

**Subject:** Public Administration  
**Course:** Public Administration: An Introduction  
**Title of the Module:** Unity of Command

### **Introduction:**

The module is in the form of introduction of the paper on Unity of Command in Public Administration. Module is divided in to five parts. First part refers to organisational behavior as studied and explored by administrative thinkers in the development of the organisation. It is based on a net-work of personal relationships and group ties developed by workers. It explains how the employees actually behave in an organisation, the second part argues, that meaning and concept of the Unity of Command. Third part of the module presents Significance and difference between Unity of Command and Chain of Command. The fourth part emphasizes on the unity of command structure offers a unique speed advantage for decision-making. Last and fifth part is related to Limitation and it may lead us to conclude that the principle of unity of command has broken down as far as public administration is concerned.

### **Key Words:**

Command, Common Purpose, Coordinated and Cooperative, Division of Work, Leadership, Planning, Direction, Supervision and Control, Multiplicity of Command, Authority, Hierarchy, Gangplank, Chain of Command, Scaler Chain, Inefficiency and Irresponsibility, Command Structure.

### **Introduction:**

Public administration as an organised activity provides various services to the people and regulates the behavior of individuals and groups in society. Consequently, Public administration requires the basic tool of organisation for keeping the administrative process operating. As Prof. George E. Berkely says, “All administration requires an organisation of some shape, size, or kind and all organisations carry on some measure of administrative activity”. Since much of contemporary life involves organisations, it is necessary here to understand briefly what an organisation is. An organisation is essentially a group of people engaged in a coordinated and cooperative effort, working toward a common goal. To James D. Mooney, “Organisation is the form of every human association for the attainment of a common purpose”. It refers to the pattern of interrelationships which is established between the workers engaged in the pursuit of common objectives.

It is based on a net-work of personal relationships and group ties developed by workers. It concerns how the employees actually behave in an organisation. Gulick notes that any manager will have a finite amount of time and energy, and discusses span of control under coordination.

Also under coordination, as well as organization, Gulick emphasizes the theory of unity of command, that each worker should only have one direct superior so as to avoid confusion and inefficiency. Still another theory borrowed from military organizational theory, particularly Sir Ian Hamilton and Lyndall Urwick and brought to prominence in non-military management and public administration by Gulick and Urwick is the distinction between operational components of an organization, the do-ers, and coordinating, the coordinating components of an organization who do the knowing, thinking, and planning. In the military, this is divided between "line" and "staff" functions. Gulick gives the private-sector example of a holding company performing limited coordinating, planning, and finance functions, with subsidiary companies carrying out their work with extensive autonomy as it saw fit according to the parent company's overall direction. Gulick states that his statement of the work of a chief executive is adapted from the functional analysis elaborated by Henri Fayol in his "Industrial and General Administration". Indeed, Fayol's work includes fourteen principles and five elements of management that lay the foundations of Gulick's POSDCORB tasks of an executive.

Fayol's fourteen principles of management are as follows:

- Division of Work
- Authority and Responsibility
- Discipline
- Unity of Command
- Unity of Direction
- Subordination of Individual Interest to General Interest
- Remuneration of Personnel
- Centralization
- Scalar Chain (line of authority with peer level communication)
- Order
- Equity
- Stability of Tenure of Personnel
- Initiative
- Esprit de Corps

Fayol's influence upon Gulick is readily apparent in the five elements of management discussed in his book,

**Planning** - examining the future and drawing up plan which are: s of actions

**Organizing** - building up the structure (labor and material) of the undertaking

**Command** - maintaining activity among the personnel

**Co-ordination** - unifying and harmonizing activities and efforts

**Control** - seeing that everything occurs in conformity with policies and practices

In his 1987 piece "Deja Vu: French Antecedents of American Public Administration," Daniel Martin notes that virtually all of the principles in American Public Administration up to 1937 and the coining of the POSDCORB acronym, including the POSDCORB principles, were present in the French literature on the subject by 1859, but that this literature had largely been forgotten by the theorists of that era, thus the "re-invention" of these principles in the later French and American literature.

