Chapter 5

The Bureaucratic Institution: Rationalizing Structure and Decision Making

People's Community College is a two-year public institution in a middle- and working-class suburb of a large metropolitan area. The college opened in an urban storefront in 1962, and in 1975 it finally moved into a large, attractive megastructure on a permanent twenty-five-acre site. The contemporary concrete-and-glass facade gives the appearance of a successful corporation's headquarters. People's offers transfer programs that parallel the first two years of a baccalaureate program, as well as a wide range of career programs in technical, business, and health science areas. Its mission statement emphasizes access, low cost, career preparation, and meeting community needs.

There are 5,700 degree students, many of them studying part time in the evening. Many students are working, married, or both. Their average age is twenty-eight, and most graduated near the middle of their high school class. Additional students are enrolled in nondegree certificate programs and adult education courses. All students reside in the city and commute. Minority enrollment peaked at 21 percent in 1982 and is declining.

All the faculty in the transfer programs have master's degrees, usually from a nearby university. Half have a year of addi-

tional graduate work, and 10 percent have doctorates. Most of the faculty in the career programs have baccalaureate degrees, and half have master's degrees. The faculty is represented by a local chapter of a national union. There is a faculty senate, but its membership overlaps the union leadership, and the senate's role is unclear. People's was originally part of the municipal school system, and many faculty and administrators have had some secondary school teaching experience.

President Peter Potter came to People's from the administrative vice-presidency of a similar institution. As the third president of People's, he followed the extended term of a benign but paternalistic founding president and the tumultuous and disastrous three-year tenure of his successor, which included a bitter two-week faculty strike. Potter's expertise is in management and community relations.

Students view their educational experience primarily in practical terms, and most have clear vocational objectives. Few students participate in campus organizations, and many maintain closer ties with high school friends than with fellow students. Faculty are dispersed throughout the metropolitan area and spend little nonteaching time on campus.

Current issues on campus include state pressure for student assessment examinations, the intrusiveness of some local trustees who think the college should be run "more like a business," transfer articulation disagreements with local four-year colleges, implementation by the new academic vice-president of a management-by-objectives program, and negotiations with local firms over the expansion of contract training activities.

People's Community College as a Bureaucratic System

We have seen how activities at Heritage College are coordinated by internally generated norms that are continually reinforced by face-to-face interactions of participants. In general, the larger the organization, the greater the number of positions between the top leader and the ordinary member (Homans, 1950). As organizations grow, the number of subunits (such as departments) increases, these subunits become increasingly specialized, and administrative structures become more complex

(Blau, 1973). Interaction decreases, and norms become confused and no longer serve to control behavior. More structured means of interaction are required, and the institution becomes bureaucratized. The same processes that create bureaucracies in other settings do so in colleges and universities as well (Stroup, 1966).

