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PRESENTS

BUSINESS STUDIES

TOPIC 6: THE OFFICE

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THE OFFICE

It is a place, a room or a building set aside in an organization where communication, secretarial, administration and clerical work take place. Various operations are planned, coordinated and monitored in an office.

Functions of an office:

1. **Receiving and recording information** – this aids in making informed choices.
2. **Distributing (disseminating) information** – through the office, information is channeled to the relevant departments for action and implementation;
3. **Mailing.** Letters and parcels for and from various departments are dispatched and received in an office;
4. **Communication.** It serves as the communication centre to and from which the information flows.
5. **Safeguarding and controlling of an organization's property.** The office ensures safety of the organization's property through:
 - Taking insurance cover;
 - Ensuring the safety of people using the premises;
 - Enhancing security against theft using watchmen, security lights, alarms and fences;
 - Keeping records of movement and usage of each of the property;
 - Property repairs and maintenance;
 - Periodical physical stock-taking.
6. **Filing** – This involves keeping information and documents in a safe, neat and tidy way. To ensure this, a good filing system should be:
 - Simple to understand and operate;
 - Compact to save on space;
 - Suitability. It should be appropriate enough to suit the business needs;
 - Elasticity. It should be flexible enough to accommodate any future expansion needs;
 - Safety. The system should be able to secure the documents against loss, misplacement, damage, unauthorized hands, etc.
 - Accessible
 - Economical. It should be inexpensive to start and maintain.



Role of filing

- i) Protects documents from loss and unauthorized people;
- ii) Improves tidiness and efficiency in the office;
- iii) Acts as a future reference;
- iv) Enhances systematic storage and hence easier and quicker retrieval of documents;
- v) Keeps documents neat and dry.

7. **Reproduction of documents:** there are several ways of reproducing documents. These are:

a) Carbon copying:

This method uses carbon papers placed between papers stacked together with the carbonated side facing down and the original paper to be handwritten or typed on placed topmost.

Advantages

- i. Convenient for reproducing few copies;
- ii. Cheap;
- iii. Requires no training.

Disadvantages

- i. Not convenient for many copies;
- ii. Copies can be misaligned
- iii. Poor quality copies;
- iv. Difficult to produce different colours;
- v. Copies of photographs cannot be reproduced.

b) Duplicating

It involves use of a master copy like for instance a stencil to reproduce a copy or a succession of copies. The master copy can be prepared by hand writing, typing or scanning. There are different methods of duplicating namely:

I. Ink duplicating

It uses ink duplicator, duplicating stencil, stylus pen, typewriter, run-off paper and ink. The stencil is cut using a stylus pen or a typewriter and is then fed



into the duplicator to produce the required copies. The duplicator can be manual or electric.

Advantages

- i. Quite cheap for many copies;
- ii. Easy to correct errors on the stencil using correcting fluid;
- iii. Produces permanent copies with relatively good quality;
- iv. Stencils can be stored for later use;
- v. It is fast

Disadvantages

- i. Expensive when producing few copies;
- ii. More time consuming than photocopying;
- iii. Uses coarse absorbent papers and is therefore unsuitable for quality work;
- iv. Requires separate runs for different colours.

II. Spirit duplicating

This method uses a spirit duplicator which transfers carbon from the master copy to the other copies.

Advantages

- i. Economical for few copies;
- ii. Can handle different colours in the copies.

Disadvantages

- i. Unsuitable for many copies;
- ii. Copies fade out with time;
- iii. The master is expensive.

III. Photocopying

This method uses a photocopier which photographs the master copy and prints out the photography on blank pieces of paper to produce an exact copy of the master copy.



Advantages

- i. Cheap for few copies;
- ii. Quicker than duplicating or printing;
- iii. Requires no special training to operate;
- iv. Produces high quality copies;
- v. Some machines can produce coloured copies;
- vi. Confirming the accuracy by comparing the copy with the original is not required unlike the case with duplicating and printing.
- vii. Environmentally friendly.

Disadvantages

- i. Expensive to produce many copies;
- ii. Copies may fade out with time;
- iii. Only selected colours can be copied
- iv. Can be easily misused due to its convenience;
- v. Cannot be used where there is no electricity.

IV. Printing

This process uses computerized or manual printing equipments to produce documents. Computer and printers can be networked to have the following advantages.

