

## Role of hierarchy/scalar principle in organizational administration

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### Abstract

In many organizations the principle of hierarchy is employed for the better or efficient management of organization. Some executives or administrations call organization an idea and, in this system, hierarchy is also an idea. This is also called 'Scalar' system. Control of higher over the lower. It stands for grades or steps of several levels. It is universal and essential feature of an organization no matter it is small or large. The purpose of this paper is to convey the vitality of this principle in the successful and efficient functioning of an organization for the accomplishment of its objective.

**Keywords:** hierarchy, scalar system, superior and subordinate, gangplank, organization. personnel, henry fayol, pyramid structure, public personnel, graded arrangement

### Introduction

Every organization has certain objectives and goals to achieve and is structured on the basis of certain principles with a view to achieving these objectives. These principles are, therefore, known as principles of organization, which are generally followed by every organization for the achievement of its ends. A principle may be a basic statement or a fundamental truth that gives understanding and guidance to thinking and practice.

Hierarchy means a gradation of social positions or status. It implies structural or fixed inequality during which position is unconnected with individual ability. This is the precise meaning of hierarchy employed or utilized in public administration. Literally, the term 'hierarchy' means the rule or control of the upper over the lower. In administration, hierarchy means a graded organization of several successive steps or levels which are interlinked with each other. It is a method where the efforts of various individuals in an organization are integrated with each other. In every large-scale organization, there are a few who command and there are others who are commanded. This results in the creation of superior-subordinate relationship through variety of levels of responsibilities reaching from top to rock bottom of a corporation. A paramedical type of structure is built up in an organization which Mooney and Reiley call the 'Scalar Process'. In organization, scalar means the grading of duties consistent with degrees of authority and corresponding responsibility, consistent with Mooney, this scale or scalar chain may be a universal phenomenon. Wherever we discover a corporation of individuals related as superior and subordinate, we've the scalar principle.

### Definitions of Hierarchy or the Scalar System

**L.D. White:** Hierarchy consists of the universal application of the superior- subordinate relationship through a number of level of responsibility reaching from the top to the bottom of the structure.

**Earl Latham:** Hierarchy is a graded structure of inferior

and superior beings in an ascending scale.

**Robert Presthus:** Hierarchy is a system of ranking positions along a descending scale from the top to the bottom of an organization.

After analyzing the above definitions, we understand that the Scalar or Hierarchy principle is the superior- subordinate relationship. Responsibility is of different degree at different level. All positions in the organization are arranged vertically on both ascending and descending order. Hierarchy has universal application in which the entire organization will be divided in to different units and sub-units with different degree of authority and power. These units are organized in the form of pyramid one below the other and the authority is distributed to all these levels. The below diagram illustrates the pyramidal structure in hierarchy.

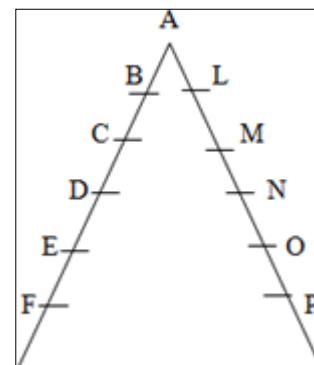


Fig 1

Again, the qualification and eligibility of all aren't same. But all the workers contribute to the betterment or development of the organization. In order to put a right man during a proper place is a crucial job which the authority must perform. Moreover, every employee isn't eligible for each job. All these are prelude to the system of hierarchy.

Hence hierarchy can be defined as an idea or system of management which suggests to employ a person to a post for which he is eligible. Apart from this, in every organization there's a chief executive to manage the entire body. Since he himself cannot manage it alone he requires people to assist him. All of them don't hold an equivalent rank or perform an equivalent duty. There are different persons who perform different duties. Some experts of public administration are of opinion that the concept of hierarchy is sort of prevalent in theology. In church and related fields the system of hierarchy is usually found. Latham within the same article has said: "Like a piece of writing of religion during a religious creed, hierarchy may be a symbol of the assumption within the mythic sort of administrative organization. Like a piece of writing of spiritual faith it's believed in spite of the shortage of evidence to support it". Some people think that publicly administration the thought of spiritual faith is sort of prevalent. The employees of the lower rank never raise the question of the system of hierarchy and they ungrudgingly obey the order of the higher officer. The concept of hierarchy is just like religious faith. The employees of the inferiority generally don't raise question about the facility or authority of their higher officer. They simply take it without any consideration that the upper officer has the power and qualification also as power to issue order and direction. Hence it's a sort of religion which can easily be compared with religious faith. The employees of the management spontaneously obey the order of the upper officer. Here is a problem of religion and loyalty.

