Unit – I Chapter-1

Introduction to Basic Skills in an Organisation

Dr. Vibha Sharma
Associate Professor & Head (Retired)
Department of Public Administration
MCM DAV College for Women, Chandigarh
Website - https://vibhasharma.in/

Objective

The objective of this chapter is to make the students understand:

1. The meaning of Organisations and Skills;
2. Importance/Significance of Basic Skills;
3. Key Basic Skills;
4. Challenges in imparting Basic Skills; and
5. Strategies for Developing and Enhancing Basic Skills.

Introduction

Organisations are an integral and indispensable part of human life. They serve as the steel framework that enables the judicious utilisation of the three key resources — men, money, and materials — to achieve desired goals. An organisation provides a structured framework that allows individuals to work collectively toward common objectives. In today's fast-paced and ever-evolving work environment, technical expertise alone is no longer sufficient. Every organisation, whether small or large, relies heavily on the basic or foundational skills of its employees. These skills are the building blocks of workplace efficiency, collaboration, and overall success. Basic skills are essential for effective communication, team performance, time management and problem-solving. Each of these contributes significantly to the achievement of both individual and organisational goals.

This chapter explores the definition of **Organisation** and **Skills.** It also discusses the Types, Significance, and Methods of Developing Basic Skills in a professional setting.

Definitions

Organisation: An organisation is a group of individuals who come together to achieve common goals. It provides a structural framework within which individuals or functionaries are assigned specific roles and responsibilities. The entire system operates through a predetermined process, with interrelated components performing diverse activities to accomplish the set objectives. An organisation defines *what* work is to be done, *how* it is to be carried out, and *who* is responsible for performing it. It also involves the interrelation, grouping, and regrouping of tasks, along with a clear definition of authority and responsibilities of individuals occupying various positions, each contributing as a part of the larger whole towards the achievement of organisational goals. An organisation, being an important and integral part of the modern human endeavour to achieve its goals, is defined by scholars in the following manner:

— **Compact Oxford English Dictionary:** Organisation means a group of people framing a structure to achieve common objectives. It includes:

(i) the action of organising;

(ii) a systematic arrangement or approach; and

(iii) an organised body of particular people with a particular purpose.

— **Chester I Barnard:** An organisation is a system of consciously coordinated activities or forces of two or more persons**.**

— **Dimock and Dimock:** Organisation is the systematic bringing together of interdependent parts to form a unified whole through which authority, coordination and control may be exercised to achieve a given purpose.

— **Mooney and Riley:** Organisation is the form of every human association for the attainment of a common purpose**.**

Analysis

Scholars view organisations from different perspectives but converge on key elements like common purpose, a deliberately structured system, coordinated group efforts, communication channels and well-defined roles. Scholars such as Barnard and Dimock emphasise coordination and control, while Mooney and Riley highlight the universal nature of human associations. Collectively, these definitions reveal that an organisation is not merely a formal structure but a dynamic, purposeful system that channels human effort towards shared goals, playing a vital role in both individual success and societal development.

Skills: A Skill is the ability of a person to perform a specific task or to proficiently carry out highly operational, administrative, and technical functions within an organisation. A Skill means an ability of an employee to carry out a task with pre-determined objectives within the given time. A few definitions are as follows:

— **Merriam-Webster Dictionary:** Skill is the ability to use one's knowledge effectively and readily in execution or performance.

— **Skill Training Module of Medical Council of India:** Skill is the ability to perform a task leading to a specific, predefined outcome.

— **B Knapp:** Skill is the learned ability to bring about pre-determined results with maximum certainty, with the minimum outlay of time or energy or both.

Basic Skills

Basic skills mean essential abilities that are required to function effectively in an organisation/or workplace. These skills include communication and coordination, teamwork, and decision-making skills. Some definitions of basic skills are as follows:

— **OECD:** Basic skills are the foundation for learning, work, and life. They include literacy, numeracy, and problem-solving skills needed in technology-rich environments.

— **UNESCO:** Basic skills refer to those skills that are fundamental for participation in social, economic, and political life.

— **National Research Council (USA):** Basic skills are those foundational skills that underlie more complex thinking, learning, and performance.

Skills, thus, are the capabilities or proficiencies developed through training or experience, enabling individuals to perform tasks effectively. Humans have been divided on the basis of their skills, which differentiate them as skilled and non-skilled. The skilled workers are generally more trained, higher paid, and have more responsibilities than unskilled workers.

