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Bureaucracy in Sport Organizations

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Abstract:

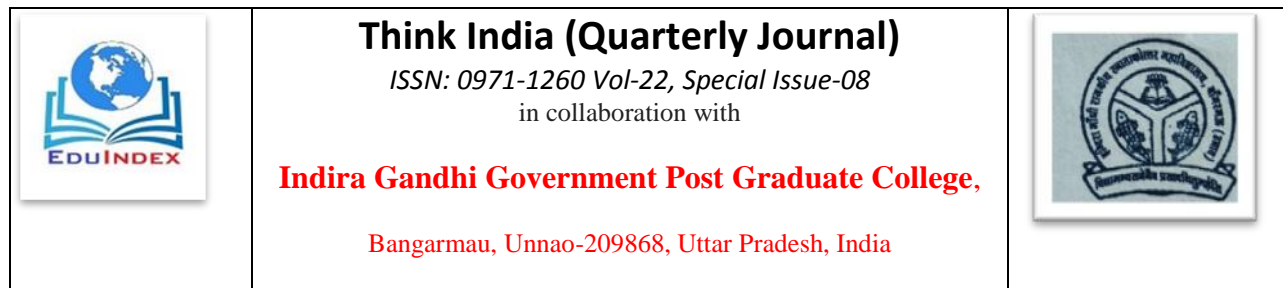
The concept of bureaucracy has been discussed at length for two main reasons. First, modern society is controlled/dominated to a greater and greater extent by bureaucracies the government, large corporations, universities, hospitals, unions, political parties, etc., thus, all individuals must have an understanding and appreciation of the principles underlying bureaucratic structures. Second, although the concept of a bureaucracy appears to be relevant only to large organizations, the elements that make a bureaucracy rational and efficient can be profitably applied to smaller organizations. For example, in the case of football, the most successful teams are clearly characterized by a division of labour (offensive and defensive units, and the specializations within each), a hierarchy (the chief coach, assistant coach, coaches for specialized units, the captain, quarterback), impersonality in selection, utilization and rewarding of athletes, and technical competence on the part of the coaches and players. Further, rules are numerous in football varying from the rules of the sport to the league rules and to the team rules which even control the athlete's life away from the field. What is most significant is that these rules are closely followed by the players. There is no better example of members willing compliance and obedience to the rules and authority of a bureaucracy.

Keywords: Bureaucracy, Authority, Soccer, Athlete, Sports, Management.

The relevance of bureaucratic concepts to national sport organizations is illustrated by Frisby's (1983) study of those organizations in Canada. She found that those national sport organizations that were more bureaucratic were also more effective in terms of both goal attainment and resource acquisition. She contended terms of both goal attainment and resource acquisition. She contended that "Weber's theory of bureaucracy provides a useful framework for understanding the nature of voluntary amateur sport organizations". Even voluntary organizations must rely on bureaucratic processes if they wish to achieve specific goals.

Organizing: Open Systems Perspectives

A bureaucracy is, by nature, a closed organizational system. In the bureaucratic view, the organizational goals are assumed to be clear and fixed, and the organization and its processes are





designed to be efficient in all its internal operations. In its drive for efficiency, a bureaucracy tends to ignore the environmental influences. But organizations do not operate in a vacuum. Fundamentally, an organization is an instrument of society and, consequently, it has a primary responsibility to society and its needs. Because societal needs change, it is essential for any organization to monitor the changes and adapt in function in order to more effectively meet the needs of society. Even if it is accepted that organizations are self serving, they must still adapt and change with the changes in the environment in order to survive. Since an organization is dependent upon the environment for its resources as well as the disposal of its outputs, it becomes imperative that an organization must be attuned to the vagaries of the environment. Thus, a technical college must recruit students and, in turn, those students eventually find a place in the work force. But, if the technological needs of society change and the technical college does not modify its curriculum to reflect these changes, it could be eventually forced out of business. This sensitivity to the demands of the environment forms the basis for the approach taken by many of the sections, the approaches taken by three of those theorists-Lawrence and Lorsch (1967), Thompson (1967), and Parsons (1960)-are discussed.

The Lawrence and Lorsch Medel

The research of Lawrence and Lorsch (1967) was concerned with manufacturing organizations. Their basic premise was that a manufacturing organization is basically divided into three major subsystems; sales, production, and research and development. Each of these subsystems must deal with different segments of the environment-market, technical-economic, and scientific sub-environments respectively.

