Introduction to the Module:

To support the administrative functionaries directly involved in the implementation process and to provide necessary guidelines, directions, clarifications and assistance to them and also to ensure that the authority and discretion is not misused, two key processes viz. control and supervision have been devised. An effort has been made to familiarize the readers with these processes in this module. The module is divided into two broad parts, the first deals with control and the second with supervision. Control may be formal or informal depending upon whether it is exercised by the prescribed channels through well laid down rules and procedures or not. While formal control operates both from within the organisation and outside of the organisation, media, public opinion, professional code of conduct etc. are the prominent tools of informal control. Since supervision involves a one-to-one relation, certain qualities or skills are expected of a supervisor which may broadly be categorized as substantive skill, institutional skill and personal skills. Prior approval, service standards, budgetary allocation, appointment or allocation of key subordinate personnel, reporting system, and inspection are certain important techniques and methods of supervision, which have also been highlighted in the module.

Keywords:


CONTROL AND SUPERVISION

Control and supervision aim at ensuring that the aims and objects of the organization are achieved and that the policies and programmes are implemented in the true spirit in which these have been enacted. This means that the organization is heading in the right direction and the ultimate goals are not lost sight of. The two also aim to ascertain that the policies and
programmes get implemented within the specified time frame. However, this should not be misconstrued that the two processes are identical and synonymous.

Even though it appears difficult to draw distinction between control and supervision, the two have different meanings. According to Henry Fayol, control verifies that everything occurs in conformity with the plan adopted, instructions issued and principles established.¹ Thus control helps in measuring the progress in the implementation process and also implies taking or causing to be taken, corrective action, if needed.

Margaret Williamson has defined supervision as “a process by which workers are helped by a designated staff member to learn according to their needs, to make the best use of their knowledge and skills, and to improve their abilities so that they do their jobs more effectively and with increasing satisfaction to themselves and the agency.”² In fact, supervision exists wherever individuals work together in some type of hierarchical relationship. Supervision is mainly concerned with inspiring and guiding workers towards greater performance.

Thus, it may be said that control is a wider concept and supervision is a part thereof. Even though it takes place at all levels of an organisation, “Supervision its purest form occurs at the first or lowest level of the organisation. In governmental parlance, this level is referred to as that of the first line supervisor.”³ Thus, while there has to be a direct relation between the supervisor and supervisee, intimate and direct human involvement is not necessary in case of control as it can be exercised even through rules and procedures and from a distance, which makes it objective in nature. Moreover, whereas supervision provides guidance and is thus both supportive and corrective in nature, control relates to evaluation and correction in case of deviations. Further, while the main object of control is to ward against arbitrariness and whimsical attitude, the purpose of supervision is to ward against the situation of directionless and waywardness. In other words, control more aims at adherence to rules and procedures; supervision more aims at effective performance and quality control.

¹ Fayol, Henry, *General Industrial Management*, p. 107
CONTROL

Control may be formal or informal. ‘Formal’ means what is legally prescribed. Thus, formal control would mean the control that is exercised by the prescribed channels through rules and procedures. Formal control may be internal and external, i.e., control systems generating and operating within the organization itself (internal) or may operate from outside of the organization (external). In contrast to the formal control mechanisms, informal control systems are those that do not operate within and according to the legally laid down rules and procedures. Media, public opinion, professional code of conduct etc. are the prominent tools of informal control.

Formal Control

As narrated above, formal control may be internal or external. The different mechanisms of the two types of control are briefly explained below.

Internal Control

Internal control is one that is exercised within the organisation itself. In other words, it is inherent in the administrative machinery and get automatically exercised during the process of its functioning. Rules and procedures, budget, laying down specific targets, periodic reports and inspections are the usual forms of internal control\(^4\) in public organizations and are explained below.