Classical administrative thinkers focused on structural aspect of organisation. They believed that the setting up of proper organisation requires the observance of certain administrative principles. Therefore, the classical writers such as Henry Fayol and Luther Gulick developed and discussed comprehensively the "so called" administrative principles of division of work, coordination, departmentalization, hierarchy, authority, unity of command, span of control, delegation, centralization and decentralization, and so on. These writers thought that these principles can guide administrators not only in the creation of effective organisation but also to enhance the academic status of Public Administration. In their opinion, these principles are universal in nature and applicable to diverse organisation in both public and private sectors.

Organisation is also related to management. Management is concerned with getting things done through other people in an organizational setting. It is the direction of a group's efforts toward the achievement of specified goals. Management is regarded as the collective utilization of human and material resources to achieve defined goals of the organisation. While organisation provides the structure for the conduct of the work of an agency, management provides leadership, planning, direction, supervision and control. The efficient execution of government's policies and programmes depends upon effective management and utilization of material and human resources.

Organisation is method of dividing work among different people. Aristotle has suggested two ways of dividing work: First, division of work according to men or class of men and second, division of work according to the service. In 1968 Halden Committee said, "Upon what principles are the functions of departments to be determined and allocated?"

There appear to be only two alternatives which may briefly be described as distribution according to process or classes to be dealt with and distribution according to the services to be performed."

The principle of division of work is basic for the proper and efficient functioning of an organisation. The importance of this principle of division of labour is clearly brought out by Kautilya in his Arthashastra when he says that the king alone cannot carry on the entire

administration without assistance. According to Henri Fayol, division of work belongs to the natural order. Fayol compares organisation to huge animals. Animals evolved by specializing their biological structure and the brain grew bigger. In the same way organisation develops by developing sound principles and methods. Fayol believes that organisation develop by refining their division of work and the central staff gets bigger.

**POSDCORB** is an acronym widely used in the field of Management and Public Administration that reflects the classic view of administrative management. Largely drawn from the work of French industrialist Henri Fayol, it first appeared in a 1937 staff paper by Luther Gulick and Lyndall Urwick written for the Brownlow Committee. The acronym stands for steps in the administrative process: **P**lanning, **O**rganizing, **S**taffing, **D**irecting, **C**oordinating, **R**eporting and **B**udgeting. Gulick's "Notes on the Theory of Organization" further defines the principles of POSDCORB by explaining that if an executive's workload becomes too overwhelming, some of the elements of POSDCORB can be organized as subdivisions of the executive, depending on the size and complexity of the enterprise.

Under organizing, Gulick emphasized the division and specialization of labor in a manner that will increase efficiency. Gulick notes that there are three limitations to division of labor. The first occurs when labor is divided to the point where any one task in the division of labor would require less than the full time of a worker, in which case a worker may need to be employed in other tasks to fill up their time. The second limitation to division of labor arises from technology and custom, where certain tasks may only be handled by certain workers either because of a lack of technological means or customs at the time. Gulick gives the example of a single worksite in which only plumbers do the plumbing work and electricians do the electrical work, though this may not take up their full work time. Work in these areas could be re-combined in a manner to increase efficiency, however union considerations could prevent this. The third limitation to division of labor is that it must not pass beyond physical division into organic division, or intricately related activities must not be separated from each other. Gulick gives the example that while it may seem more efficient to have the front end of a cow grazing in pasture at all times and the back half being milked at all times, this would not work due to the intricate connection between the halves that is needed for the whole to function.