Importance/Significance of Basic Skills

Basic skills such as communication, teamwork, time management, and problem-solving play a vital role in ensuring the smooth functioning of any organisation. The importance of basic skills in organisations is as follows:

1. **Boosts Productivity:** Basic Skills like time management, communication, cooperation, and coordination help employees complete tasks professionally, boosting efficiency and effectiveness, thereby leading to higher productivity.

2. **Enables Teamwork and Collaboration:** Basic Skills like Interpersonal skills and emotional intelligence enable smooth partnership among team members, fostering a healthy and cooperative work environment within the organisation.

3. **Improves Organisational Communication:** Strong verbal and written communication skills reduce misinterpretations, ensure clarity in official/organisational communication, and support improved functioning.

4. **Encourages Organisational Change:** In an era of rapid technological innovation, organisational change has become the norm. Possession of strong basic skills makes employees more adaptable and responsive to such changes, thereby facilitating smooth, timely, and effective transitions within the organisation.

5. **Supports Problem-Solving and Innovation:** Critical thinking and analytical skills help in identifying and categorising issues, generating resolutions, and encouraging innovation and modernisation within the organisation.

6. **Increases Employee Confidence and Morale:** Possessing essential skills empowers employees to perform their tasks efficiently and with confidence. This not only enhances individual performance but also boosts job satisfaction and overall morale within the workplace.

7. **Ensures Customer Satisfaction:** Foundational skills like effective communication, active listening, and professionalism play a crucial role in enhancing customer experience, building trust, and ensuring long-term customer retention.

8. **Reduces Operational Costs:** Employees equipped with the right skills perform tasks more accurately and efficiently, minimising errors, rework, and delays. This leads to significant savings in operational costs and enhances overall productivity.

9. **Strengthens Future Leadership:** Basic skills lay the groundwork for leadership development by improving critical competencies such as decision-making, effective delegation, and conflict resolution. These skills prepare employees to take on leadership roles with confidence and capability.

10. **Achieves Organisational Goals and Progress:** When employees across all levels are equipped with essential foundational skills, the organisation functions more efficiently, aligns better with its strategic vision, and can sustain long-term development and success.

Key Basic Skills

Basic skills form the basis of individual and organisational success. Essential competencies like communication, teamwork, time management, adaptability, critical thinking, and problem-solving enable employees to accomplish the organisational objectives effectively and harmoniously within the given time. Basic skills are universally applicable across job profiles, making them crucial for daily operations, interpersonal interactions, and organisational development. By acquiring these skills, the employees become more productive, collaborative, and responsive to change. Basic skills are as follows:

Basic Skills in Organisations

1. **Time Management and Organisational Skills:** Time management and organisational skills are essential for maintaining efficiency and maximising productivity in the organisation/workplace. These skills involve prioritising tasks effectively, often using the following tools:
   - **The Eisenhower Matrix** to distinguish between urgent and important activities.
     — Introducing the Eisenhower Matrix: https://www.eisenhower.me/eisenhower-matrix/

     — How the Eisenhower Matrix can fix your Procrastination issues: The Art of Improvement: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k7xJwo1fVyU

   - **Setting SMART Goals** (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) helps in maintaining clarity and direction.
     — SMART Goals: a guide to setting goals that matter: https://www.bitesizelearning.co.uk/resources/smart-goals-meaning-examples
     — Lake Superior State University: https://www.lssu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/SMART-Goals-Worksheet-1.pdf
     — University of San Diego: SMART Goals Template: https://www.sandiego.edu/hr/documents/STAFFGoals-PerfPlanningGuide1.pdf
   - Delegation: Delegation and proper scheduling ensure that responsibilities are evenly distributed and timelines are met. Moreover, the ability to avoid distractions and manage

workload efficiently allows individuals to stay focused, meet deadlines, and achieve professional objectives with greater ease.

2. **Communication Skills:** Communication skills are vital in every organisation, encompassing verbal, non-verbal, and written forms of expression. Effective communicators not only convey their ideas clearly but also excel in active listening, ensuring shared understanding and encouraging collaboration. Constructive feedback on issues and goals nurtures a culture of continuous improvement. Proficiency in writing emails and documents is essential for maintaining professionalism and precision in organisational communication. Cross-cultural communication is has become increasingly vital in today's globalised environment, requiring awareness and sensitivity to diverse cultural norms and communication styles to ensure inclusivity and avoid misunderstandings.