The three subsystems differ with respect to the rate at which there respective sub-environments change, in the relative amounts of information they have about their environments, and in the feedback they receive from the environment. These three elements constitute what Lawrence and Lorsch called "certainty of the environment". According to these authors, the relative certainty of the environment faced by the subsystems creates two specific problems for the organization - differentiation and integration.

Differentiation. Differentiation occurs when an organization is divided into units according to environmental exigencies, and those units are then staffed with people of appropriate attitude and skills. It must be noted that the concept of differentiation is not identical to the concept of department. According to the classical and bureaucratic approaches, departmentation occurs when an organization is divided into units that are concerned with specific functions and/or purposes. The internal structure within the various units is similar and is characterized by hierarchy of authority and rules and regulations.

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But differentiation, according to Lawrence and Lorsch, is division of labour based on the differing environmental conditions, and since each unit is required to interact with different segments of the environment (and these segments differ in terms of uncertainty and rate of change), each organizational unit must be organized differently to enable it to cope up with the particular environment and its requirements. Further, a necessary condition for differentiation is that the members of a unit possess those specific talents and attitudes that are consistent with the demands of the environment.



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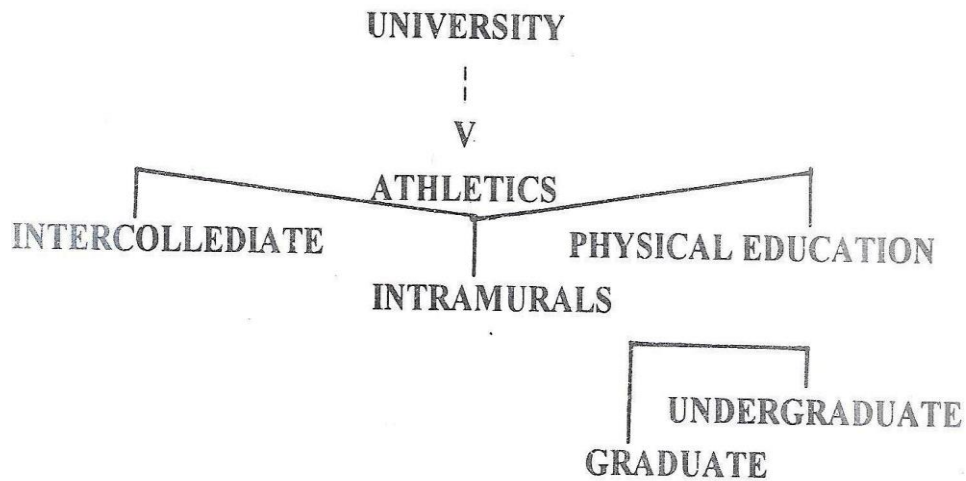
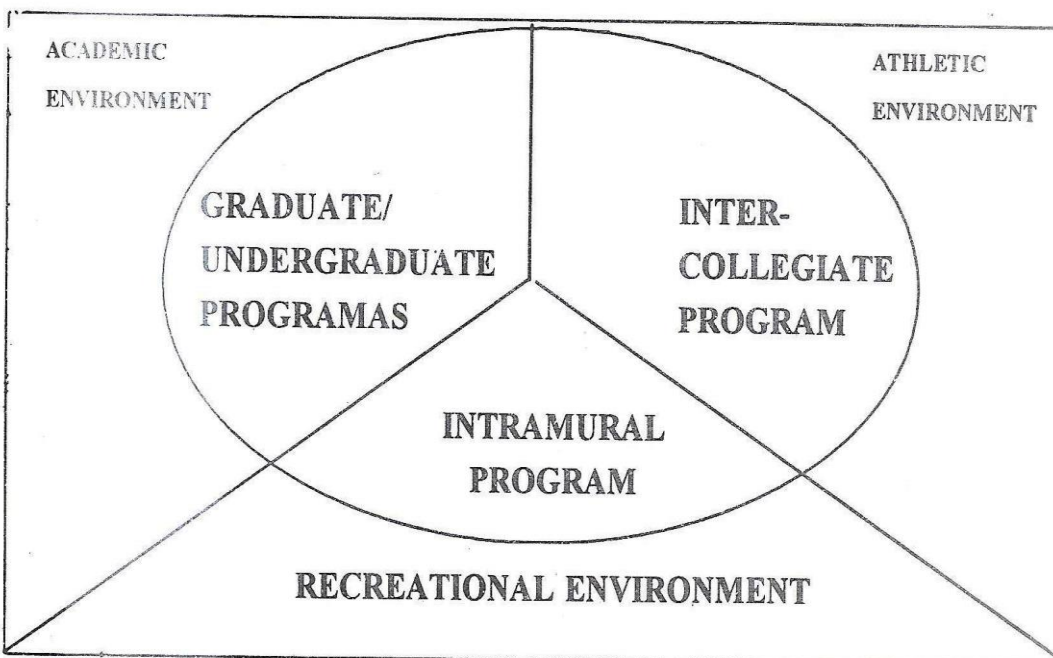


Exhibit 4.4. Differentiation and Integration of physical Education, Athletics, and Intramural from an open system perspective.