If this faith and loyalty for one reason or other are disturbed, the system of hierarchy cannot function satisfactorily. Hence loyalty to and faith in higher authority are of important importance within the system of hierarchy. An important aspect of hierarchy is that within the organisation there shall exist mutual faith and harmony and order shall prevail within the whole body of organisation. Latham says: "But unless the administrator sees this group as a coherent unit, he's likely to develop not harmony and order, but disorder and discouragement." So we will say that unity and cooperation are the 2 most vital properties of hierarchical system. Along with it there shall exist mutual belief and faith. Every employee must take it without any consideration that a politician above his head has the proper to offer order and it's his duty to obey the order. This is an issue of religion also as a crucial issue of cooperation.

James Mooney has called the hierarchy a kind or sort of scalar process or principle. He calls it so as altogether organisations there's a highest rank and a lowest rank and in between these two there exist number of ranks. The stages are generally arranged in order of "importance". In public administration all the stages or all the persons of a stage aren't of equal importance. Each person holds a rank and there's scope of promotion to seniority.

Promotion is determined by several factors. James Mooney, however, says that the scalar principle works. We quote him: "The scalar principle is that the same sort of organisation that's sometimes called hierarchical. But to avoid all definitional variants, scalar is preferred." Hierarchy is applied on the consideration that each one the functions of an organisation aren't of equal importance, and, thereon ground they're arranged so as of importance. Needless to say that this is the central theme of the concept of hierarchy. It has been asserted that each one sorts of

organisation in one form or other—follow or adopt the principle of hierarchy. It is said that hierarchy may be vertical or horizontal. Whatever may the type be, hierarchy is hierarchy and every organisation follow or adopt it.

### **Significance of Hierarchy in Organization**

In the public administration systems of all modern states there exists bureaucratic structure and this is inseparable from hierarchy. Long ago the German sociologist Max Weber pointed out this and since then bureaucracy, public administration and hierarchy are well-knit concepts. In the structure of hierarchy there's a chief executive who gives orders and it's channelled through the system of hierarchy. For this reason L.D. White calls it a Channel of Command. The order of the chief executive passes through several stages and it finally reaches its destination. It is said that it's impossible for the chief executive to send his order personally to all or any concerned. Needless to mention that here lies the crucial role of the hierarchy. Another function of hierarchy is named channel of delegation. The decision of 1 person or a choice taken at a specific stage is delegated or sent to a different stage and during this way the general public administration performs its duty. It is not feasible for the chief executive to require all decisions regarding the management of organisation. He simply formulates the overall guidelines and, at subsequent stages, authorised persons or departments to require decision or make changes within the original policy.

In the British parliamentary and other parliamentary systems there is a very well-known concept which is called "delegated legislation". Its meaning is—the parliament adopts the overall principle of a policy and therefore the general administration has been empowered to form minor changes. The system of hierarchy falls during this category. The third important function of hierarchy is that the fashionable public administration is to perform numerous and differing types of function and it's impossible for any particular department to do all the duties. There are different departments and various aspects of a choice are performed by them. In this way, public administration is run today. No one department is completely liable for any decision or performance. Sometimes the reconsideration or reformulation of the first policy or decision could also be required and hierarchical system does this job. L.D. White has pointed this out. Still there is another function. It is said that hierarchy ensures channel of control. This may be called checks and balances. This system is prevalent in American constitutional structure. In the structure of hierarchy nobody particular section or department is fully empowered to require all decisions. The final form of a decision passes through a number of sections and after this it assumes final shape.

L.D. White has mentioned a crucial function of hierarchy. He says: The linkage of civilian officers during a chain of command and responsibility of the most two-way highway along which public business travels is an endless stream. The duty or responsibility of every section or person is specified and naturally there doesn't arise any ambiguity. Each person or department performs specific duty and during this way the management of the organisation is run. The specification of duty is an important aspect of this technique and this feature helps running the general public administration. The hierarchy introduces in an indirect way a kind of division of labour. The public administration has

numerous aspects and all these cannot be fruitfully performed by any single person. Naturally, the division of labour or duty is an important part of every organisation.