— Effective Communication Skills: Paper Fold Exercise: Northeast Wisconsin Manufacturing Alliance: https://newmfgalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/effective-com-skills-paper-fold-activity-8-19-2015.pdf

3. **Team Work and Interpersonal Skills:** Teamwork and interpersonal skills are essential for nurturing a collaborative and productive work environment. These skills involve the ability to cooperate with others and take shared responsibility for achieving common goals. Building rapport and demonstrating compassion contribute to robust professional associations and mutual respect amongst team members. Effective conflict resolution strategies help address disagreements constructively, preventing disruptions and upholding team harmony. Additionally, the ability to network effectively—both within and outside the organisation—augments collaboration, resource sharing, and access to new openings, which strengthens the organisations.

— Texas Tech University - 30 Team-Building Games, Activities and Ideas: https://www.depts.ttu.edu/provost/studentlife/Involvement/Leadership/documents/team_builddinggamesactivitiesideas.pdf

4. **Problem-Solving and Decision-Making Skills:** Problem-solving and decision-making skills are vital for effective functioning in any professional setting. These skills begin with the ability to identify and define problems, which sets the basis for suitable solutions. Employing logical, analytical, and creative thinking empowers individuals to explore multiple perspectives and develop pioneering styles. Carefully evaluating various alternatives helps make informed and comprehensive decisions. Furthermore, understanding and weighing potential risks involved in the decision-making process ensures better readiness and reduces the likelihood of adverse outcomes.

— Living as a Leader: Worksheet for Problem Solving and Decision-Making: https://www.livingasaleader.com/Files/Book-Resources/LiveAsALeader_ProblemSolvingandDecisionMaking.pdf

5. **Adaptability and Learning Skills:** Adaptability and learning skills are crucial in today's fast-evolving professional landscape. They involve embracing change with a positive attitude and using feedback as a tool for growth. Technological adaptability ensures that individuals stay relevant by learning and integrating new tools and platforms. Regular self-assessment and a clear sense of goal orientation help in tracking progress and identifying areas for improvement. A commitment to continuous learning fosters personal and professional development, enabling individuals to remain agile, competent, and forward-thinking in their roles.

— Symonds Research: 10 Best Adaptability Activities for Adults and Employees: https://teambuildingworld.com/adaptability-activities/

6. **Digital Skills:** Digital Skills refer to the ability to effectively use digital tools, platforms, and technologies in both personal and professional contexts. These skills are essential in today's technology-driven world and include proficiency in software like MS Office, using email and cloud storage systems, and managing digital communication tools. Digital literacy also extends to social media management, basic cybersecurity awareness to ensure safe online practices, and the continuous learning of new digital tools to stay updated with technological advancements. Having strong digital skills enhances productivity, communication, and adaptability in modern organisational environments.

7. **Leadership and Supervisory Skills:** Leadership and supervisory skills are essential for guiding teams and driving organisational achievements. Effective leaders lead by example, inspire trust, and positively influence team members through their actions and decisions. They provide constructive feedback, continuous support, and clear guidance to help others grow. A strong sense of responsibility and accountability ensures that leaders uphold high standards and own the outcomes of their decisions. Understanding various leadership styles—such as transformational, which focuses on inspiration and change, and transactional, which emphasises structure and performance—enables leaders to adapt their approach based on team needs and situational demands.

   —— Symonds Research: 14 Fun Leadership Activities and Games for Adults and Students: https://symondsresearch.com/fun-leadership-activities-games/

Challenges in Developing Basic Skills

Although basic skills are fundamental to the success of individuals and organizations, several persistent challenges hinder their development:

1. **Limited Access to Quality Education or Training:** In many cases, people/employees may not have access to oundational education or skill development programs due to economic, geographical, or institutional limitations. As a result, individuals enter the workforce without essential competencies in communication, problem-solving, or digital literacy. Additionally, organisations may not prioritise or invest adequately in in-service training or upskilling programs, leaving employees underprepared.

2. **Resistance to Change or Learning:** Some employees may resist adopting new skills or changing long-standing habits due to fear of failure, lack of confidence, generational gaps, or complacency in comfort zones. .

3. **Poor Feedback or Mentoring Systems:** Feedback and mentorship are critical to skill development. If organisations lack structured feedback mechanisms or fail to assign experienced mentors, employees struggle to identify areas of improvement or learn from experience. In such environments, even motivated individuals may not know how to grow or correct their shortcomings, resulting in stagnation.

4. **Cultural or Language Barriers:** In diverse workplaces, cultural differences or language limitations can impede the effective transfer and application of basic skills. Misunderstandings in communication, varying expectations, or discomfort in training sessions conducted in unfamiliar languages can all hamper learning. Furthermore, cultural norms may discourage open dialogue or assertiveness, affecting interpersonal and communication skills.

