
UNIT 14 COORDINATION

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14.0 OBJECTIVES

After studying this unit, you should be able to :

- explain the meaning and objectives of coordination
- distinguish between coordination and cooperation
- explain the various types of coordination
- enumerate the principles of coordination, and
- discuss the techniques of coordination.

14.1 INTRODUCTION

In Blocks 2 and 3 you have learnt the various functions of management **viz.**, planning, organising, staffing, directing and controlling. We shall now discuss the function of coordination which is very essential for any organisation to achieve its objectives.

Management has to procure and make the best use of resources like men, material, money and machines to succeed in achieving business objectives. The resources are at the disposal of managers for different types of functions and operations, which are inter-related. Thus, to attain the objectives of the organisation **efficiently**, different activities and efforts must be planned, organised and **carried** out in an orderly manner.

The various activities of a business organisation are grouped and carried out in **different** departments. Within each department again there is division and sub-division of operations according to the nature of tasks involved. Activities of such divisions, **sub-divisions and** departments are to be monitored by harmonising individual and group efforts. This can be achieved through coordination only.

In this Unit you will learn the meaning of coordination, its importance, the techniques and principles of coordination as well as the limitations to coordination.

14.2 DEFINITION OF COORDINATION

You must have seen that in an orchestra, its conductor directs activities of the group in such

a manner that it produces harmony and melody in music. Similarly, in an enterprise a manager (conductor) must also direct the activities of the group in such a manner that it brings harmonious and united action to achieve the common goal.

In every organisation, division and sub-division of activities become necessary to derive the benefits of specialisation and smooth operation. Individuals and members of groups are expected to contribute maximum efforts in the performance of their tasks. But, to ensure that their efforts are not in conflict with each other, individual and group activities are to be harmonised so that there is unity of action. The process by which a manager brings unity of action in an organisation is coordination. Thus, managers at all levels are required to coordinate the efforts of their subordinates.

Coordination refers to the orderly arrangement of individual and group efforts to ensure unity of action in the realisation of common objectives. It involves synchronisation of different actions or efforts of the various units of an organisation to provide the requisite amount, quality, timing and sequence of efforts so that the planned objectives may be achieved with minimum of conflict.

According to Brech, "Coordination is balancing and keeping together the team by ensuring suitable allocation of tasks to the various members and seeing that the tasks are performed with the harmony among the members themselves." According to McFarland, "Coordination is the process whereby an executive develops an orderly pattern of group efforts among his subordinates and secures unity of action in the pursuit of common purpose."

Theo Haimann defines Coordination as "the orderly synchronising of efforts of the subordinates to provide the proper amount, timing and quality of execution so that their united efforts lead to the stated objectives, namely the common purpose of the enterprise." From the above definitions we can infer that coordination is a conscious process of assembling and synchronising various kinds of activities with a view to achieve specific objectives.

The following five points emerge from the above discussion :

- 1 **Harmonisation of group efforts:** Most of the management thinkers have emphasised on harmonisation of group efforts to point out that organisation is not merely a collection of men, money, material, machines, methods, but these resources need to be properly organised. Besides, subordinates efforts must also be synchronised to ensure proper timing and quality of execution so that the organisational objectives are realised.
- 2 **Unity of action:** Each individual in the organisation performs certain unique and different types of tasks. He is not only related with others in the organisation (through structure) but his function also affects other's functions. A manager tries to synchronise individual efforts to attain unity of efforts in the pursuit of common objectives. Coordination, therefore, applies to group efforts.
- 3 **Pursuit of common purpose :** Each employee has goals, perceptions, values, beliefs, attitudes etc, and makes every effort to achieve his own goals. When individuals and groups work for achieving their objectives, they also contribute something for the achievement of organisational goals. The conflict, if any, between personal and organisational goals gets resolved through coordination. Managers have to persuade individuals and groups to work for a common purpose while achieving their own objectives as well.
- 4 **Continuous process :** Coordination is not a one-shot deal but a continuous process. It starts with the very first action in the process of establishment of business and runs through until its closure. It is a continuous process for achieving unity of purpose in the organisation.
- 5 **Responsibility :** It should be noted here that coordination is the most important responsibility of every manager in the organisation as he tries to synchronise the efforts of his subordinates with others. When this is not felt or realised by managers, there is a need to appoint special coordinators.