Advantages

- i. Produces high quality copies;
- ii. Can produce different colours;
- iii. Convenient for many copies;
- iv. Environmentally friendly.

Disadvantages

- i. Expensive
- ii. Requires specialized training;
- iii. Requires electricity.

V. Stencil (screen) printing



This is a mechanical method that uses the concept of cutting out an outline of some letters on a template such as a piece of paper, placing the cut out template against the background of the surface to be printed and then spreading ink onto the template to produce the prints. It is mainly used on surfaces that cannot be fed into a printer.

Advantages

- i. Cheap
- ii. Requires only little training
- iii. Adaptable
- iv. Can produce a variety of colours

VI. Offset lithography

In this method, the document to be printed is first printed onto a metallic plate which then affixed onto a printer for duplication.

Advantages

- i. Produces high quality documents
- ii. Suited for mass production;
- iii. Can print different colours

Disadvantages

- i. High initial and installation cost;
- ii. Pollutes environment;
- iii. Leads to deforestation due to high demand of logging to get trees;
- iv. Requires a lot of monitoring.

Types Office layouts

Office layout refers to the outlook, arrangement and positioning of furniture and equipment in an n office. There are different kinds of layout such as:

a) Open office layout

The staff members are housed in one large room and are usually grouped into departments. This is common in banks and some KPLC offices.

Advantages



- i. Easy to supervise the staff;
- ii. Low construction cost since they need few partitions;
- iii. Easy to locate workers;
- iv. Minimizing staff movement hence saving time when passing information;
- v. More efficient utilization of equipment since the staff is closely monitored;
- vi. Promotes teamwork;
- vii. Low maintenance cost;
- viii. Saves floor space;
- ix. Cheap to decorate;
- x. Discourages worker absenteeism.

Disadvantages

- i. Disruption from colleagues;
- ii. Senior workers are not secluded which may affect their status quo;
- iii. Creates untidy un-business like appearance;
- iv. Due to overcrowding, air conditioning, lighting and heating may not be conducive to all;
- v. Distraction by fellow workers and machines may lower productivity;
- vi. Contagious disease may easily spread;
- vii. Private discussions and consultations with management may be difficult.

b) Enclosed layout

Also known as cubicles. Usually occupied by one or two people with their names and/or their designations written on the door.

Advantages

- i. Offers privacy
- ii. Less noise and disruptions;
- iii. Creates a conducive working environment;
- iv. Confers status to senior workers;
- v. Air conditioning, lighting and heating may be controlled to comfortable levels;
- vi. Provides security for valuable ad sensitive documents.



Disadvantages

- i. Impedes closer supervision of the workers;
- ii. Costly to construct and maintain;
- iii. Encourages absenteeism;
- iv. Time consuming by workers as they move from one office to another;
- v. Encourages laxity;
- vi. Reduces interaction between management and other employees;
- vii. Possible to misuse office facilities.

c) Landscape office layout

It is similar to the open layout but is more sophisticated with some glass semi-partition, sometimes with different floor levels so as to have senior employees on a slightly higher level for easier supervision and may have some decorations.

Advantages

- i. Promotes teamwork among workers;
- ii. Promotes sharing of office equipment hence less equipments are required;
- iii. Easy supervision of the workers;
- iv. Low maintenance cost;
- v. Easy location of workers;
- vi. Discourages absenteeism;
- vii. Decorations provides conducive and attractive working environment.

Disadvantages

- i. Disruption by colleagues and machines;
- ii. May be expensive to set up and maintain;
- iii. No privacy for senior officers;
- iv. Confidential work may not be conveniently done
- v. Set up may be more about aesthetics than functionality.

Office Equipment

These are facilities used in an office to make work easier.



Roles of office equipment

- Make working more efficient;
- Enhances neatness and accuracy;
- Ensure security for documents;
- Provides comfortable working environment.



