

Unit- I: Chapter 3 – D - Unity of Command

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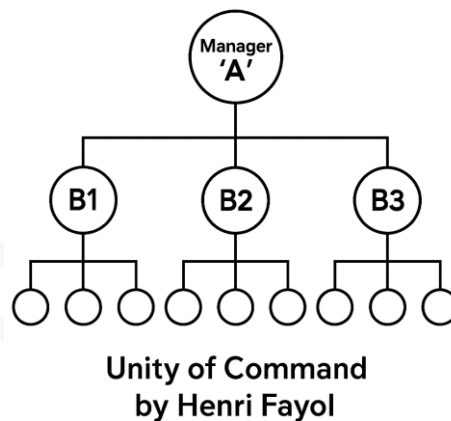
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Objectives: Objectives of this chapter are to make the students aware of:

- The Principle of Unity of Command;
- Advantages and Disadvantages of Unity of Command;
- Principle of Functional Foremanship; and
- Principle of Unity of Command in action.

Introduction

Unity of Command is one of the principles of an organisation given by Henri Fayol which states that an employee of an organisation should receive command only from one superior. It also means that no employee should be subjected to the command of more than one superior as it can create conflict in the organisation. A hierarchical organisation based on the scalar chain running from the top to the bottom of an organisation is the basis of the principle of Unity of Command. It provides for a unified command in the entire organisation leading to one head at the top directing the activities of the entire organisation.



Definition: Following are some definitions of Unity of Command:

1. **Henri Fayol:** Unity of Command means that 'an employee should receive orders from one superior-only.
2. **Pfiffner and Presthus:** Unity of Command means "that any member of an organisation should report to one and only one leader.
3. **Dimock and Dimock:** A corollary of the chain of command is the unity of command, the principle that each employee should have only one boss.

According to Unity of Command, a principle given by Henri Fayol, a subordinate should receive orders only from one superior.

Advantages of Unity of Command: Unity of Command has the following advantages:

1. Good superior-subordinate relationship leading to good industrial relations.

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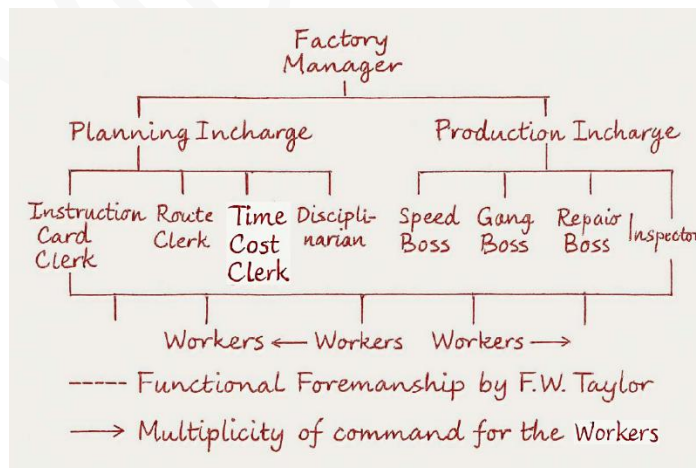
2. Helps in avoiding confusion due to clear lines of authority and responsibility.
3. Effective coordination amongst employees is instrumental in making effective teams.
4. Conforms to the scalar chain of command.
5. Better decision-making due to effective coordination, clear lines of authority and responsibility.
6. Clear channels of upward and downward communication.
7. Good discipline due to clear lines of authority and responsibility.
8. Higher productivity.

Disadvantages of Unity of Command: Unity of command has the following disadvantages:

1. F.W. Taylor advocated the concept of “functional foremanship”, under which a worker receives orders from eight supervisors in different areas of the work he performs. Functional foremanship ensures specialisation and expert supervision.
2. According to Herbert Simon, the principle of unity of command conflicts with the principle of specialization.
3. J.D. Millet advocated “Dual Supervision” and argued that unity of command needs reconciling due to dual nature of the job – i.e. technical and administrative.
4. Seckler-Hudson states that the old concept of one single boss for each person is seldom found, in fact in complex governmental situations, and many interrelationships exist outside the straight line of command.
5. J.D. Millet advocates the theory of 'Dual Supervision' in place of unity of command. He argues that the Authority and Responsibilities of the managers may overlap, leading to a lack of unity of command.