These challenges can significantly affect an organisation's ability to cultivate a skilled, adaptable, and high-performing workforce. Proactively identifying and addressing these issues through inclusive

policies, continuous learning programs, and supportive leadership is essential for overcoming these barriers.

Strategies for Developing and Enhancing Basic Skills

To bridge the gap in basic skills among employees, organizations must take proactive and structured measures. The following strategies have proven effective in fostering skill development and building a more competent workforce:

1. **Training Programs:** Structured training initiatives like workshops, in-house seminars, skill development programmes, and e-learning platforms help in equipping employees with both basic and advanced competencies. These programs must be tailor-made for the organisation. Regularly updating training content also ensures relevance in a rapidly evolving work environment, especially in digital skills, communication, and time management.

2. **Mentorship and Coaching:** Establishing formal mentorship programs pairs less experienced employees with seasoned professionals. This relationship promotes knowledge sharing, confidence building, and problem-solving support. Coaches and mentors serve as role models, offering insights based on their own experiences, which accelerates learning and reduces the likelihood of repeating past mistakes. One-on-one guidance also helps in setting realistic career goals and navigating workplace challenges.

3. **Performance Feedback:** A culture of regular, constructive feedback is essential for continuous improvement. Clear and actionable feedback help employees understand their strengths and the areas they need to develop. When feedback is timely, respectful, and supportive, it boosts motivation and allows individuals to take ownership of their growth. Using tools like performance appraisals, 360-degree reviews, and feedback surveys ensures a well-rounded perspective.

4. **Self-Learning Opportunities:** Encouraging self-directed learning fosters autonomy and intrinsic motivation. Organisations can support this by providing access to digital libraries, curated content, learning management systems (LMS), discussion forums, and knowledge-sharing sessions. Employees should be encouraged to explore new ideas, read industry-relevant materials, and participate in online communities or MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses). When individuals take charge of their learning journey, they become more agile and better prepared for future responsibilities.

By integrating these strategies into the organisational culture, companies can ensure a continuous learning environment that not only fills current skill gaps but also prepares employees to meet future challenges with competence and confidence.

Conclusion

Basic skills enable individuals to perform their tasks efficiently, adapt to challenges, collaborate with others, and contribute meaningfully to organisational goals. As workplaces evolve, the demand for adaptable, communicative, and ethical professionals continues to grow. Investing in the development of basic skills is, therefore, not just a personal advantage but a strategic necessity for any forward-looking organisation.

Important Terms/Terms/Information

1. **Mooney and Riley:** Organisation is the form of every human association for the attainment of a common purpose**.**

2. **Merriam-Webster Dictionary:** Skill is the ability to use one's knowledge effectively and readily in execution or performance.

3. **Time Management and Organisational Skills:** Time management and organisational skills are essential for maintaining efficiency and maximising productivity in the organisation/workplace. These skills involve prioritising tasks effectively, often using the following tools:

4. **Team Work and Interpersonal Skills:** Teamwork and interpersonal skills involve the ability to cooperate with others and take shared responsibility for achieving common goals. Building rapport and demonstrating compassion contribute to robust professional associations and mutual respect amongst team members.

Short and Long Questions

Short Answer Type Questions
1. Write one definition of Organisation.
2. Write one definition of Skill.
3. Write one definition of Basic Skills.
4. Write three points of importance of Basic Skills.
5. Give three challenges in developing Basic Skills.
6. Write three strategies to develop Basic Skills.
7. Write three key Basic Skills required in Organisations.
8. Write a note on any one type of Basic Skill.
9. Give three types of Basic Skills.

Long Question
1. Define Basic Skill. Give its Importance. Enumerate Key Basic Skills.
2. Discuss the Significance and Key Basic Skills required in Organisations.
3. Discuss the key Basic Skill in Organisations, Challenges in Developing Basic Skills and Strategies to develop Basic Skills.

Additional Resources

1. **NCERT:** https://ncert.nic.in/vocational/pdf/kees101.pdf
2. Oxford Home Study Centre: Problem Solving (Short Course): https://www.oxfordhomestudy.com/courses/online-management-courses/problem-solving-courses
3. Harvard Business School: Free Leadership Book: https://info.email.online.hbs.edu/leadership-ebook?_gl=1*1mjbp0n*_gcl_au*MTIzMTc1MDc3LjE3NTM5MDYwMTI.