Adapted from behling & Schrisheim (1976)





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Factory and Service Models of Physical Education programs.

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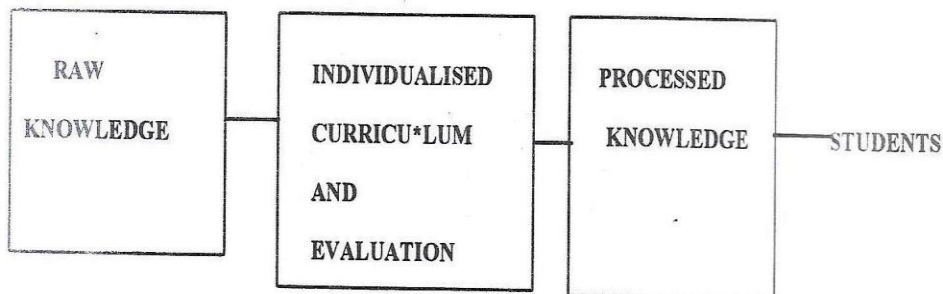
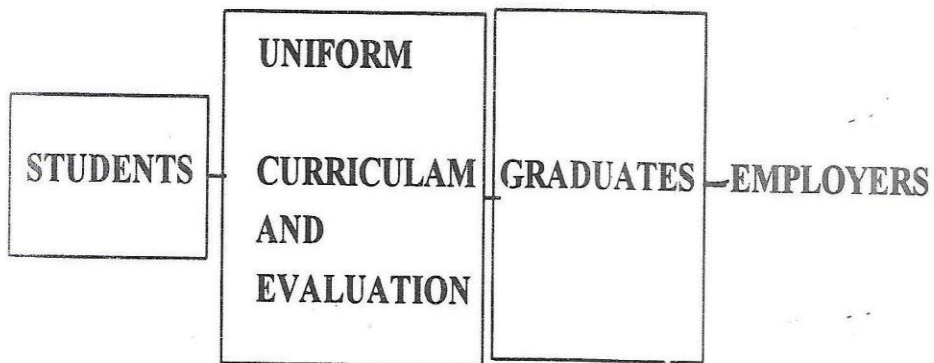
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INPUTS

THROUGHPUTS

OUTPUTS





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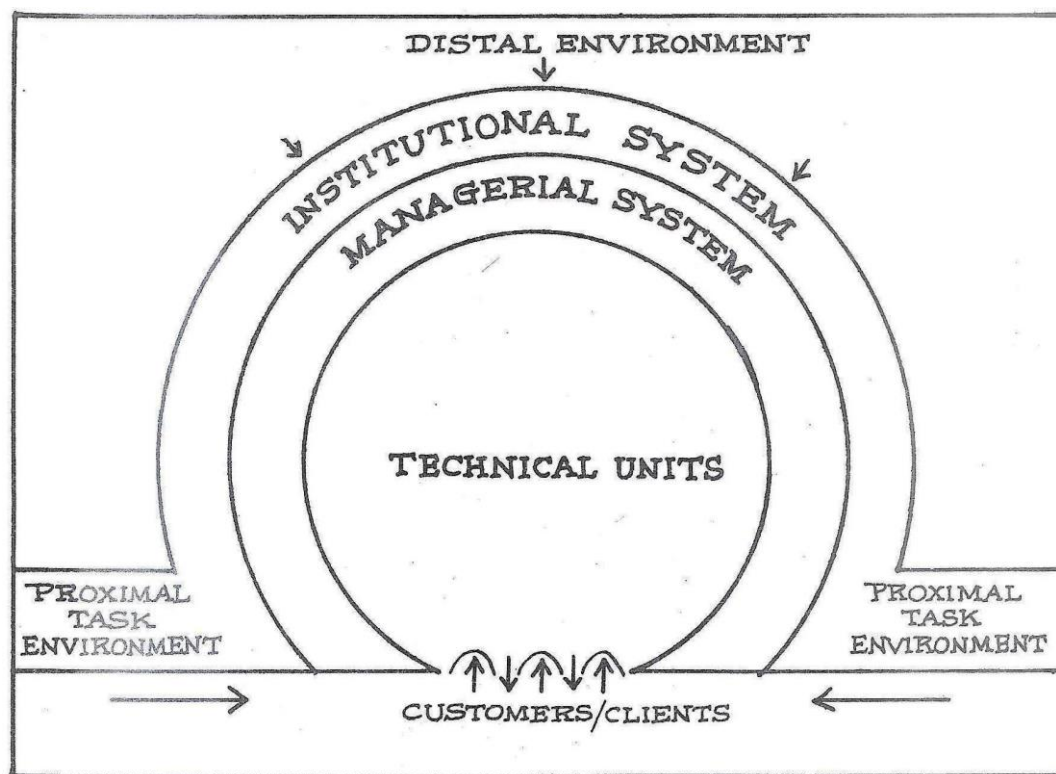
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The Thompson Model