F.W. Taylor's Principle of Functional Foremanship

The Principle of Functional Foremanship, propounded by F. W. Taylor, states that a single worker or supervisor is not an expert in all aspects of their job. He opined that there should be eight foremen to guide the workers in the planning and production departments.



Planning Department – The following four foremen are in the planning department:

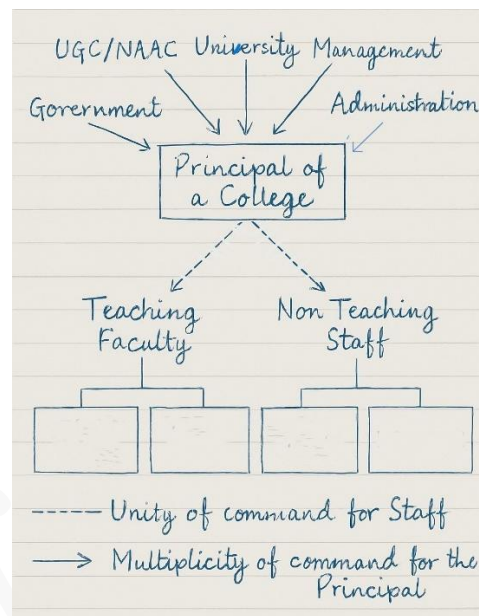
- i. Route Clerk – Responsible for the route of production;
- ii. Instruction Card Clerk – Responsible to give instructions to the workers;
- iii. Time and Cost Clerk – Responsible for preparing time and cost sheets; and
- iv. Disciplinarian – Responsible for maintaining discipline.

Production Department – The following four foremen are there in the production department:

- i. Speed Boss – Responsible for timely completion of work;
- ii. Gang Boss – Responsible for keeping machines and tools ready;
- iii. Repair Boss – Responsible for maintaining machines and tools; and
- iv. Inspector – Responsible for maintaining the quality of work.

Unity of Command in Practice

In the technology-driven current times, it is not possible to practice the principle of Unity of Command in the conventional form due to specialisations and super-specialisations in literally every field of knowledge. A person may receive orders from several specialised superiors, so the principle of unity of command cannot be practiced. If these commands given by specialised officials are in different areas of operation and are not in conflict with each other, then they are acceptable and help in improving the functioning of the organisation. The author wishes to state here that currently, the situation in organisations is as follows:



Conclusions

Unity of Command given by Henri Fayol relates to one man receiving orders from only one boss as duality or multiplicity of command may lead to conflict in the organizations. In the present age of specialization due to science and technological advancements, the principle of unity of command has changed in practice.

Important Terms/Concepts/Information

1. **Henri Fayol:** Unity of Command
2. **F W Taylor:** Functional Foremanship
3. **Functional Foremanship:** The Principle of Functional Foremanship, propounded by F.W. Taylor, states that a single worker or supervisor is not an expert in all the aspects of his job. So, he advocated that eight foremen should guide the workers in the planning and production departments.

Planning Department – Four foremen in the planning department are:

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Production Department – Four foremen in the production department are:

- e. Speed Boss – Responsible for timely completion of work;
- f. Gang Boss – Responsible for keeping machines and tools ready;
- g. Repair Boss – Responsible for maintaining machines and tools; and
- h. Inspector – Responsible for maintaining the quality of work.

4. **Unity of Command:** According to the principle of Unity of Command, one employee should have only one boss, and he should receive orders from him only.

Short and Long Questions

Short Answer Type Questions

1. Explain Unity of Command in 25-30 words.
2. Differentiate between Henri Fayol's Unity of Command and FW Taylor's Functional Foremanship.

Long Question

1. Write a note on Unity of Command.

Suggested Readings

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