14.3 NEED AND SIGNIFICANCE OF COORDINATION

In any business organisation people are engaged in carrying out different tasks. A manager, through coordination, can avoid potential conflict among people, duplication of work, reduce wastage and save scarce resources. Synchronisation and harmonisation of various individual and departmental activities assume importance in achieving the desired organisational objectives.

To ensure harmonious and smooth functioning of an enterprise, the departmental activities, all decisions and human actions are required to be pulled together. In doing so the managers should prevent overlapping and duplication of efforts that may affect the unity of action. Therefore, effective coordination is required in every business organisation.

In every organisation coordination has become inevitable due to the following reasons:

- 1 Increase in size and complexity of operations : The advantages of economies of large scale production and distribution have led to the establishment of large business organisations. This has made the operations of the organisation more complex. Moreover, in a big organisation, a large number of people are employed to carry out a variety of tasks. This complex structure of the organisation has given rise to problems of supervision and communication. Therefore, coordination plays an important role in integrating all these activities in the organisation.
- 2 Specialisation : In this age of specialisation, highly skilled people are employed to perform technical jobs. Division of work into specialised functions and departments leads to diversity and lack of uniformity. Specialists in charge of various departments focus on their own functions with little regard to other functions. Coordination helps in synchronising the activities of different units and creates unity in the midsts of diversity.
- 3 Clash of interests : There is a possibility of conflict between the personal goal of the employee and the organisational goal. Sometimes they may pursue their own specialised interests at the expense of the larger organisational goals. Coordination helps to avoid conflict between individual and organisational goals. It brings about harmony between the two types of goals.
- 4 Different outlook : Every individual has his own way of working and approach towards problems. Capacity, talent and speed of the people differ widely in any organisation. Therefore, it becomes imperative to reconcile differences in approach, timing and effort to secure unity of action. By resolving the differences and bringing about unity coordination helps in creating congenial atmosphere in the organisation.
- 5 Interdependence of units: Various units of an organisation depend upon one another for their successful functioning. The output of one unit serves as the input of another unit. Therefore, the need for coordination increases with an increase in the interdependence between organisational units.
- 6 Human nature : There is a wide variation of human nature and attitudes in the organisation. Managers are confined with the job of their own departments. They do not involve in the activities of other departments. This is more so when managers are compensated on the basis of their performance. Coordination helps in the integration of the activities of different departments in the organisation,

14.4 OBJECTIVES OF COORDINATION

You have learnt the meaning and need for coordination. Let us now discuss the objectives of coordination which have been listed as below:

- 1 Reconciliation of goals : Conflicts in organisation arise because of differences between organisational goals and individual goals and the individualistic perception of goals and its realisation. Coordination is the only means by which such conflicts can be avoided.

Through personal contacts and better communication **conflicts** are minimised and unity of purpose is achieved. Commitment to organisational goal is also brought about.

- 2 Total accomplishment of goals : Although individuals are firmly committed for the achievement of organisational goals individual contribution to work bring about total accomplishment which is in excess of the aggregate of the individual contribution. This is realised **through** the establishment of a reporting system and **clear-cut spelling** out of business objectives.
- 3 Harmonious **relationships** : Another objective of coordination is to maintain **harmonious** relationship between individuals and the brganisation. Individuals derive satisfaction when their work **performance** brings about realisation of the desired goal. This keeps their morale high.

As the organisation is structured with clear lines of authority and responsibility, conflict between line and staff personnel is minimised and better **relationship** is established. This not only helps in reducing labour turnover, but also enables workmen to stick to their jobs in the organisation. Thus, coordination in an organisation is expected to promote good personal **relationships**.

- 4 **Economy and** efficiency : Coordination aims at bringing about economy and efficiency of operations through synchronisation of activities and individual **efforts** whereby wastage of resources is minimised and there is saving of time and expense. Reduced rejection and minimum delays in execution lead to efficiency of operations in the organisation.