Hierarchy

All administrations are hierarchical in nature, which means that the personnel working in the organisations are bound in a senior-subordinate relationship. Authority flows from top to bottom downwards and the people down the line are accountable for whatever they do, to their superiors and the seniors have a right to give directions to their subordinates. Thus system of control is inherent in this hierarchical system of administration.\(^5\)

Rules and Procedures

Every public organisation frames certain rules and lays down procedures which serve the purpose of guiding the administrative functionaries in discharging their administrative

---


obligations. According to Max Weber, the rules and procedures ensure regularity and standardization in performance of work. There also exist procedures for motivating the administrative functionaries to perform and also provide for disciplinary action against those who fail to deliver and do not submit to the persuasions. Thus, rules and procedures constitute an important tool of internal control as they provide very little scope for deviations and ensure consistently impersonal behaviour as also provisions for deviant behaviour.⁶

**Budget**

Finances are the lifeblood for every organisation. Without availability of funds, no organisation can operate. Every public organisation has a specific budgetary allocation for each of its activities duly sanctioned by the respective legislature. Budgetary provision to every specific activity includes financial allocation to different heads and sub-heads resembling to the parts and sub-parts of that activity. Each activity has to be performed within the specific budgetary allocation including within the moneys provided for its parts and sub-parts. Not only the budgetary allocations can’t be exceeded, re-appropriations from one head/ sub-head to another have to be effected with the prior approval of the competent authority. Budgetary allocations and re-appropriations, therefore, serve as an important tool of internal control.

**Specific Targets**

Given the nature of work, it is slightly difficult to lay down precise and specific targets of performance in respect of administrative functionaries. Yet there is no denying the fact these are often laid down for administrative functionaries at various levels. Employees are persuaded and motivated to achieve these targets and this serves as an important tool of internal control.

**Periodic Reports**

The operating agencies are required to maintain detailed records of the activities performed. These records are to be submitted in the form of periodic reports to the higher authorities. Usually, the formats of the reports are prescribed in advance and are devised in a way that elicits valuable information about the performance of the activities. Through reporting system crucial information about the progress of work is communicated and it serves the purpose of control in ways more than one. First, the very fact that their performance has to be reported

motivates the subordinates to deliver. Second, the controlling authority might seek clarifications in case of any ambiguity and lack of clarity. Also, a uniform system of reporting enables comparison of the performances. Thus, the reporting system serves as an important tool of internal control.

**Inspection**

Reports submitted by the operating agencies themselves about their performance may not convey the true picture. To obtain true picture of the happenings, these may be followed by field visits and inspections, which serve as important tool of control. Inspection helps in ensuring that the works are being undertaken as per laid down rules and procedures. Importance of inspection in control is succinctly explained as below: “Reports … may conceal as much as they reveal. Inconvenient facts and omissions may be passed over. Statistics can be notorious liars. These deficiencies of written reports can be checked and removed by inspection and investigations. If reports are the ears of control, inspection and investigation are its eyes.”

**External Control**

As the name depicts, external control is exercised by the agencies outside of the organisation. Usually, the external control structures are created and provided for in the constitution itself. Political executives, legislatures and judiciary are the three such traditionally recognised agencies which exercise external control over the administrative organisations the world over. Some more agencies of external control have also evolved over the years. These include the ombudsman and the regulatory agencies. The various agencies of external control system usually adopted in public administrations are explained below.

**Political Executive**

Political executive is invariably responsible for all acts of omission and commission of the administrative agencies operating under it. The entire administrative structure of a country is organized into departments each one of which is headed by and works under one or the other minister. All administrative powers relating to the respective departments are vested in the concerned minister, who plays a key role in the formulation of all policies and programmes relating to the concerned department. The administrative functionaries are responsible for the

---

effective implementation of these policies and programmes to the minister concerned who is, in turn, responsible to the legislature and the people of the country.

Legislature

In a democracy, there are three organs of government and irrespective of the form of government, legislatures exercise control over executive though the shape it takes may differ and vary depending upon the form of government and the politico-constitutional and legal context. Even though the policy proposals emanate in the executive, these can’t be enacted without the approval of the legislature, which has the right to effect any changes in these proposals as also to withhold its assent to the proposals. Since the policies relate inter alia the objects, the time frame and financial allocations, and even lay down the duties and responsibilities of the key officials as also the broad framework of the procedures, in several cases, the process of policy formulation provides ample scope for the legislatures to exercise control over administrative organisations.

