

HIERARCHY OR THE SCALAR PROCESS

The literal meaning of hierarchy is the rule of control of the higher over the lower. Hierarchy means a graded organisation of several successive levels in which one of the lower level is immediately subordinate to the next higher one and through it to the other higher steps right up to the top. The shape of the administrative structure is that of a pyramid. Mooney and Reily call it the scalar process. They say “a scale means a series of steps something graded. In organisation it means the grading of duties not according to different functions, but according to degrees of authority and corresponding responsibility.

The basic features of the hierarchical structure are:

- a. A person will have only one immediate superior from whom he will receive orders.
- b. A person will not receive orders from lower status.
- c. No intermediate level shall be skipped over in the dealing of the people at the top with those lower level or vice versa.
- d. A person who is given responsibility for a task will have authority commensurate with this responsibility.

From the above features it is clear that in the scalar system authority command and control descend from the top to the bottom step by step. The secretary of department will deal with the joint secretary who in turn shall deal with the deputy secretary who further shall deal with the undersecretary. The undersecretary shall further deal with the section officer who in turn deal with assistants, clerks etc. Similarly, the upward

communication shall also be exactly the same when a section officer deals with higher officers.

L D. White narrates the basic functions of hierarchy. According to him its primarily the channel of command. It is the principal channel of communication downward and upward along with the flow of information, advice, specific instructions, warnings and commands. It is the channel for the delegation of authority.

Merits and Demerits of Scalar Principles

The advantages of the scalar system need no emphasis. It is almost indispensable for every large-scale organisation. Some of the merits of the system are:

1. Scalar system or hierarchical system serves as an instrument of integration and coherence. It binds together the various units and divisions into an integrated whole. It acts as a link, which joins the various sections of an organisation most harmoniously.
2. It enables us fix responsibility at each level.
3. It serves a channel of communication both upwards and downwards.
4. It simplifies the procedure for file movements.
5. It helps to decentralize decision-making and prevents congestion of business at the top.

Demerits

1. It creates superior-subordinate relationship in the administrative system.
2. Procedure through the proper channel may create unnecessary delay in administration.

3. Red tapism is another possible defect of the hierarchical system.
4. Too much rigidity in administration and thus human relationship which essence of good administration is missing in it.
5. As the direction flows from top to bottom it kills the initiative of the lower officers consequently resulting into indecisiveness and efficiency.

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