### **Historical Background:**

The chain of command principle is ancient, but its application to the management of organisations was only systematized in the twentieth century. Two individual French engineer and executive Henri Fayol and the German sociologist Max Weber contributed much to our understanding of this principle. In his book, General and Industrial

Management, Fayol presented what have come to be known as the fourteen principles of management. These principles include both the unity of command (his fourth principle) and the scalar chain (line of authority). Fayol's principle of the unity of command holds that a subordinate should report to one and only one supervisor. Fayol believed that this was necessary to provide the supervisor with clear position authority, and to prevent a subordinate from receiving conflicting orders. Fayol's scalar chain principle states that authority and responsibility flow, one level at a time, in a vertical line from the highest level in an organisation to its lowest level. This line of authority establishes an organization's hierarchy. Fayol believed that it was a management error to abandon the chain of command for no reason, but he also allowed for circumstances in which the chain of command might be bypassed for the good of the company. For example, Fayol suggested that communication delays might sometimes be caused by blind adherence to the chain of command and unity of command principles, and proposed what he called the "gangplank," which allows communications outside the chain of command as long as superiors are made aware.

A problem associated with the chain of command occurs when a subordinate bypasses a manager in either the giving of information or the requesting of a decision. This act undermines the authority and position of the manager who is bypassed. If this practice is allowed to continue in a bureaucratically-organized company, morale of the managers will decline. The urgency and frequency of these situations may, of course, mitigate the impact and inappropriateness of such contacts. With the rapidly-changing environment and increasing uncertainty that organizations face in the twenty-first century, some adopt structures that emphasize flexibility and quick response to change. **Weber** also studied the problems inherent in large organisations, as organisations grew from family structures to much larger entities during the Industrial Revolution. Weber proposed the bureaucracy as a model of efficient organisation. Bureaucratic characteristics have clearly defined hierarchies of authority and responsibility, consistent with the chain of command principle.

### **Meaning of Unity of command:**

Unity of command means that an employee should receive orders from one superior only. In other words, it means that no employee should be subjected to the orders of more than one superior. Thus, it stands for single boss for each person or mono-command. Unity of command is a basic principle of classical Public Administration. It means that "each subordinate should have one and only one superior", with orders flowing from and accountability flowing to that single superior. It bases itself on the old proverb that "no man

can serve two masters”. This important principle is drawn from the hierarchical organisation characterized by scalar chain running throughout the organisation. The scalar chain provides for a unified command, one head directing the activities of the entire organisation. Thus, the scalar principle contains the concept of unit of command.

In addition to the above meaning of unity of command is also interpreted in two other ways:

- (i) It means that all the units of an organisation should be integrated or brought under the authority of one head like a President, a Cabinet, a Minister, a Secretary, a Chairman or some other body or officer.
- (ii) It means that the head of the organisation should be a single individual. More elaborately, it means that there should be only one person and not a body of persons at the apex of an organisation, and all lines of authority should be concentrated in his hand.

In the first sense, unity of command is incompatible with the independent or autonomous units of organisations like the public corporations or constitutional bodies in India or the independent regulatory commissions in USA and so on.

In the second sense, it is incompatible with Commission type or Board type of organisations like the Election Commission, the Union Public Service Commission, the University Grants Commission, the Railway Board, the Flood Control Board and so on. Hence, the most widely accepted interpretation of unity of command is the one given above.

Unity of command is one of the Henri Fayol’s 14 principles of Management. This principle states that there must be only one superior of a subordinate. That is an employee or a worker must not have many bosses or superiors. If an employee of subordinate has to work under the influence of many bosses or superiors, then it creates a confusing situation dilemma and disorder.

This also affects overall efficiency, productivity and profit of the organisation, but also creates confusion about the accountability of an employee. Thus according to the principle of unity of command, too many heads (bosses or superiors) must not boss or supervise the same amount of work being done by a worker or an employee. In other words, the work of a worker or job of an employee must always be supervised by a single head.

### **Concept of Unity of Command:**

The concept of unity of command is essential to avoid confusion and manipulation in organisations. Duality or multiplicity of command keeps an employee under confusion and conflicting situation, for instance, ‘whom’ to follow and ‘what’ to follow. Further, a

subordinate can also evade orders by playing-off one superior against another, which undermines the organisational purpose. Henry Fayol is the most important advocate of the principle of unity of command. He asserted that, “should it be violated, authority is undermined; discipline is in jeopardy, order disturbed and stability threatened”.