Public organisations get authorization to spend specific sums of money and to raise finances in the form of fees, taxes etc. through enactment of budget by the legislature. Even though budget proposals like policy proposals emanate in the executive but have to be consented by the legislature; without legislative approval, not even a single paisa can be raised or spent by the public organisations. Thus, “through the budget, the legislature can exercise control over the entire executive function because no activity of the government can be carried out without money, which is authorized only by the legislature.”

Legislatures have several committees which are divided into two parts: standing and ad hoc committees. Parliamentary committees are the ears and eyes of the legislatures and through them the legislatures exercise meaningful control over the administrative organisations. The standing committees ensure, in their respective sphere, whether the policies and laws are effectively carried out and whether these have been implemented in the spirit these were enacted by the legislature. The ad hoc committees are constituted to enquire into some specific lapse on the part of some administrative organisation and probe the matter deeply in the jurisdiction it has been assigned. The parliamentary committees recommend suitable corrective action, if needed,

---

and also seek action taken report from the executive departments. In this way, the parliamentary committees are potent means of external control over administrative organisations.

The administrative organisations are required to maintain accounts in prescribed form of all moneys spent by them as also incomes accrued to them. These accounts are periodically audited by an audit agency which is independent of the executive and is responsible to the legislature. “Auditing is a quasi-parliamentary function. The main objective of audit is to check the government for any illegal, improper or incorrect payments made resulting from any false, inaccurate or misleading certificates made by them as well as for any payment prohibited by law or which did not represent a legal obligation under the appropriation or the fund involved.” The audit reports are submitted to the legislature and a parliamentary standing committee, known as public accounts committee in India, scrutinize the report and make recommendations.

**Judiciary**

In a democratic country, the scope of judicial intervention (control) is usually indicated in the constitution and to protect the rights and liberties of the citizens. In order to uphold the sanctity of the constitution, the judiciary reviews the laws enacted by the legislature to ensure that they do not contravene it (the constitution). Also, it ensures that the laws are implemented in the spirit in which they have been enacted and that there are no procedural lapses either in enactment or implementation thereof. According to L.D. White, “Judicial control of administration ensures legality of the acts of the executive and protects citizens against unlawful trespass on their constitutional or other rights.”

Under normal circumstances, the court does not intervene into the affairs of the government of its own; it acts only when some aggrieved citizen approaches and appeals it to set the things right. However, there have been several instances of courts taking suo motu action in case of gross violation of the rights of the people across the democratic world. Judiciary can interfere in administrative actions in case lack of jurisdiction, error of law, error of fact finding, error of authority, error of procedure is reflected.

---

Ombudsman

First created in Sweden, the institution of ‘ombudsman’ has become a popular institution in different parts of the world. Known by different nomenclatures in different countries, ombudsman has proved to be an effective institution to combat politic-administrative corruption and thus to protect the interests of the citizens. It is a supervisory agency independent of the executive branch and responsible to the legislature. The main advantage of an ombudsman is that it examines complaints from outside the offending state institution, thus paving the way for an independent enquiry.

Ombudsman investigates complaints and try to resolve them, through recommendations (binding or not) or through mediation. Ombudsmen sometimes also aim to identify systemic issues leading to poor service or breaches of people’s rights. Ombudsman usually has a wide mandate covering the entire executive branch including the political executive. Ombudsman usually places the annual report before the legislature of the respective country and the executive is required to explain the reasons for not accepting recommendations of the ombudsman. This makes ombudsman a really effective institution.

Regulatory Bodies

A regulatory agency/ body is a government agency that exercises autonomous authority over some area/ activity assigned to it. Regulatory agencies may be created by the constitution or through statutes or by an executive order. Regulatory agencies deal in the area of administrative law i.e., regulating or rulemaking (codifying and enforcing rules and regulations and imposing supervision or oversight for the benefit of the public at large). Regulators act as watchdog over the activities of the service providers and ensure transparency in their decision-making processes. Regulatory agencies also in some cases have quasi-judicial powers. Usually the regulatory agencies perform following functions:

- To regulate the respective commercial sector assigned to it and ensure its orderly growth,

---

• To ensure compliance of policies and directives of the government by the service providers
• To protect the interests of service providers and consumers
• To prescribe and ensure the standards of quality of service provided to consumers
• To lay down technical specifications under the government policy and ensure its compliance by the service providers
• To take action or recommend it to the government, depending upon its jurisdiction, disciplinary action against the defaulting service providers.