Types of office equipment

Office	machine	use
GENERAL OFFICE	Guillotine	Trimming documents into required shapes and sizes;
	Paper punch	Make holes in papers to facilitate filing
	Stapling machine	For pinning papers together
	Staple remover	To remove pins from papers
MAIL ROOM	Folding machine	Folding letters and sealing envelopes;
	Frankling machine	For printing postage impressions on envelopes;
	Addressing machines	For printing addresses on the mail
	Sorting machine	For sorting letters
	Letter opener	For opening letters
	composite	To fold documents, place them in envelopes and seal the envelops
TYPING ROOM	Typewriter	Used for typing documents manually
	Dictating machines (Dictaphone)	For making shorthand dictations and recording information on tapes;
	Paper shredders	Cutting unwanted documents into tiny pieces to avoid the documents getting into wrong hands
	Duplicating machine	For reproducing documents from a master copy. (stencil)
COMMUNICATIONS	Telephone, radio calls, pagers	Used to send and receive messages;
	Telex-printer, computer emails	For printing telexed messages
	Facsimile , answering machines	For transmitting written messages like letters, maps, diagrams, photographs.
DUPLICATING/ REPRODCUTION	Photocopier Printing machine Stencil duplicator	For producing documents
ACCOUNTS / FINANCE	Adding machine	Adding and subtracting figures
	Cash register	Preparing ash receipts
	Calculators	For all types of calculations
	Accounting machine, Tax register	For posting information to ledgers and payroll preparation
	Computer	For complex calculations
	Money counting machine	For counting coins and notes



Advantages of Office Machines

- i. Save on labour – use of machines substitutes large number of people hence saving on salaries;
- ii. Speed. Machines are much faster than people;
- iii. Accuracy – when used by an efficient operator, it can be very accurate;
- iv. Presentable – their products are of high quality;
- v. Control – machines can prevent frauds by using some meters or detectors;
- vi. Uniformity – machines produce homogenous outputs;
- vii. Minimizes – they handle tedious and monotonous activities;
- viii. Saving on cost – machines are more efficient than labour

Disadvantages of office machines

- i. Cost – high initial, maintenance and operational costs;
- ii. Stoppage of work – breakdown and down time may disrupt operations;
- iii. Unemployment – machines displace people from work;
- iv. Obsolescence – advanced in technology may render a machine outdated;
- v. Require skills – machines require some training to operate;
- vi. Special materials – some machinery may require special stationary;
- vii. Losses – carelessness of the operator may lead to high losses.

Factors considered when selecting office equipment

- a) Cost – initial, operational and maintenance costs;
- b) Adaptability – should be able to cope with future changes in technology;
- c) Durability – should have high working life;
- d) Effect on staff morale – it should boost the morale of the workers;
- e) Possibility of hiring rather than buying
- f) Availability of complementary resources – power to operate, the raw materials and spare parts should be considered as one acquires equipment;
- g) Availability of man power to operate the equipment;
- h) Availability of adequate space to keep it;
- i) Security of the equipment



Office staff

These comprise of the people who work for the business organization. They are usually categorized into:

- a) **Managerial staff** - They formulate policies, implement them and supervise other workers. They include managers, and company secretary.
- b) **Junior staff** – they include skilled and semi-skilled employees like account clerks, secretaries and sales persons.
- c) **Subordinate staff** – they are unskilled employees who provide non-specialized duties like cleaning and delivering messages.

Duties of various office staff

A. General Manager

- (i) Controls all activities in the organization;
- (ii) Co-ordinates all departments to harmoniously work towards the main goals and objectives;
- (iii) Responsible for acquisition and management of staff;
- (iv) Provides resources for the organization;
- (v) Advising the owners on matters relating to the organization;
- (vi) Plans work and time schedule in the organization.

B. Company secretary

- (i) Handles all legal matters of the company;
- (ii) Taking down minutes during major meetings like AGM.

C. Department managers

Include production manager, sales manager, technical manager, finance, human resources manager, etc. The finance manager:

- (i) Keeps books of account;
- (ii) Funds collection, banking and making payments on behalf of the firm;
- (iii) Making financial returns to the General Manager;
- (iv) Preparing financial reports;
- (v) Preparing payrolls and budgets.



D. Personal secretary

A senior employee usually attached to a more senior officer.

- (i) Filing information for the boss;
- (ii) Attending meetings and recording minutes;
- (iii) Supervising junior secretarial staff;
- (iv) Receiving and making telephone calls for the boss;
- (v) Taking dictation from the boss;
- (vi) Making travel arrangements and booking hotels for the boss;
- (vii) Keeping petty cash

E. Typists

- (i) Typing information from original documents;
- (ii) Filing documents;
- (iii) Reproducing documents

F. Clerk

- (i) Handling mail;
- (ii) Duplicating and operating various office machines;
- (iii) Indexing and filing;
- (iv) Helps in store keeping and record keeping;
- (v) Ordering, receiving, storing and issuing stationary.