As soon as two superiors wield their authority over the same person or department, uneasiness makes itself felt and should the cause persist, the disorder increases, the malady takes on the appearance of an organism troubled by a foreign body, and the following consequences are to be observed; either the dual command ends in disappearance or elimination of one of the superiors and organic well-being is restored, or else the organism continues to wither away. In no case is there adaption of the social organism to dual command.

**Gulick and Urwick** have also supported the principle of unity of command. They believed that, “a man cannot serve two masters. “Hence, they concluded that, “well-managed administrative units in the government are almost without exception headed by single administrators.” Gullick explains the importance of this principle, “any rigid adherence to the principle of unity of command may have its absurdities. But they are unimportant in comparison to the certainty of confusion, inefficiency and irresponsibility which arise from the violation of the principle.

The concept of unity of command has been opposed by many writers. Seckler-Hudson argues, “The old concept of one single boss for each person is seldom found in fact in complex governmental situations. Many interrelationships exist outside the straight line of command which require working with, and reporting to many persons for purpose of orderly and effective performance, the administrator in government has many bosses and he can neglect none of them. From one he may receive policy orders’ from another, personnel; from a third, budget; from a fourth, supplies and equipments.”

**J.D. Millet** advocates the theory of ‘Dual Supervision’ in place of unity of command. He argues that the concept of unity of command needs to be reconciled with the recognition that supervision of any activity may be dual-technical (professional) and administrative. These two types of supervision may be exercised by different individuals.

The former may be concerned with the professional competence in the performance of a job, while, the latter may be chiefly interested in the efficient utilization of men and material resources available for the job. He concludes that “it should be kept in mind that under no circumstance and employee is subject to conflicting commands”.

Moreover, the concept of unity of command has been affected by the following two factors which are the result of growing size and complexity of modern organisations,

- (i) Adoption of plural headed bodies like 'boards' and 'commissions' as the heads of administrative agencies as against 'bureaus' (headed by a single individual).
- (ii) Increasing number and growing influence and power of staff and auxiliary agencies which are manned by specialists.

A principle refers to a fundamental truth. It establishes cause and effect relationship between two or more variables under given situation. They serve as a guide to thought & actions. Therefore, management principles are the statements of fundamental truth based on logic which provides guidelines for managerial decision making and actions. These principles are derived: -

- (a) On the basis of observation and analysis i.e. practical experience of managers.
- (b) By conducting experimental studies.

### **Principles of Management described by Henri Fayol:**

#### ***Division of Labor***

- (a) Henry Fayol has stressed on the specialization of jobs.
- (b) He recommended that work of all kinds must be divided & subdivided and allotted to various persons according to their expertise in a particular area.
- (c) Subdivision of work makes it simpler and results in efficiency.
- (d) It also helps the individual in acquiring speed, accuracy in his performance.
- (e) Specialization leads to efficiency & economy in spheres of business.

#### ***Party of Authority & Responsibility***

- (a) Authority & responsibility are co-existing.
- (b) If authority is given to a person, he should also be made responsible.
- (c) In a same way, if anyone is made responsible for any job, he should also have concerned authority.
- (d) Authority refers to the right of superiors to get exactness from their sub-ordinates whereas responsibility means obligation for the performance of the job assigned.
- (e) There should be a balance between the two i.e. they must go hand in hand.
- (f) Authority without responsibility leads to irresponsible behavior whereas responsibility without authority makes the person ineffective.