14.5 COORDINATION VS. COOPERATION

The terms 'coordination' and 'cooperation' cannot be used interchangeably. Cooperation refers to the collective efforts of people who associate voluntarily to achieve specified objectives. Cooperation indicates the willingness of people to help each other, while coordination is much more inclusive requiring more than the desire and willingness to cooperate. Coordination is an organisational effort while cooperation is individual.

Coordination is an orderly arrangement of group effort to provide unity of action in the pursuit of **common** objectives. It requires deliberate effort on the part of management. Existence of cooperation among members of the group facilitates coordination but it does not mean that coordination originates automatically from the voluntary efforts of the group members.

Coordination has to be achieved through conscious and deliberate efforts of the manager. For example, when a dozen persons are required to shift a heavy object from its present position to **another** position, their willingness to cooperate with one another for the common purpose may not be successful unless one of them coordinates their efforts. He must give proper direction to all members of the group to apply the right type of effort at the right time and right place. Cooperation is a necessary but not a sufficient condition of coordination. Coordination without **cooperation** and cooperation without coordination are detrimental to the organisation. To be effective an organisation requires both cooperation and coordination.

Points of distinction between coordination and cooperation are:

- i). Cooperation is for the most part the **result of** voluntary attitudes on the part of people in **an organisation** while coordination is a state of affairs which an executive brings about through deliberate action on his part.
- ii) Cooperation is necessary for successful coordination, while coordination is necessary, for the success of the organisation as a whole. Coordination is a broader concept.
- iii) Cooperation has no elements like **time, quantity**, or direction. Whereas coordination is the concerted effort of requisite **quantity** and quality arranged at the proper time.

14.6 TYPES OF COORDINATION

On the basis of scope **and** flow in an organisation coordination may be classified as internal **and** external, and horizontal and vertical.

- 1 **Internal** and external coordination : Synchronisation of the activities and efforts of **individuals** within each of the respective units, departments, plants and offices of an **organisation** is known as internal coordination. External coordination relates to **synchronisation** of the activities and efforts **between organisation** and its external environment comprising market, technology, **government, shareholders**, etc. External coordination is very essential for the survival **and growth** of the organisation just like **internal** coordination.
2. **Vertical** and horizontal coordination: Vertical coordination refers to synchronisation of activities and efforts of people at different levels in the organisation. Vertical coordination is ensured by top **management** through **delegation** of authority. Horizontal coordination means coordination between various positions at the same level in the organisation, which is brought about through **mutual** consultation and cooperation.

Check Your Progress A

1 Define Coordination.

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2 Distinguish between Coordination and Cooperation.

- i)
- ii)
- iii).....

3 State whether the following statements are True or False,

- i) Coordination helps in resolving the conflict of personal goals and organisational goals.
- ii) Large size of business and its complex operations make coordination essential.
- iii) The need for coordination decreases with an increase in the interdependence between organisational units.
- iv) Coordination provides unity of action in the organisation.
- v) Coordination between various positions at the same level in the organisation is called vertical coordination.

14.7 PRINCIPLES OF COORDINATION

You have learnt that coordination is crucial to the success of any business enterprise. **Let us** now discuss various principles of **coordination**.

- 1 Direct person to person contact : Direct **contact** among the responsible persons in an **organisation** brings coordination **through** inter-personal relationships, exchange of views, responses and communication. Personal contacts bring about agreement on methods, actions, and lead to quick and efficient realisation of corporate objectives.

Direct contacts pave the way for removing misunderstanding, resolve controversies between the manager and his subordinates, and help in smooth functioning of the organisation.