Thompson (1967) also endorsed the Lawrence and Lorsch view that an organization should be subdivided into units on the basis of the segments of the environment are called the boundary spanning units. In addition, Thompson, following Parsons (1960), endorsed the view that organizations must attempt to seal off one of the units - the technical core - from the environmental uncertainties.

Technical core refers to the unit that is most directly concerned with the production of goods or services. The assembly line in an automobile factory, the classrooms in a high school, or an athletic team in an intercollegiate athletic program are examples of the technical core in their respective organizations. Thompson argued that if the technical core is to be efficient, it must be able to work that if the technical core is to be efficient, it must be able to work in a stable environment in terms of steady flow of inputs, prompt disposal of its outputs, and minimal interference from other organization. That is, the technical core must be able to focus on its fundamental task of producing goods or services without being distracted by environmental concerns such as securing inputs and disposing of outputs.



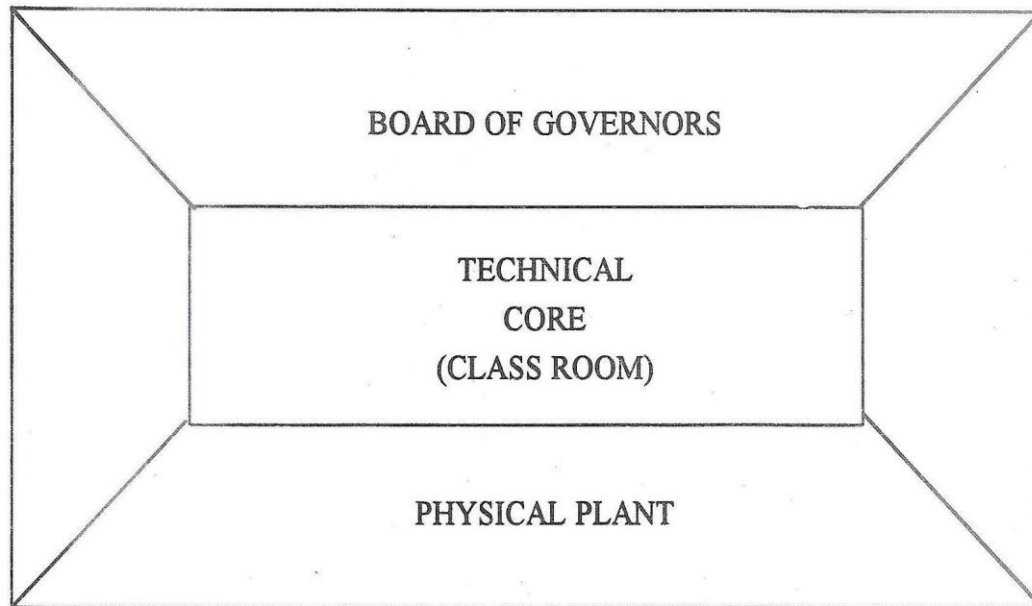


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**Exhibit 4.6 Thompson's Model Applied to a
Faculty of Physical Education**

Adapted from Behling & Schriesheim (1976).

BOARD OF GOVERNORS

**TECHNICAL
CORE**

**(CLASS ROOM)
PHYSICAL PLANT**

Parsons' (1960) model is particularly relevant to those sport organizations which have both an elected and appointed body of administrators (i.e. the organization has both volunteer administrators and paid professional administrators).