#### ***Principle of One Boss***

- (a) A sub-ordinate should receive orders and be accountable to one and only one boss at a time.
- (b) In other words, a sub-ordinate should not receive instructions from more than one person because -



- It undermines authority
  - Weakens discipline
  - Divides loyalty
  - Creates confusion
  - Delays and chaos
  - Escaping responsibilities
  - Duplication of work
  - Overlapping of efforts
- (c) Therefore, dual sub-ordination should be avoided unless and until it is absolutely essential.
- (d) Unity of command provides the enterprise a disciplined, stable & orderly existence.
- (e) It creates harmonious relationship between superiors and sub-ordinates.

### **Unity of Direction**

- (a) Fayol advocates one head one plan which means that there should be one plan for a group of activities having similar objectives.
- (b) Related activities should be grouped together. There should be one plan of action for them and they should be under the charge of a particular manager.
- (c) According to this principle, efforts of all the members of the organization should be directed towards common goal.
- (d) Without unity of direction, unity of action cannot be achieved.
- (e) In fact, unity of command is not possible without unity of direction.

<b>Basis</b>	<b>Unity of command</b>	<b>Unity of direction</b>
<b>Meaning</b>	It implies that a sub-ordinate should receive orders & instructions from only one boss.	It means one head, one plan for a group of activities having similar objectives.
<b>Nature</b>	It is related to the functioning of personnel's.	It is related to the functioning of departments, or organization as a whole.
<b>Necessity</b>	It is necessary for fixing responsibility of each subordinate.	It is necessary for sound organization.
<b>Advantage</b>	It avoids conflicts, confusion & chaos.	It avoids duplication of efforts and wastage of resources.
<b>Result</b>	It leads to better superior sub-ordinate	It leads to smooth running of the

relationship.

enterprise.

Therefore it is obvious that they are different from each other but they are dependent on each other i.e. unity of direction is a pre-requisite for unity of command. But it does not automatically come from the unity of direction.

### **Equity**

- (a) Equity means combination of fairness, kindness & justice.
- (b) The employees should be treated with kindness & equity if devotion is expected of them.
- (c) It implies that managers should be fair and impartial while dealing with the subordinates.
- (d) They should give similar treatment to people of similar position.
- (e) They should not discriminate with respect to age, caste, sex, religion, relation etc.
- (f) Equity is essential to create and maintain cordial relations between the managers and sub-ordinate.
- (g) But equity does not mean total absence of harshness.
- (h) Fayol was of opinion that, "at times force and harshness might become necessary for the sake of equity".

### **Order**

- (a) This principle is concerned with proper & systematic arrangement of things and people.
- (b) Arrangement of things is called material order and placement of people is called social order.
- (c) Material order- There should be safe, appropriate and specific place for every article and every place to be effectively used for specific activity and commodity.
- (d) Social order- Selection and appointment of most suitable person on the suitable job. There should be a specific place for every one and everyone should have a specific place so that they can easily be contacted whenever need arises.

### **Discipline**

- (a) According to Fayol, "Discipline means sincerity, obedience, respect of authority & observance of rules and regulations of the enterprise".
- (b) This principle applies that subordinate should respect their superiors and obey their order.
- (c) It is an important requisite for smooth running of the enterprise.
- (d) Discipline is not only required on path of subordinates but also on the part of

management.

- (e) Discipline can be enforced if -
- There are good superiors at all levels.
  - There are clear & fair agreements with workers.
  - Sanctions (punishments) are judiciously applied.

### **Initiative**

- (a) Workers should be encouraged to take initiative in the work assigned to them.
- (b) It means eagerness to initiate actions without being asked to do so.
- (c) Fayol advised that management should provide opportunity to its employees to suggest ideas, experiences & new method of work.
- (d) It helps in developing an atmosphere of trust and understanding.
- (e) People then enjoy working in the organization because it adds to their zeal and energy.
- (f) To suggest improvement in formulation & implementation of place.
- (g) They can be encouraged with the help of monetary & non-monetary incentives.

