

## **SPAN OF CONTROL**

By span of control mean the number of subordinates, which a superior officer can effectively supervise, direct and control. Span of control is simply the number of subordinates or the units of work that an administrator can personally direct. In the words of Dimock, "The span of control is the number and range of direct, habitual communication contacts between the chief executive of an enterprise and his principal fellow officers. V A. Graicunas described this concept is related to the principle of "span of attention".

There are limits to human capacity; and if the span of supervision extended too thinly, unsatisfactory results occur. There are some who limit it to 3 persons; others put at 7; and still others restrict it to 20. The problem of fixing the number of subordinates is a problem of span of control and is related to the psychological problem of span of attention. In fact nobody can attend to more than a certain number of things or persons. It means the span of attention is limited.

There are several factors, which are determinants of the degree of span of control. They are nature of work, leadership, age of agency and the location of the organisational units. If the nature of work is of homogenous character, span of control is more than if the work is of heterogeneous character. Again the span of control increases or decreases depending upon the qualities of the supervisor. Supervisor is more easy and span of control increases if the organisation has been long in existence. Moreover, supervision becomes easier when the subordinates work under the same roof where the supervisor sits.

## **Span of Control under revision**

The idea of span of control has come under revision during the recent years. The increasing use of automation in administration, the information revolution and the growing role of the specialist are chiefly responsible for such change. Automation and mechanical process have resulted in simplification and expediting of communications. The headquarters are now linked with field office through internet; mobile phones, fax and other fast means of communications. The use of latest means of communications has hardened the span of control. The length of span of control has increased and the superior can control more subordinates.

The entry specialist in the public services has also affected span of control considerably. Since they are conscious of their expertise, do not tolerate any interference from the ignorant laymen. They dislike vertical relationship in the organisation and so that the old patterns of organisation are undergoing a change. The well – known concept of superior–subordinate relationship is facing a challenge. Everybody wants recognition as a matter of right. Thus the job of the chief executive is now more of coordination than of supervisor and control.