 1.4 Example of an Organization chart for reference purposes.



NOTES:

1.1 Types of Departments with individual functions and responsibilities

Office work is undergoing an evolutionary process. Office work still remains secondary to the primary function of any organisation. New techniques, procedures and equipment have been introduced and these have changed the entire concept of the office as well as the roles of those who work in the office. Technology is changing the face of office work.

The office performs a complementary role, providing an essential control element over personnel and activities.

Organisations are frequently divided into a number of departments and office work is an integral part of the work of all departments.

The functions and responsibilities are illustrated in the next page.

Department	Special Observations	Functions And Responsibilities	Associated Documents And Forms
Purchasing	Frequently a Centralized function	Securing the best prices. Checking quality and sources of supply. Ensuring reliability of suppliers. Matching deliveries to production schedules. Negotiating discounts, monitoring goods received, checking against invoices, stock control, devising distribution and requisition procedures.	Requisitions Price Lists Quotations Estimates Orders Advice Notes Delivery Notes Invoices Debit Notes Credit Notes Stock Control Cards Stock Lists
Administration	The principal paperwork department dealing with all day-to-day running of office type activities. Often headed by a Company Secretary or Chief Administrative Officer (CAO)	Provision of central administrative and secretarial support. Handling and processing of mail, telephone services, form design and control. Printing and reprographic services. Maintenance of official company records, share registration matters, all legal and insurance matters. Registering of patents and copyright.	Variety of standard business forms and documents.
Marketing	Central to any organization. Conveniently divided into three principal areas of activity viz, research sales (import and export) distribution.	Market research; Advertising and publicity, attending exhibitions and trade fairs.	Inquiries, Estimates, Quotations, Price Lists, Catalogues; Sales Orders, Advice Notes, Dispatch Notes, Invoices, Debit Notes, Credit Notes, Bills of Lading, Bills of Exchange, Certificates of Origin, Consignment notes, Customs Declaration, Questionnaires
Management Services	A range of specialist services which may include: Computing and DP; Management Information Systems;	Analyzing work patterns; improving procedures; improving facilities and working environment. Reviewing office layout; designing Computer Systems; Programming	Policy documents; Plans; Progress charts; Reports; Legal documents; Pro formats;

	O&M, Facilities Management, Security Services. This department provides expertise, which may be called upon by any other individual or department.	computers; Processing information; Solving problems, Standardizing procedures; Enhancing decision making capacity of management; Introducing checks and control mechanisms; Improving the use of resources; Improving security.	Governmental forms; Confidential designs; Specifications; Flow charts; Standard business documents; Agendas; Minutes
Human Resources	Four main areas of activity: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recruitment and Selection - Training; - Welfare; - Industrial relations. 	Manpower planning – assessing future needs against present staffing; Appointment, promotion and distribution of staff; Implementation of employment legislation; designing incentive schemes. Operating suggestion schemes; Staff development and training; Designing job specifications; Job Analysis; Job Evaluation; Staff Appraisal; Salary and wage matters; Redundancy and dismissal procedures; Attendance at Industrial Tribunals; Health and Safety; Environmental factors; Welfare; Social & Recreational matters.	Contracts of employment; Job descriptions; Job specifications; Interview assessment forms; Suggestion scheme forms; Safety reports. Accident report forms; Job evaluation forms; Personnel specifications; Staff Handbook insertions.
Finance and Accounts	A mix of financial accounting, funding and control activities	Preparation of final accounts; Maintenance of Accounting records for submission to Registrar and Home Ministries; Inspector of Taxes; Compilation of Financial reports; Internal audits; Analysis of capital and revenue expenditure; Preparation of budgets; Credit Control; Cost accounting; Payment of wages and salaries; Tax matters; Comparing and contrasting alternative investments; Performing different analytical techniques to control finance. E.g. cash flow analysis; cost benefit analysis; Introducing computerized methods.	Trial balance; Trading and profit and loss accounts; Balance sheet; Flow of funds statement; Bank reconciliation statement; Petty Cash book; Wage records; Cash analysis; Tax Tables; NI deduction cards; Clock cards; Tax returns
Production	Usually a mix of engineering, planning and control sections.	Balancing requirements against resources, i.e. orders and sales forecasts against manpower, materials and machines; Balancing work schedules to ensure production economies; Working to specified standards, e.g. (SIRIM) regulations, BSI specifications; Ensuring safety	Production schedule; Stores requisition; Specifications; Time sheets.

		standards; Carrying out work study; Designing special tools; Performing quality control tests; Controlling stock levels; Monitoring machine breakdowns; Rescheduling as necessary; Diversifying in response to innovation and change.	
Research and Development (R&D)	The centre of innovation and change but often under funded and subject to cutbacks because investment is very expensive. A company's failure to invest often means losing out to fierce foreign competition.	Design, develop and test new products and prototypes; Make short-term, low-cost improvements; Establish long-term projects; Engage in pure and applied research; Suggest ways of diversifying, e.g. extending product range, going off in a new direction.	