- 2 Early take off: Coordination can never be initiated at the execution stage. In fact, coordination should start from the very beginning of planning process itself. Right from the time of setting objectives, policy formulation and drawing up plans for execution, coordination has to be carried out. It helps in resolving the problems as soon as they come up. Moreover, participation right from the initial stage not only facilitates agreement but also induces people to give their unconditional commitment to organisational goals. Therefore, coordination must have an early start.
- 3 Contingency : Coordination which starts early continues till the attainment of the desired objective. Coordination is a never-ceasing and never-ending exercise of managers who strive constantly to maintain proper balance among different groups.
- 4 Reciprocal relationships : All actions and people influence and are influenced by other actions and people in the whole organisation. Thus, all factors in a situation like material, men, environment are reciprocally related. This necessitates integration of all efforts and interests towards the same purpose.
- 5 Self-coordination : By self-coordination we mean that one department modifies itself favourably even when another department does not have direct control over it and the same is affected by other departments activity. For example, when the production department alters its total production in such a way as to suit the sales capacity of the marketing department, self-coordination is said to have taken place.

14.8 MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES IN COORDINATION

It is clear, by now, that coordination is not something which can be ordered by an executive but is brought about by the executive as he performs his managerial functions effectively and efficiently. Management techniques available to an executive for achieving coordination are outlined below:

- 1 Coordination by rules or procedures: If the work is highly structured and proper systems have been laid down to carry them out, one can easily predict the outcome. Rules and procedures act as work guide to subordinates for taking decisions in course of their normal activities. Through rules and procedures, managers can easily specify ahead of time, and the required actions to be taken by his subordinates.
- 2 Coordination by type of organisation and departments: In business organisation coordination can be achieved by departmentalisation. Forms of departmentalisation facilitate coordination better than others. For instance, departments under functional organisation are highly interdependent. The chief executive has to work hard to coordinate production, marketing, finance etc. for the company as a whole. But in the departments under product organisation, the head of the product division will have his own production, marketing and finance departments under his authority and control. Hence, the chief executive does not have any difficulty in coordinating the activities under product organisation.
- 3 Coordination by simple organisation structure: A simple and sound organisation is an important means of coordination. The lines of authority and responsibility from top to the bottom should be clearly defined. This ensures minimisation of interpersonal conflicts and makes room for unified action. Unity of purpose is the primary goal of coordination. Therefore, goals of the organisation and members contribution to achieve the goals through their independent action within the structure must be clearly understood by everyone in the organisation. Only a simple organisation structure is expected to facilitate it and help in better coordination.
- 4 Coordination by chain of command: The principle of 'scalar chain' which creates superior-subordinate relationship in the organisation through hierarchy or chain of

command facilitates better coordination. Clear lines of authority and responsibility having been laid down by the superior, because of his organisational position, has the authority to issue orders and instructions to his subordinates. Moreover, coordination between interdependent units can be easily achieved by putting the subordinates under one boss.

- 5 Coordination by committees: Formation of committees to coordinate is a sound management technique. Committees are the body of knowledgeable, experienced and responsible persons entrusted with discharging some functions collectively as a group. Nowadays managers achieve coordination by creating interdepartmental committees, task forces, and teams. These committees are usually composed of representatives of interdependent departments and they are required to meet periodically to discuss common problems and ensure interdepartmental coordination. Committees help in establishing and maintaining face-to-face contact and personal relationships and to promote voluntary cooperation.
- 6 Coordination by **communication** : Communication is the life blood of decision making. It also plays a vital role in coordination. Communication facilitates proper understanding between individuals and group among whom coordination is to be achieved. Through effective communication each and every person understands his scope of activity and limits of functioning. As a result of such understanding one can ensure both horizontal as well as vertical coordination. Modern information systems, use of computers in data processing and communication network free from any barrier allow easy and quick flow of information. This enables the executives to coordinate business operations efficiently.
- 7 Coordination by conference : In large business organisation conferences are organised at regular intervals to provide a platform for discussion of various problems faced by different departments geographically dispersed. In such conferences top management and executives at unit level exchange views, identify problems and resolve it through discussion. Such discussions and decisions pave the way for better coordination throughout the organisation.
- 8 Coordination by special coordinators: In an organisation where an executive finds little time to attend to basic issues of coordination, he may hire an assistant to do the job for him. Such a person is known as special coordinator. His main task is to collect information regarding problems, analyse the same, list various alternatives available, and suggest steps to be taken by the executive to coordinate. Thus, the special coordinator provides valuable assistance to the executive in making decision.
- 9 Coordination by leadership and supervision : Leadership of top management is the surest means of achieving coordination. Sound leadership can persuade subordinates to have identity of interests and to adopt a common outlook. It may also bring self coordination within the group.