Regulatory agencies are usually a part of the executive branch but in some cases they may also report to the legislature. Usually, the decisions of the regulatory agencies are binding upon service providers but the latter may challenge the decisions in the courts of law. Examples of regulatory agencies are the Interstate Commerce Commission and U.S. Food and Drug Administration in the United States, Ofcom in the United Kingdom and the TRAI, SEBI, IRDA etc. in India.¹²

Citizen Charter

A Citizen’s Charter represents the commitment of an organisation towards standard, quality and time-frame of service delivery, grievance redress mechanism, transparency and accountability and is issued with an object to improve the quality of public services. This is done by letting people know the mandate of the concerned organisation, how one can get in touch with its officials, what to expect by way of services and how to seek a remedy if something goes wrong. "Citizen's Charters initiative is a response to the quest for solving the problems which a citizen encounters, day in and day out, while dealing with the organisations providing public services.” However, it may be added that the Citizen's Charter does not by itself create any new legal rights, it merely helps in enforcing the existing rights.

Citizen’s Charter is a British political initiative launched by the then prime minister John Major in 1991 as a National Programme with an aim to “continuously improve the quality of public services for the people of the country so that these services respond to the needs and wishes of the users.” Even though Citizen Charter was first implemented by the British, the following statement of Mahatma Gandhi seems to be the spirit behind the initiative: “A customer

¹² Ibid.
is the most important visitor on our premises. He is not dependent on us; we are dependent on him. He is not an interruption on our work; he is the purpose of it. He is not an outsider on our business; he is part of it. We are not doing him a favour by serving him; he is doing a favour by giving us an opportunity to do so.”

The importance of Citizen’s Charter as a tool of control is being increasingly recognized and therefore, it is being adopted and implemented by more and more organisations in many countries across the globe. Since Citizen’s Charter is a voluntary commitment of the organisations towards service delivery, to make the commitment mandatory, it is being increasingly backed by service accountability legislations.

Informal Control

In contrast to the formal control mechanisms, informal control systems are those that do not operate within and according to the legally laid down rules and procedures. Media, public opinion, professional code of conduct etc. are the prominent tools of informal control.

Public Opinion

In a democracy, citizens exercise control over public organisations in an indirect manner. On behalf of the citizens, elected representatives of the people exercise control over administration and they, in turn, are accountable to the public. Besides, grave administrative lapses cause ripples which no public organisation can dare to ignore. However, public opinion is a tool of general rather than specific mechanism of control.

Media

It is rightly said that media is the fourth pillar of democracy. It keeps a close watch on the administrative failures and thus acts as an important tool of control over public organisations and thus also serves the cause of strengthening democracy. Media raises and highlights issues of administrative failures and is thus an important instrument of formation of public opinion.

---


Administrative Ethics

Every profession develops certain values and this set of values is called the code of ethics of that profession and so do the administrative functionaries. All the administrative functionaries are informally required to affirm their commitment to this set of values and also to follow these values in practice. Even though this code of conduct is voluntary, it acts as an effective mechanism of social and group control.15

SUPERVISION

In hierarchical organisations people are placed in senior-subordinate positions; everyone who has subordinates down the hierarchical ladder possesses authority to direct them and supervise their work. This is because the seniors are responsible for the work of subordinates to the high ups along the hierarchy and ultimately to the head of the organisation. Supervision is a broad term and the nature, form and extent thereof differs a great deal in accordance with “(a) the kind of work, (b) the people to be supervised, (c) the extent of supervisory responsibility, and (d) the level of supervision. The nature of supervision of skilled or professional employees is quite different from that of unskilled workers. Similarly, the supervision at higher level is less close and detailed than at the lower level and also requires higher ability, experience and tact.”