G. Telephone operator

- (i) Receives calls and directs them to the relevant offices at the switch board.

H. Office Massager

- (i) Collect and delivers mail

I. Receptionist

- (i) Supervises massagers and porters;
- (ii) Receives and directs visitors within the organization;
- (iii) Taking and passing messages;
- (iv) Making, renewing and cancelling appointments;
- (v) Keeping visitors' book



Essential qualities of office staff.

(a) Personal attributes

- (i) Physical appearance e.g. dressing and presentability;
- (ii) Hygiene – general body cleanliness;
- (iii) Posture – manner of walking, talking, sitting etc. should be dignified;
- (iv) Moral behavior
- (v) Good health and physical fitness.

(b) Office etiquette (code of behavior)

- (i) Respect – showing regards to others in regard to age, rank and status.
- (ii) Punctuality – keeping time in duties and appointments.
- (iii) Courtesy – handling people politely, pleasantly and with consideration.
- (iv) Loyalty – commitment to the organization.
- (v) Honesty – telling the truth and sincerity.
- (vi) Co-operation – working harmoniously with colleagues.
- (vii) Diplomacy – ability to convince others tactfully.
- (viii) Judgment – making informed decisions.
- (ix) Accuracy e. typing a document quickly and with precision.
- (x) Initiation – ability to create and implement ideas.

(c) Personal knowledge and skills

- (i) Knowledge – relevant academic and professional qualifications;
- (ii) Skills – capability to work efficiently, accurately and easily that comes with training and experience.

Trends in Office Management

Office management and operations are currently taking a transformation through such technologies like:

A. Computers – it is used for:

- i. Data storage and inventory control;
- ii. Processing amounting transactions
- iii. Storing information for the staff;
- iv. Communication e.g. email, intranet, websites etc



Advantages of using computers

- i. Economize on space and amount of materials;
- ii. Fast
- iii. Presentable output;
- iv. Can have numerous storage capacity
- v. Facilitates communication
- vi. accurate

Disadvantages of using computers

- i. leads to unemployment;
- ii. inhibits innovation;
- iii. using the same machine over and over is monotonous;
- iv. requires extra expense for back-ups, data links, UPS e.t.c
- v. requires skilled manpower;
- vi. may lead to leaking of confidential information;
- vii. expensive to install
- viii. Requires electricity;
- ix. Subject to virus attack

Uses for computers in communication

- i. **Internet** – connects very many computers all over the world hence proving lots of information;
- ii. **Intranet** – connect the organization to selected persons like the suppliers, customers or employees;
- iii. **Website** – a virtual location in the internet posted for other parties to access.
- iv. **E-commerce** – involves carrying out trading activities on the internet. It offers the following advantages:
 - Access to a large market;
 - Can connect small and large businesses without discrimination;
 - Very fast
 - Reduces paper work
 - Saves cost of sending and receiving messages;



- Can enable one to access important business information enhancing decision making.

v. **Teleconferencing** – one can hold meetings over the internet.

Advantages of internet, intranet, website, extranet, and e-commerce

- i. Fast
- ii. Low cost
- iii. Convenient – you get information at the touch of a button;
- iv. Can store information for future use

Disadvantages of internet, intranet, website, extranet, and e-commerce

- i. High initial cost of equipment;
 - ii. High maintenance cost;
 - iii. Requires training for the users
 - iv. Suffers from occasional breakdown e.g. internet down-times, computer virus,
 - v. Prone to misuse
 - vi. Requires power to operate.
- a) **Office arrangement** – many organizations are nowadays adopting open or landscape office layouts to enable the manager have better control;
 - b) **Public relations department** – the need for much better customer relations has necessitated establishment of customer relations department;
 - c) **Mobile phones** – this enables the workers to carry out their responsibilities even while away;
 - d) **Office location**- many organizations are tending to prefer locations outside the contestation of town to avoid traffic jams, lack of space and high running costs.
 - e) **Procedure and routines** – technology has transformed some of the traditional procedures and routines like the use of computers instead of typewriters has enables management to take up responsibilities that would earlier be assigned to typists.