Personal supervision and establishment of informal contacts with people help to create a climate of mutual trust and cooperation which is the foundation of business coordination.

14.9 PROBLEMS OF COORDINATION

Though coordination between different departments, groups and activities is essential for the success of an organisation, some limitation must be overcome. They are discussed below:

- i) **Uncertainty**: A constant threat comes from an uncertain future. Natural phenomena like rain, flood, disease, uncertain political condition, abnormal changes in the behaviour of individuals etc., pose uncertainty and challenge to coordination.
- ii) **Personal limits**: Coordination is limited to the extent of managers knowledge, experience, ability and wisdom in business operations and also his personal character.
- iii) **Organisational limits**: There is a lack of orderly method of developing and adopting new and appropriate ideas and programmes in the organisation structure. Because of its

particular structure, managers are not able to develop and use administrative skills which limit the degree of coordination.

Check Your Progress B

- 1 State which of the following statements are True and which are False.
 - i) Coordination is best achieved by order or force.
 - ii) Coordination should start from the very beginning of the planning process.
 - iii) Self-coordination means coordination of departmental activities only.
 - iv) The chief executive has greater difficulty in coordinating functional departments than product divisions.
 - v) The principle of scalar chain facilitates coordination.

- 2 Fill in the blanks.
 - i) Communication facilitates both and coordination.
 - ii) Rules and procedures help to predict the of work effort.
 - iii) The limitations of coordination stem from, and limits.

14.10 LET US SUM UP

Complex nature of present day business organisations, conflict between organisational and individual goals and unpredictable nature of human beings require management to coordinate various activities in business to achieve its objective. To coordinate is to harmonise all the activities of a concern in order to facilitate its working and its success. Through coordination, an executive develops an orderly pattern of group efforts among his subordinates and secures unity of action in the pursuit of common goal.

The main objective of coordination involves reconciliation of goals, total accomplishment of business objective, maintenance of satisfactory personal relationships, and economy and efficiency in operation. It is through continuous harmonisation of group efforts, and unity of action in pursuit of common purpose that the above can be attained.

Cooperation refers to the collective efforts of people who associate voluntarily to achieve specified goals, while coordination is an orderly arrangement of group efforts to provide unity of action in the pursuit of common objectives. It is a deliberate effort by the management.

The basic principles of coordination involves: direct person to person contact, early take off, continuity, reciprocal relationships, and self-coordination. Whereas the techniques of coordination includes: coordination by rules or procedures, by type of organisation and departments, by organisation structure, by effective communication, by chain of command, by committees, by conference and by leadership and supervision.

14.11 KEY WORDS

Chain of command: An organisational hierarchy as a result of delegating authority sequentially from the top down to the first-line supervisors.

Coordination: Achieving harmony of individual and group efforts towards the accomplishment of group purposes and objectives.

Cooperation: The collective efforts of people who associate voluntarily to achieve specified goals.

Committee: A group of persons to whom, as a group some matter is entrusted for purposes of information, advice, interchange of ideas, or decision.

Horizontal coordination: Coordination between various positions at the same level in the organisation.

Self-coordination: Self motivated phenomenon in which people at work adjust themselves according to the work of others.

Vertical coordination: Synchronisation of activities and efforts of people at different levels in the organisation.

14.12 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

- A 3 i) True ii) True iii) False iv) True v) False
- B 1) i) False ii) True iii) False iv) True v) True
- 2 i) horizontal, vertical ii) outcome, iii) uncertainty, personal, organisational.

14.13 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

- 1 What do you mean by coordination? What is the need for coordination in today's business environment?
- 2 What are the objectives of coordination? Distinguish between coordination and cooperation.
- 3 Explain the various principles of coordination and discuss its limitations.
- 4 How can coordination be used as an instrument of effective management action? Discuss the various techniques through which coordination can be achieved.

Note: These questions will help you to understand the unit better. Try to write answers for them. But do not send your answers to the university. These are for your practice only.