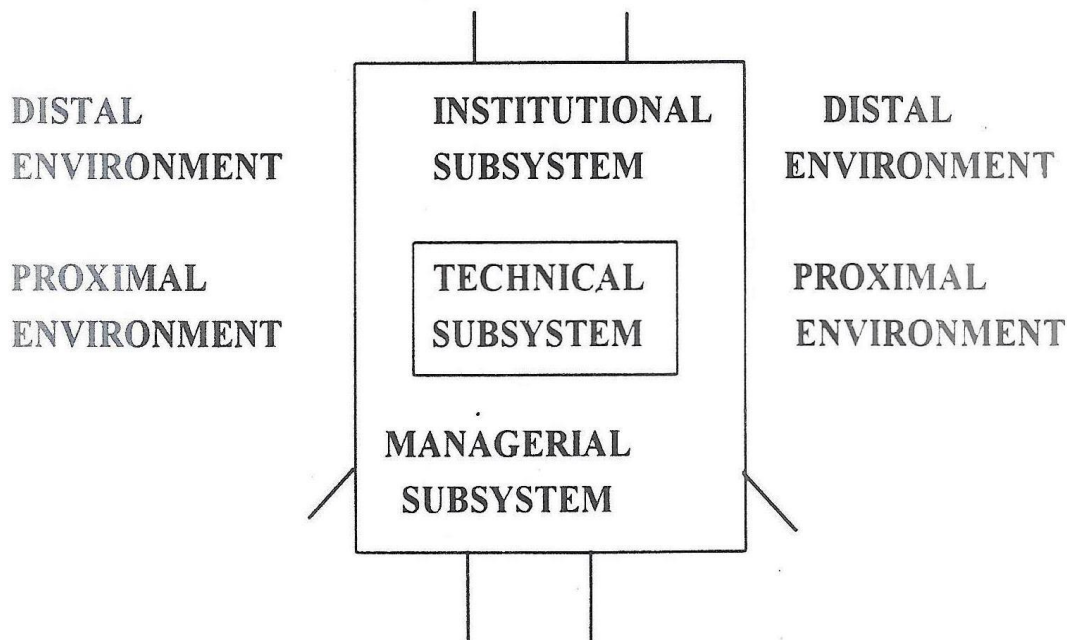
In Parsons' view an organization consists of three distinct hierarchical suborganizations - the technical, the managerial, and the institutional subsystems.

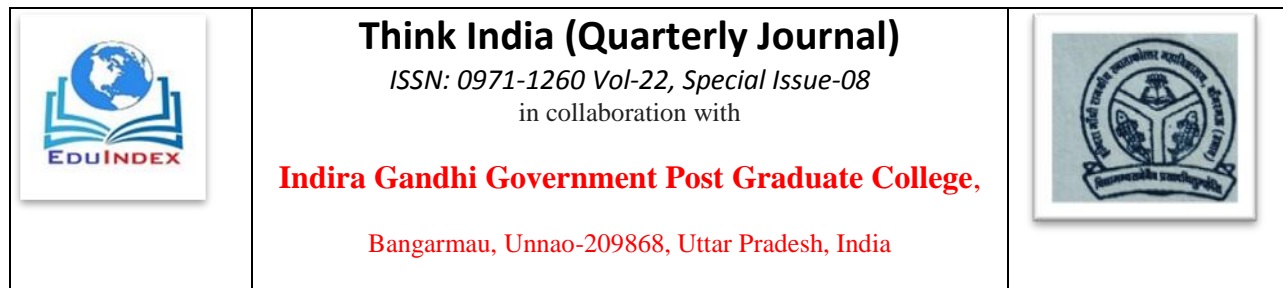
The technical subsystem is concerned with those activities that are directly associated with the major take(s) of the organization. The requirements. This is identical to Thompson conceptualization.

The managerial subsystem is a higher system which both administers and serves the technical system. Parson (1960) attributed two major areas of responsibility to the managerial subsystem.

Parsons' Hierarchical Differentiation of System Activities

Adapted from Behling & Schriesheim (1976)





The primary one is to mediate between the technical organization and those who use its "products" - the "customers", pupils or whoever. The second is to procure the resources necessary for carrying out the technical function (i.e. financial resources, personnel and physical facilities).

Thus, the managerial subsystem carries out part of the boundary spanning functions included in Thompson's model.

Finally, the function of the institutional system is to interact with the wider environment with which the organization must deal. As parsons (1960) noted.

Conclusion:

In essence, sport is a kind of diversion which has for its immediate and direct and fun, pleasure, and delight and which is dominated by a spirit of moderation and generosity. Athletics on the other hand, is essentially competitive activity which has for its and victory in the contest and which is characterized by a spirit of dedication, sacrifice and intensity.

If the differences between recreational sport (which is concerned with the pursuit of pleasure) and athletics or competitive sport (which is concerned with the pursuit of excellence) are taken into account, then its is only logical to expect that the two endeavors will be structured differently, recreational sport must be loosely structured; competitive sport, bureaucratically structured.

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