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Principle of Hierarchy and Unity of Command: Theory and Practice in Higher Education

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Introduction:

Administration is an art as well as science. Administration it may be public or private depends upon certain principles. Hierarchy, Unity of Command, Span of Control, Authority, Responsibility, Supervision, Integration Vs. Disintegration, Coordination, Delegation, are some of the fundamental principles of administration. In this research paper attempt has been made to critically assess theory and practice of the principles of 'Unity of Command' and 'Hierarchy' in Higher Education System with special reference to Maharashtra in the context of implementation of NEP. Therefore these two important principles of organization is taken into consideration to discuss the problems in the higher educational institutions in implementation of different policies and programmes. In NEP we are going to adopt the policy of choice based credit system. A student can learn what he wants. There are number of options in front of students. The effective implementation of NEP-2020 depends upon its structural set up. If we forget to adopt basic principles of administration in implementation of education policy, we may not get the concrete results of the policy.

It is observed that, there is violation of above mentioned two fundamental principles (Hierarchy and Unity of Command) of administration in existing educational set up of Maharashtra. Hence other principles of organization also suffer. Viz. Authority, Responsibility, Supervision, Coordination, etc.

Structural Set up of Higher Education-

Most of the colleges in Maharashtra are run by the Private Management. Therefore college administration is under the direct supervision of Chairman or Secretary of the Management. Principal (in some institute Director) is the administrative head of the college or institute. He looks after day to day administration of the college. The principal, being the head of the college, is responsible to the University (i.e. Vice Chancellor or Registrar); he is responsible to Government of Maharashtra (i.e. Director or Joint Director of Higher Education) and Management (Chairman or Secretary). Principal is also directly responsible to accreditation agencies like NAAC, NIRF, Atal Ranking, AISHE or NBA etc. He is also bound by guidelines of apex bodies like UGC, NCERT, AICET etc. and directions of Ministry of Education and State Higher Education Department. Apart from this direct control, he (Principal) is also responsible to community at large for academic excellence.

The management is the appointing authority of the Principal and Staff. The university is responsible for defining role and duties of the principal and staff. The service conditions are also defined by the university. Salary and financial matters of staff are controlled by state government through Director of Higher Education. College or institute is responsible for maintaining quality parameters defined by autonomous accreditation agencies like NAAC or NAB. Moreover some of the agencies like NIRF, AISHE, MIS are agencies which require data from colleges for different reasons. Thus it is also the legal responsibility of the principal to provide online data to these agencies in time bound framework. In short the present higher educational system has become highly complex one.

Moreover there is issue of permanent staff. Most of the colleges in Maharashtra are having ad-hoc staff. It means they are appointed on temporary basis. They are paid as per the financial position of the institution. Generally this kind of staff is underpaid. As they are not permanent it is very difficult to get work done from such staff. In some old reputed college of Maharashtra we find more than fifty percent staff is working on temporary basis. In addition to this we are going to implement NEP-2020 from June 2024 in full fledged manner. NEP is going bring structural changes in the education setup. While bringing this structural change we should take care of the above principles of administration.

In this context, we are going to examine two basic principle of administration which are not observed in higher education system.



Council, Management Council, Senate etc. Registrar was the chief executive officer of the university. He used to issue all directions. No other authority was supposed to give directions to colleges other than Registrar. Principal was directly responsible to the Registrar of the university only.

During last one decades number of new changes took place in the education system. With the introduction of NEP-2020, number of new issues are going to emerge. The system will go to become more complex than ever. The very fundamental principles like Hierarchy, Unity of Command, Span of Control, Authority, Responsibility, Centralization vs. Decentralization, etc. are going to be sidelined in this pattern.

If we take the example of Programme Officer of NSS in the college, he receives at least two circulars or letters per week from different stake holders. It becomes practically impossible to comply all letters or circulars. He gets letters from Health Department, Panchayat Raj Dept., Women Empowerment Dept., Dept of Social Justice, Revenue Dept. etc. It is also note worthy development in the administration that number of programmes are directed without any monitory provisions. There is no satisfactory answer with higher authorities to this fundamental question too.

Conclusion:

Due to violation of basic principles of administration it is not clear who is responsible for delay for declaration of university result. It is also not clear who is responsible for decline in the quality of higher education. Therefore, while introducing NEP, traditional pattern of university and college administration cannot be totally ignored. National Education Policy to be brought in practice with care. In three decades ago college were basically engaged in teaching university syllabus in depth. Because head of the college, that is principal, was just academician. He used to concentrate on academic aspects only. Now he has to work like a bureaucrat. It is very difficult task to coordinate different events in the college. It is also highly technical to work by making different functional committees. On an average every day principal of the college gets at least 10 to 12 circulars from different authorities. Amongst which some are obligatory and other are optional. In nutshell, basic principles of administration such as Hierarchy, Span of Control and Unity of Command must be observed in educational administration for effective implementation any educational policy.

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