Skills and Qualities of a Supervisor

Supervision involves “directing the work of others, allocating workload, planning and scheduling, instructing and monitoring actions, maintaining discipline, taking responsibility and ultimately being held accountable for the work done.” In order to perform the task of supervision effectively, the supervisor must possess certain skills. Scholars like Pfifner, Halsey, Keith Davis have tried to highlighted various skills required and qualities of a supervisor. The more prominent among these are explained below:

Substantive Skill

The supervisor must possess thorough knowledge and understanding of the various aspects of work he/ she has to supervise. Unless the supervisor is well conversant with the

---

technical details of the work to be supervised, he/she would not be able to guide and assist the subordinates in the performance of their work.

**Institutional Skill**

The supervisor must also have adequate knowledge of the vision, mission, policies, rules, and regulations, procedures of the organisation as also the strengths and weaknesses of the subordinates. In the absence of such knowledge of organizational norms and values, the supervisor will not be able to plan the work and assign duties to the subordinates.

**Personal Skill**

Even though the supervisor possesses formal authority and can wield it to get the work done, the Hawthorn experiments revealed that it has limited utility. Marry Parker Follet also viewed that subordinates detest exercise of authority over them; in fact, she propounded the concept of ‘situation of law’ and highlighted the need of ‘depersonalization of orders’ so that the subordinates could be self-motivated to abide by the instructions. Thus, “a supervisor must be human, sympathetic and considerate by nature and possesses the art of effective human relations.”

The importance of these factors varies with the level of supervision and the kind of work and people to be supervised. “Thus, the familiarity with the technical know-how is more important for a first-line supervisor than those higher up whose point has to be administrative rather than technical ability. In office work, familiarity with the policies and procedures of the organisation is indispensable for the supervisor. The human factor … is important at all levels but most so at the higher ones.”

**Techniques of Supervision**

J.D. Millet highlighted certain techniques and methods of supervision.16 These are briefly explained in this section:

**Prior Approval**

Every functionary prepares a detailed plan of the work along with the specified time frame in which the same has to be accomplished and submit the same for being approved by the

---

senior/s. While approving the detailed plan of work, the supervisors get an opportunity to modify or amend or delete whatever aspect/s of the work are redundant or are not in consonance with the organizational norms. Besides, the subordinates cannot deviate from the work plan approved by the supervisor. Also the process of supervision becomes easier as the supervisor can compare the work plan with the actual work performance. Moreover, time line also get automatically followed and adhered to as the time frame for different activities of the work plan are also specified in the detailed work plan.

**Service Standards**

Setting up of service standards is another important tool of supervision. Supervisors set up both qualitative and quantitative standards of service which must be satisfied during the performance of work. “Work plans, written procedures of manuals, written and oral instructions, staff meetings and administrative follow up are the means by which service standards are established for workers to attempt to approximate.”

**Budgetary Allocation**

Through budget allocations to various aspects of the activities are made, i.e., it is decided beforehand as to what how much is to be spent for performance of different aspects of work. The officials are required to act within the budgetary allocation. In case the funds allocated are insufficient, the supervisor/ authorized higher ups are to be approached to obtain authorization for higher allocations or for re-appropriations, as the case may be.

**Appointment or Allocation of Key Subordinate Personnel**

Specialists are the key to success in modern organisations and for the effective performance of work, it is necessary to appoint/ designate such specialists or key personnel to the appropriate aspect of work, i.e., “to appoint such technically and professionally equipped officials those could do justice to the task at hands. It is the higher rung of administration that plays a key role in either recruiting such officials for lower rungs or allocating them from already existing human resource available to them.”

**Reporting System**

All subordinates are required to report their performance periodically to their respective supervisors. Besides providing opportunity to the supervisors to know about the progress of work
of their subordinates, reporting system also assist the supervisors in knowing the difficulties that the subordinates might be facing in performance of the work. This would enable the supervisors to come to the rescue of the subordinates and also to amend the work plan, if needed.

**Inspection**

Sometimes the facts cannot be conveyed through the reporting system. They may also provide misleading information. This necessitates inspection of the work site. “A supervisor inspects the records, papers and files in order to have the first hand information about results of the work done.”