Chapter - 6

Collaborative Needs of Fertilizer Industry

6.1 Identifying Groups and Group Processes in Fertilizer Industry
6.2 Understanding Need of Collaboration in Group Work
6.3 Requirement Analysis for Different Tools that Support Group Work
Collaborative Needs of Fertilizer Industry

Fertilizer industry in India is divided into three sectors – Public Sector, Cooperative Sector and Private sector. Each company may have more than one units spread across the country. Some of them have their head offices situated at a central location for the purpose of administrative, marketing, procurement and other policy related purposes. Moreover, like any other company fertilizer companies have various functional units within it. Thus the structure of the industry is such that it needs a great deal of collaboration not only among geographically spread units of the same company but also among the various groups / teams within the same unit.

6.1 Identifying Groups and Group Processes in Fertilizer Industry:

Groups and teams in business organizations are the collection of people who work together to achieve some common goals. The Business Dictionary.com defines the group as “A collection of individuals who have regular contact and frequent interaction, mutual influence, common feeling of camaraderie, and who work together to achieve a common set of goals.”¹ The policy control on the fertilizer industry in India in terms of prices and distribution of fertilizers is excised by the Government of India through Department of Fertilizers, Ministry of Chemicals & Fertilizers. Whole Industry is a big group under the policies of Government of India. Various companies under the three sectors have different units of production and marketing of their products. All such units are geographically dispersed and need high level of collaboration among them in achieving different shared objectives. Like any other business organizations, the companies in fertilizer industry have also structured themselves in major functional groups as:

- Production
- Marketing
- Research and Development
- Human Resource Management
- Others
At the unit level these different functional departments work in close coordination in planning, utilizing shared resources, production and marketing the products etc. Thus the groups in the fertilizer Industry is similar to any other Industry. This can be understood in four different levels:

**Level 1:** Big Group (Whole Industry) under Government of India

**Level 2:** Among geographically dispersed units of a Company

**Level 3:** Among functional department of a single unit

**Level 4:** Among members of small teams and sub groups in the functional departments

Group structure of fertilizer industry can be understood from the following figure:

Exhibit 6.1: Structure of Indian Fertilizer Industry Viewing as Groups

Group processes are the procedures through which a group approaches to find solution of the common problems and achieves the shared goals. Group processes are important in achieving the group goals. The group dynamics are influence by different factors. These factors may range from individual level through group and environmental levels. The group interaction process determines the performance outcome of the group. The interaction process includes the communication patterns, rules for information flow control mechanism, monitoring the performance etc. The group cohesiveness is considered as essential for group goal achievement. The outcomes are not only towards the organizational objectives but many others which
may range from member satisfaction to sociometric structure. This can be understood with the help of following figure:

Exhibit 6.2: A traditional paradigm for analysis of group interaction as a mediator of performance outcomes. Adapted from Hackman, J Richard and Morris Charles G.²

6.2 Understanding need of Collaboration in Group work:

The very gist of group work depends upon the collaboration. The extent of collaboration among the participating members will decide the level of outcome of the group work. India is agriculture based country where majority of people get their employments in the agriculture sector. Indian Agriculture sector provides food grains for the second largest population of the world. There are growing trends in food processing business in India and the necessary raw material is drawn from this sector only. Fertilizer Industry is challenged to provide necessary nutrients to the agriculture sector for yielding sufficiently large output so as to meet all the requirement of agricultural output. By realizing the importance of availability of fertilizers the Government of India has taken the control on its price and distribution. The objective can only be fulfilled when the whole Industry is considered as a big group with effective collaboration among major stakeholders in planning, procuring, producing, pricing and distribution of the fertilizers.
Need of Collaboration to Increase Efficiency of Group work: The Group work is considered better than an individual work but if it lacks collaboration, the efficiency of the group cannot be better than the individual work. The collaboration is the key factor for enhancing the efficiency of members working in a group.

Better Utilization of Shared Resources: The optimum utilization of resources cannot be guaranteed without having systematic collaboration among the users i.e. members of the group. The outcome of the group mainly depends upon the proper utilization of resources. Thus the collaboration among the participating members is required to ensure the optimum utilization of resources meant for the achieving the shared objectives.

Effectiveness of Work: The group work is a result of the efforts of all members and if the work lacks collaboration the group may not be able to do for what it has been formed. It may miss its target and thus effectiveness of the group will be lost.

Thus, at all levels the objectives are needed to be understood by all members and close collaboration is needed in sharing the resources and achieving the objectives. Without proper collaboration, the effectiveness of the group will remain always doubtful.

6.3 Requirement Analysis for Different Tools that Support Group Work:

Requirement of various tools that support the collaboration in groups are vital to be identified. Each group consists of different members which work together to achieve some shared goals. Every member needs some level of information and support for efficient execution of the assigned tasks in the group. Thus the tools that are used to support group work must be analyzed to ensure its usefulness for each member of the group. M. Maguire and N. Bevan have defined a process for user requirement analysis which has four stages, as mentioned in the following figure:
The fertilizer Industry has different groups and these groups have different requirement of collaborative tools. The group work starts right from planning, assigning tasks, meeting, resource sharing, processes coordination etc. Some of the common tools that are useful in supporting group work and are being used are mentioned below:

**Messaging Tool:** There is a need to have a messaging tool which will enable the members of a group to send and receive messages. Some of the messages are required to be sent to more than one member. The messaging tool can be used for communication among members of a group and for sharing of information. This can also be used to assign tasks to subordinates. Therefore, the requirement of messaging tool is very important in communication among the group members.

**Scheduling Tool:** Some of the important tasks in a group are required to be scheduled in advance so that all significant people can contribute according to their role and responsibilities. The scheduling tool is also required to schedule meeting and appointments. Scheduling tool should have system of prioritizing the tasks.

**Calendaring Tool:** These are used for fixing appointments and meetings.

**Discussion Support Tool:** Members of the group must have a discussion forum so that common issues are raised and resolved through open discussion.

**Decision Support Tool:** The group must have some tools that support decision making process.

This chapter has been written to understand the need of collaboration at different levels in the Indian Fertilizer Industry. This will help to understand the need of collaboration at different levels in the organisation.
References