### **Fair Remuneration**

- (a) The quantum and method of remuneration to be paid to the workers should be fair, reasonable, satisfactory & rewarding of the efforts.
- (b) As far as possible it should accord satisfaction to both employer and the employees.
- (c) Wages should be determined on the basis of cost of living, work assigned, financial position of the business, wage rate prevailing etc.
- (d) Logical & appropriate wage rates and methods of their payment reduce tension & differences between workers & management creates harmonious relationship and pleasing atmosphere of work.
- (e) Fayol also recommended provision of other benefits such as free education, medical & residential facilities to workers.

### **Stability of Tenure**

- (a) Fayol emphasized that employees should not be moved frequently from one job position to another i.e. the period of service in a job should be fixed.
- (b) Therefore employees should be appointed after keeping in view principles of recruitment & selection but once they are appointed their services should be served.
- (c) According to Fayol. "Time is required for an employee to get used to a new work & succeed to doing it well but if he is removed before that he will not be able to render worthwhile services".

- (d) As a result, the time, effort and money spent on training the worker will go waste.
- (e) Stability of job creates team spirit and a sense of belongingness among workers which ultimately increase the quality as well as quantity of work.
- (f) Fayol defines scalar chain as 'The chain of superiors ranging from the ultimate authority to the lowest'.
- (g) Every orders, instructions, messages, requests, explanation etc. has to pass through Scalar chain.
- (h) But, for the sake of convenience & urgency, this path can be cut short and this short cut is known as Gang Plank.

### **Sub-Ordination of Individual Interest to General Interest**

- (a) An organization is much bigger than the individual it constitutes therefore interest of the undertaking should prevail in all circumstances.
- (b) As far as possible, reconciliation should be achieved between individual and group interests.
- (c) But in case of conflict, individual must sacrifice for bigger interests.
- (d) In order to achieve this attitude, it is essential that -
  - Employees should be honest & sincere.
  - Proper & regular supervision of work.
  - Reconciliation of mutual differences and clashes by mutual agreement. For example, for change of location of plant, for change of profit sharing ratio, etc.

### **E-spirit De' Corps (can be achieved through unity of command)**

- (a) It refers to team spirit i.e. harmony in the work groups and mutual understanding among the members.
- (b) Spirit De' Corps inspires workers to work harder.
- (c) Fayol cautioned the managers against dividing the employees into competing groups because it might damage the moral of the workers and interest of the undertaking in the long run.
- (d) To inculcate E-spirit De' Corps following steps should be undertaken -
  - There should be proper co-ordination of work at all levels
  - Subordinates should be encouraged to develop informal relations among themselves.
  - Efforts should be made to create enthusiasm and keenness among subordinates so that they can work to the maximum ability.
  - Efficient employees should be rewarded and those who are not up to the mark

should be given a chance to improve their performance.

- Subordinates should be made conscious of that whatever they are doing is of great importance to the business & society.
- (e) He also cautioned against the more use of Britain communication to the subordinates i.e. face to face communication should be developed. The managers should infuse team spirit & belongingness. There should be no place for misunderstanding. People then enjoy working in the organization & offer their best towards the organization.

### **Centralization & De-Centralization**

- (a) Centralization means concentration of authority at the top level. In other words, centralization is a situation in which top management retains most of the decision making authority.
- (b) Decentralization means disposal of decision making authority to all the levels of the organization. In other words, sharing authority downwards is decentralization.
- (c) According to Fayol, “Degree of centralization or decentralization depends on no. of factors like size of business, experience of superiors, dependability & ability of subordinates etc.
- (d) Anything which increases the role of subordinate is decentralization & anything which decreases it is centralization.
- (e) Fayol suggested that absolute centralization or decentralization is not feasible. An organization should strike to achieve a lot between the two.

### **Difference between Unity of Command and Chain of Command:**

Unity of Command and Chain of Command are often used to refer to military command structures, but they are also applicable to modern business strategies. Within the corporate environment these terms refer to the overall business structure, containing either a rigid hierarchy of bosses or a single manager who oversees all the business functions of a company. These command structures are different, but each provides its own unique advantages.