1.2 The Functions of an office

The office provides a support function to ensure that information is processed efficiently so that the organization can achieve its purpose. The function of an office can be categorized under 6 headings:

1 Receiving and collecting information:

- At personal level - by word of mouth
e.g. personal callers, customers, sales representatives etc.
- By telephone - e.g. from customers, suppliers, local government officials and business associates etc.
- By written communication - both internally and externally;
e.g. request for quotations orders, application for jobs, complaints, promotional material about new products, materials and equipment, official publication from government sources on regulations, standards safety, taxation, etc.

2 Sorting and classifying information:

- Analyzing content
- Systematically arranging for further processing and distribution

3 Processing and interpreting information:

- Gathering statistics
- Feeding information into a computer
- Interpreting computer printouts
- Costing and budgeting

4 Recording information for future reference:

- By setting up all forms of records system
- By maintaining all such systems

5 Communicating information presented in the most effective way:

- Verbally on a person-to-person basis
- By telephone
- On paper
- By graphics visual presentations
- By datacoms

6 Protecting the business and safeguarding its assets:

- By care of finances
- By care of stock and fixtures and fittings
- By insurance
- By statutory obligations

These functions will involve the performance of the following office services:

- Receiving mail, distributing mail, dispatching mail
- Receiving visitors
- Receiving and routing telephone calls, placing telephone calls
- Arranging meetings
- Arranging and controlling transport
- Typing, transcribing from dictation
- Duplicating and copying
- Filing, keeping records
- Controlling stocks
- Processing documentation of all kinds
- Receiving cash, paying out cash
- Book keeping and accounting
- Preparing visual displays
- Record processing, word processing, data processing
- Ensuring inter-office communications

1.3 Centralisation And Decentralisation

Centralisation

A centralised system means that all functional departments call on one large office services department for the provision of all their secretarial, typing, copying or records-storage facilities. This department will be organised into sections using specialist office staff.

In many large organisations a number of the services listed below would be centralised. This means that the service would be organized and controlled from a central point. This point may be central in terms of location within a building or perhaps central in that instructions would come from head office in respect of what should be done, how, when and by whom, with regular reports on progress.

In terms of office services the centralised approach will often mean the location of personnel in one area, e.g. a word processing pool or reprographic centre.

Advantages of Centralisation

- Better administrative control
- Improved supervision
- Standardisation of systems
- Better handling of peaks of work
- Economies of space
- Better utilisation of equipment and staff resources
- Utilisation of specialist staff
- Economies in terms of expenditure on heat and light

Disadvantages of centralisation

- Increased paperwork
- Inflexibility of systems
- Delays through location and bureaucracy
- Rigid control of staff
- Impersonal working relationship and environments
- Lack of variety in work
- Restriction of experience and promotion opportunities

Decentralisation

A decentralisation system means that each department employs its own secretarial and clerical staff to handle the information relevant to its specialist activities. For example, in a Marketing Department, the marketing director has his own personal secretary while subordinate managers call on the services of a small group of shorthand or audio typists. The department has its own storage system and copying facilities.

Advantages of decentralisation

- Staff becomes proficient by concentrating on the work of a single department.
- Staff are likely to have strong identification with the work of the department
- Staff feel part of a team
- Help provide more confidentiality of information
- Possibility of moving out of secretarial work into a minor managerial/supervisory post

