UNIT 4 : OFFICE ENVIRONMENT

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4.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- describe the office environment
- analyse the requirements of office furniture and equipment.

4.2 INTRODUCTION

In the earlier unit, we have given a brief description of office management. In this unit we are going to discuss about office layout and environment, like working condition, lighting, temperature and ventilation and noise. We will also discuss about office furniture and equipment.

4.3 OFFICE ENVIRONMENT

The main purpose of an office environment is to support its employees in performing their job at minimum cost and to maximum satisfaction. In an office there are different types of people who perform different tasks and activities; however, it is not always easy to select the

right office spaces and environment. Office environment consists of the entire working environment of the office. Office environment includes various aspects like, working place, working condition, working hours, working equipment, training facilities, incentive payment system etc.

Office environment affects the efficiency of the office personnel. An employee working in the office cannot work efficiently unless provided the right type of working environment.

4.3.1 Working Condition

Working conditions can be defined as the conditions in which an individual or staff works in an office, including such things as amenities, physical environment, stress and noise levels, degree of safety or danger, and the like. If the working condition of the office is suitable, it helps in improvement of the mental and physical fitness of the employee, which ultimately helps in increasing profit for the organisation. To aid decision-making in workplace and office design, one can distinguish three different types of office spaces: work spaces, meeting spaces and support spaces. Work spaces in an office are typically used for conventional office activities such as reading, writing and computer work. Meeting spaces in an office are typically used for interactive processes, like conversations or intensive brainstorms. Support spaces in an office are typically used for secondary activities such as filing documents or taking a break. Provision for spaces as indicated above is very important for smooth functioning of an office.

4.3.2 Lighting

Lighting is one of the most important physical conditions required in the office. Lighting should be adequate for the type of work being performed in the office. Most people like to be able to see daylight as it gives them a feeling about how the day is going outside and natural light is also thought to make people feel better too. Monitors need to be positioned facing away from windows so that there is no

glare or reflection on the screen. Most people also like to be able to control the artificial lighting levels in their work area but individual control is not often possible in large offices. Different amounts of light are needed for paperwork and screen work as screens emit their own light. However the following lighting principles are applicable while selecting the lighting facilities:

- The light must be sufficient for the work but not too strong, otherwise it will be resulted to glare.
- Lighting system should be cost effective.
- The walls should be decorated in light shades in order to gain the maximum light reflection.

4.3.3 Temperature and Ventilation

Temperature and ventilation are very important aspects in an office. It is clearly important to be warm enough, but temperature and humidity can also make a difference to how alert or tired an office worker feels by the end of the day. Ventilation refers to supply of free air at the right temperature and of right humidity. Offices often become too hot and stuffy. The requirements of good ventilation are that there should be a constant flow of fresh air to remove staleness without causing draught.

4.3.4 Noise

Noise in offices can affect concentration, can be an irritation, and can be a source of stress to some people which ultimately affects the efficiency of the worker. With the development of quieter equipment, especially printers, noise levels in offices have generally decreased. However, in open-plan offices it can still be a problem with the noise mainly due to people. For example, telephones left ringing at an unattended desk, conversations being held in areas where people are trying to concentrate. Noise may be either internal or external depending upon the area from which it is generated.

Screens, carpets and good quality flooring and ceiling tiles can help to absorb noise. Below the office machines which create noise in operation, felt pad can be placed which reduce the noise.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: State any two principles for selecting lighting facilities.

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Q 2 : Why do we need proper temperature and ventilation facilities in the office?

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Q 3 : How noise can be reduced?

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4.4 OFFICE FURNITURE AND EQUIPMENT

There are four main criteria which forms the basis of judgement as to the suitability of a piece of office furniture, which are: (a) is it functional, (b) is it attractive, (c) is it hard wearing and (d) is its cost within the budget? Depending on these issues the furniture should be selected for purchase.

In light of the above criteria, a number of basic factors which should be considered when buying office furniture are as follows:

- **Design :** Size of the furniture, its look and suitability for the purpose etc.
- **Saving in Space :** Some furniture is specially designed to save floor space.
- **Appearance and Comfort :** The furniture should look attractive as well as comfortable to use.
- **Durability :** The furniture used should have durability.
- **Weight :** If furniture has to be moved around, as it is often done in a large office, light weight is preferable and fiberglass is very suitable.

Detail structures of some of the office furniture are given bellow :

- **Seats :** Seats should be adjustable so that the range of users can be accommodated comfortably and they provide support where it's needed. Computer seats are available with more features than general seat, many of which make sitting more comfortable. Armrests can provide good support but should be removable if it is not required, or they restrict posture. Now a day, while working on computers and in work desks, employees are required to move and get close to the desk and computer. The seat arrangements should facilitate this movement.
- **Desks :** Desks are usually a standard height of about 720mm. This is fine for most people, but it should check to make sure that all users can be seated comfortably at a desk of this height. Particularly short or tall people may need an adjustable-height desk.
- **Computer :** The computer hardware should also be placed in such a manner that using it is unlikely to cause injury or discomfort. The type of problems that people may get from using their computers is often described as Repetitive Strain Injuries ('RSI'), Work Related Upper Limb Disorders (WRULDs) or musculoskeletal disorders/discomfort. The main risks to users from computer hardware a probably the keyboard, mouse and monitor. The electric wires and the necessary gadgets should be placed in such a manner that it facilitates ease of operation and office efficiency. Many times, productivity in an office goes down because of improper planning in office lay out. Likewise, as it has been discussed, arrangements of office equipment and their placing plays a very important role in improving office efficiency.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 4: What are the criteria for selecting office furniture?

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4.5 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have discussed the following aspects in details:

- The main purpose of an office environment is to support its employees in performing their job at minimum cost and to maximum satisfaction. Office environment includes various aspects like, working place, working condition, working hours, working equipment, training facilities, incentive payment system etc.
- There are basically four main criteria which form the suitability of office furniture, which are: (a) functional quality, (b) attractiveness, (c) hard wearing and (d) cost effectiveness.



4.6 FURTHER READING

1) Balachandran, V. and Chandrasekaran, V. (2009), Office Management, Published by Tata McGraw Hill Education Private Limited.
2) Chopra, R. K. and Chopra, Ankita (2009), Office Management, Published by Himalaya Publishing House.



4.7 ANSWER TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans. to Q. No. 1 : Two principles for selecting lighting facilities are

- The light must be sufficient for the work but not too strong, otherwise glare will result.
- Lighting system should be cost effective.

Ans. to Q. No. 2 : To make the work environment more comfortable, we need proper temperature and ventilation facilities in the office.

Ans. to Q. No. 3 : Noise can be reduced by using screens, carpets and good quality flooring and ceiling tiles which can help to absorb noise.

Ans. to Q. No. 4 : There are four main criteria for selecting office furniture are : (a) functionality, (b) attractiveness, (c) hard wearing and (d) costeffectiveness.



4.8 MODEL QUESTIONS

Q 1 : Discuss in detail about the factors influencing office environment.

Q 2 : Discuss in details about the requirements of office furniture and equipment.

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