### **Unity of Command:**

Unity of command is a managerial technique that is built around a single individual in command, with any number of subordinates under his/her command. This is often the command structure used in small businesses; herein one owner/manager has full control over every managerial responsibility. Unity of command provides a singular vision with a clear command structure, such as that of the single owner who determines the vision for the

company. Unity of command requires consistent micromanagement by the head of the command structure; because the head of the organization has no one under her command to whom she delegates leadership responsibilities. There has been a recent quickening of the tempo of the long-standing debate on control and missions of Air Force units employed in support of ground forces. Army officers, many of whom have never been fully satisfied with the theory or practice of existing air support doctrine, are raising the issue once more. And so, largely in Army periodicals we find unofficial statements of the Army's requirements for adequate air support, with the clear implication that if the Air Force can't or won't do the job, the Army itself will have to provide its own air support—just as the Marine Corps does.

The principle Army commander is now unable to exercise any control over the air elements from which he should receive air support. Many soldiers consider that this is an intolerable situation, that it jeopardizes the successful prosecution of the land battle, and—above all—that it violates the principle of unity of command. It may be heresy, but as an Army man I find it impossible to reconcile this argument with established Army doctrine, or with Army concepts of the principles of war. I believe that there is an inherent inconsistency in reasoning with demands that local ground commanders should have command control of supporting air units on the basis of the “established and proven principle of unity of command.”

#### **Chain of Command:**

The chain of command, sometimes called the scalar chain, is the formal line of authority, communication, and responsibility within an organization. The chain of command is usually depicted on an organizational chart, which identifies the superior and subordinate relationships in the organizational structure.

According to classical organization theory the organizational chart allows one to visualize the lines of authority and communication within an organizational structure and ensures clear assignment of duties and responsibilities. By utilizing the chain of command, and its visible authority relationships, the principle of unity of command is maintained. Unity of command means that each subordinate reports to one and only one superior.

The chain of command, sometimes called the scalar chain, is the formal line of authority, communication, and responsibility within an organisation. The chain of command is usually depicted on an organizational chart, which identifies the superior and subordinate relationships in the organizational structure. According to classical organization theory the organizational chart allows one to visualize the lines of authority of communication within an organizational structure and ensures clear assignment of duties and responsibilities. By utilizing the chain of command, and its visible authority relationships, the principle of unity

of command is maintained. Unity of command means that each subordinate reports to one and only one superior.

In many organizations, the chain of command principle is still very much alive. The manager's status is that of the deliverer of orders, and the employee enacts them under the monitoring of the manager. Both parties share responsibility for achievements. But, as Longnecker suggests in his book *Principles of Management and Organizational Behaviour*, communication provides the underpinnings of this relationship. The discussions and meetings contact managers and their subordinates have many improve or harm the effectiveness of the direct report relationships in the chain of command.

In many organizations, the chain of command principle is still very much alive. The manager's status is that of the deliverer of orders, and the employee enacts them under the monitoring of the manager. Both parties share responsibility for achievements. But, as Longnecker suggests in his book *Principles of Management and Organizational Behavior*, communication provides the underpinnings of this relationship. These types of organizations attempt to place decision-making authority in the organizational structure with those who can most effectively and efficiently respond to environmental imperatives. Thus, these organizations may have flatter hierarchies and communication and decision-making patterns that do not fully adhere to the chain of command or unity of command principles. In the case of matrix organizations, employees frequently have two managers or supervisors, violating the unity of command and chain of command principles. To be effective, individuals working in these organizations learn to share power, use open confrontation to resolve issues and to utilize all directions in the organization to disseminate information.

These more organic structures are not rigidly bound to the chain of command principle, although it is still an important organizing principle in most organizations.