**Advantages of Hierarchy**

Every large-scale organization should have a unity of purpose, which may be achieved only through hierarchical system. Hierarchy integrates various units of an organization into an unified whole. As it is observed by M.P. Sharma, "It is an instrument of organizational integration and, coherence. It is to the organizational structure what mortar or cement is to building a structure". It serves as a channel of communication, both upwards and downwards in an organization. It makes clear to each official on with whom he's to affect. It enables us to fix responsibility at each level and at each post in the organization. Every employee knows what his position and responsibility are within the organization and to whom he's accountable. The scale of 'through proper channel' created by the, principle of hierarchy ensures strict adherence to procedure and avoids short-circuiting or ignoring of the intermediate links.

Hierarchy lessens, the burden of work at the highest level and decentralizes the decision making. It establishes variety of subordinate levels below the highest executive. Each subordinate level acts as a centre of decision for specified matters delegated to it. Every employee of the organization is trained to require decisions and guide his subordinates. At the same time, it relieves the chief executive from the burden of work and promotes a sense of belonging among the subordinates. It simplifies the procedure of movement of files due to strict adherence to the rule of 'through proper channel' and makes it easy to understand where a specific file is.

**Disadvantages of Hierarchy**

In the hierarchical system, directions be due above to down below. Those down below are expected to hold out mechanically the instructions of their superiors with none initiative and drive. It brings about rigidity in administrative organization and isn't proper for the event of dynamic human relationships among its members. The success or failure of this system very much depends on the personal likings of the head of the organization. If he can bring life and personal touch in the organization, it is bound to be a success.

Otherwise, it is bound to be a failure. The most serious disadvantage of the hierarchical organization is that it causes delay in the disposal of work. In the above diagram, we saw how consistent with the strict rule of through proper channel, a communication from F to K must travel through E, D, C, B, A, G, H, I, K and b & k again, in all 20 steps. This may mean inordinate delay

**Henry Fayol's 'Gangplank'**

Henry Fayol has suggested a way out to overcome all demerits of the hierarchical system. Hierarchy is universally adapted principle and hence it cannot be omitted from the organization administration. He has termed the solution as - GANGPLANK.

The below diagram illustrates the GANGPLANK idea. In this figure level 3 personnel is directly communicating to C of the other level to avoid delay and red tapism.

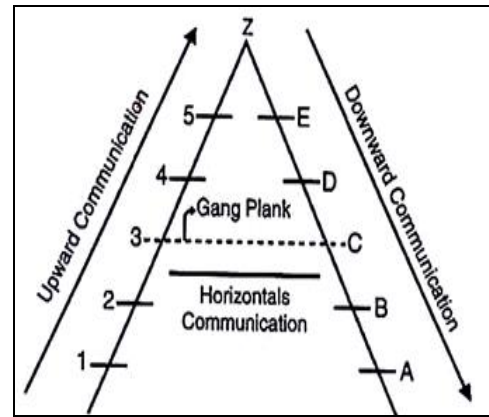


Fig 2

Fayol's concept of 'Gang Plank' to avoid delays and allow direct communication between two subordinates at the same level. Gang Plank is beneficial because it helps in making direct contact just in case of emergency. This idea of Fayol shows that his principles are flexible and may be modified as per things. Communication through the scalar chain may involve delays when two subordinates or employees at an equivalent level want to exchange' information. Thus, Fayol suggested the concept of 'Gang Plank' to avoid delays and permit direct communication between two subordinates at an equivalent level. Gang Plank is beneficial because it helps in making direct contact just in case of emergency. This idea of Fayol shows that his principles are flexible and may be modified as per things.

**Conclusion and suggestions**

Hierarchy in universal and has greater benefits and lesser demerits. Without hierarchy organizational functioning wont, be systematic and disciplined. It serves the purposes of fixing of responsibilities and enhancing efficiency of personnel through superior and subordinate relationship. Fayol's GANGPLANK is the solution to come out of all demerits of this principle.

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