Disadvantages of decentralisation

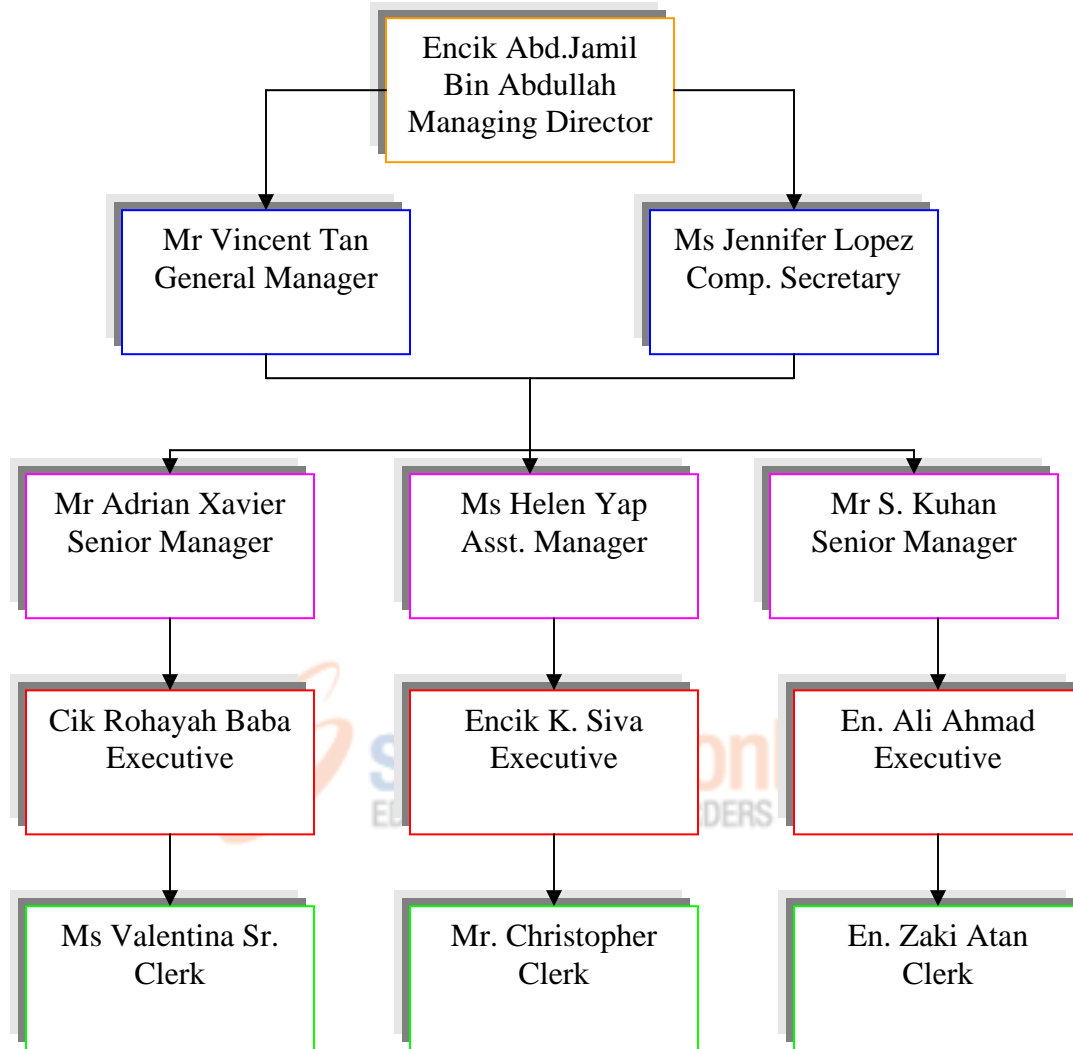
- Duplication of information and equipment may make the system costly
- Differences in status and working conditions may cause friction among similar grades of staff in different departments

Frequently centralised services

- **Data Processing and Computer Services**
Provides a round the clock, non-stop service, backing up and maintaining an organisation's computing and information processing needs. Data processing also provides a computer – writing service for departments needing to administer tasks via computers.
- **Mail Room and Telecommunication**
With the widespread use of information technology in an organization today, the function of the mailroom to administer internal and external mail is being superseded in many instances by telecommunications services located at key access points. Such services include fax, telex, teletex, and E-Mail.
- **Filing**
Many organizations run a centralised filing and records system which loans out paper-based files on request and logs respective users. Advantages include better control, security, avoidance of duplication and fewer lost documents at the cost of accessibility, time taken to obtain documents and slower pace of up-dating.
- **Procurement and Purchasing**
Economies can be significant by centralizing the purchasing functions and take advantage of bulk purchasing by doing so.

1.4

**ORGANISATION CHART
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The organisation chart shows the upper level, middle level and lower level of personnel in an office.

The upper levels here are the Managing Director, General Manager and Company Secretary.

The middle levels here are the Senior Managers and the Asst Manager and the executives. The lower levels are the clerks.

The organisation chart also helps staff identify their superiors and their level of authority in the office as well as their subordinates.

REFERENCES

1. Helen Harding, Secretarial Procedures- Theory and Applications,

TUTORIAL QUESTIONS - WEEK 1

1. Name and describe the main functions of an office.
2. What is centralisation and give three examples of departments that can be centralised.
3. What is the use of an organisation chart?