### **Unity of Command and Decision- Making Speed:**

The unity of command structure offers a unique speed advantage for decision-making. The head of the organisation has the unilateral ability to make decisions, without consultation or discussion with others, thus speeding up the decision-making process. For instance, within a single owner/manager business environment, the single owner is not responsible to communicate or discuss changes of policy to or with anyone else, providing flexibility of management and an increased ability to adjust and conform to market demands, whether by changing prices as needed or staging sales to compete with another business nearby.

### **Merits of Unity of Command:**

The following merits of unity of command are below:

- (i) It develops efficiency in administration.
- (ii) It is in conformity with the Scalar system.
- (iii) As it avoids confusion among the employees of an organisation, the work is not delayed.
- (iv) In it every employee recognizes his immediate boss, from whom he has to receive command.
- (v) Better Relationship: Unity of command helps to develop a clear and better relationship among superior and subordinates.
- (vi) Unity of command results in a clear and well-organized Authority, Responsibility and Accountability between various levels of workforce of the organisation.
- (vii) Reduces Duplication of work: It helps to reduce and/or avoid duplication of work between the various levels of workforce of the organisation.
- (viii) Prompt or Quick Decisions: The unity of command helps managers to take prompt or quick decisions properly.
- (ix) Effective and Efficient Discipline: The unity of command ensures an effective and efficient discipline within an organisation.
- (x) Better co-ordination and team work: The unity of command ensures better co-ordination, and team work in the organisation.
- (xi) Boosts Morale and Positive Attitude: It boosts morale and generates positive attitude among workers in the organisation.
- (xii) Higher Productivity: The unity of command leads to higher productivity of goods and services. This creates a better image or goodwill of the organisation in the market.

Supporting unity of command, Henry Fayol observes, “Should it be violated, authority is undermined, discipline is in jeopardy, order disturbed and stability threatened.”

### **Demerits of Unity of Command:**

#### **(i) Not universal**

The principle that ‘one man should obey one superior’ cannot be applied universally. There are some exceptions to this rule. For example, the technical experts do not come under this category. They receive and issue commands to various other officials. Millett has rightly observed. “The concept of unity of command therefore needs to be reconciled with recognition that supervision of any activity may be dual – technical and also administrative.



The two types of supervision may be exercised by different individuals. The two types of supervision may be exercised by different individuals. The one type may be concerned with professional competence in the performance of a job while the other is chiefly interested in the efficient utilization of the resources – men and materials – available for the job.”

**(ii) Functional Foremanship**

Criticizing the unity of command Prof. Taylor has recommended functional foremanship. In functional foremanship a subordinate may accept the instructions of two different foremen, one for the speed or the other for its proper maintenance.

**(iii) Impractical**

The traditional approach to the principle of unity of command that each individual receives orders from one and only one superior is not practicable. In modern time, due to the impact of science and technology, the numbers of specialists have increased considerably in administration. In such a situation, it is unpractical to receive the command of one superior only. However, there should be mechanism to ensure that the command of different officials do not conflict or contradict each other. In case of conflict of commands, the subordinate should be expected to obey the command of one man only. The notice of conflicting command should be given to the authorities. But if there is no conflict in commands, duality or multiplicity of command is not harmful. Unity of command should not be rigidly adhered to.

To sum up while the principle of unity of command is a useful guide to large-scale organisation it is not like a mathematical formula to be applied in every case in every situation. The principle is, however, essential to ensure unity of direction, stability and continuity of command and control. It achieves unity of purpose in diversity or different units and activities.

**Conclusion:**

It may lead us to conclude that the principle of unity of command has broken down as far as public administration is concerned. But this is certainly not so if we look a little deep into the issue and analyse the situation thoroughly. Unity of command is not violated if an employee receives order from two supervisors in respect of different matters or aspects of matters under his charge. It is broken only if he gets orders from two different sources regarding one and the same matter. Even in the technical departments, the last word lies with the administrative chief, who has the power and authority to overrule the technical experts.

We can conclude by saying that unity of command is essential for good administration. However, there must be flexibility in application of principle of unity of

command to keep pace with changing administrative needs and situation without violating the authority of superior.