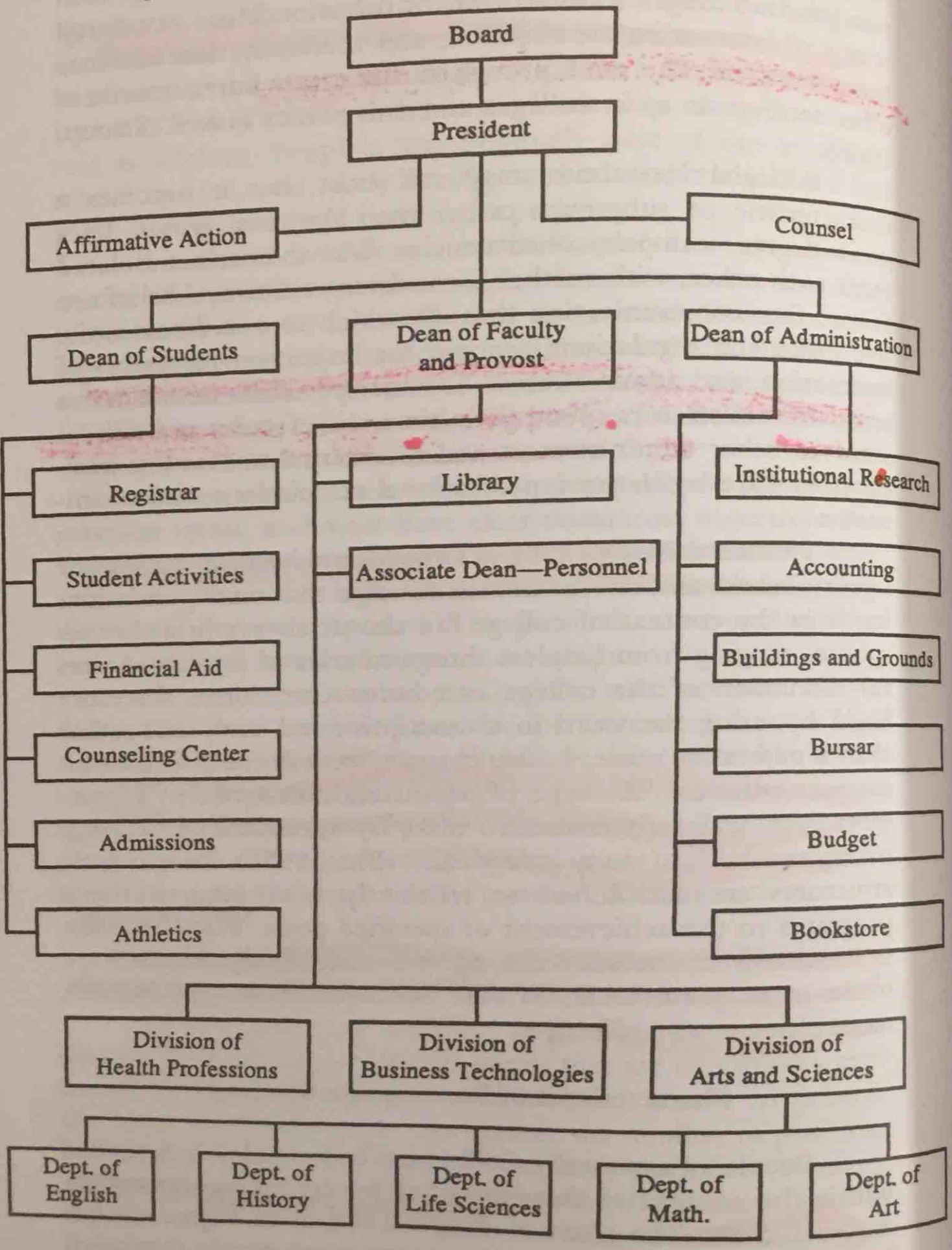
Collegial interaction may still exist, but it becomes a characteristic of subgroups rather than the total group. To a great degree, campus constituencies find themselves isolated from each other, with neither a consistent culture of belief nor face-to-face communication through which to coordinate activity. Rules and regulations become the important mediators of interaction, and administrators become specialists in distinctive areas. Administrators spend little time with faculty and talk instead to other administrators and to external nonfaculty audiences in state legislatures, professional associations, and boardrooms.

The word *bureaucracy* is so burdened by connotations of rigidity, waste, and lack of human concern that merely mentioning it in the context of college life almost always provokes responses ranging from helpless shrugs to cries of outrage. A useful discussion of the college as a bureaucracy must therefore begin by using the word in a descriptive and analytical rather than a pejorative sense. In this chapter, we will consider *bureaucracy* to refer to "the type of organization designed to accomplish large-scale administrative tasks by systematically coordinating the work of many individuals" (Blau, 1956). Bureaucratic structures are established to efficiently relate organizational programs to the achievement of specified goals. When behavior is standardized, the activities and processes of organizations are made more predictable, so that the organization can become more efficient and effective.

Characteristics of Bureaucratic Systems

People's Community College can be most clearly described within the context of that icon of all bureaucracies, the organizational chart. The chart of People's shown in Figure 12 has been greatly simplified; there are many more people employed

Figure 12. Organization Chart of People's Community College.



at People's than indicated here, and a complete chart would list every existing office.

The vertical lines connecting the offices are referred to as "lines of authority" or "lines of communication." They represent the way work is supposed to flow through the college; information and reports are presumed to flow up the chart to President Potter and through him to the board, and their directives are to flow downward. Organizational structures make a difference, and the organization chart of People's Community College contains important information that might be overlooked by the casual observer. For example, the number of levels between the highest and the lowest offices on the chart can be counted. Organizations with relatively few levels are considered to be "flat," and those with more levels are considered to be "tall." Fewer levels lead to less distortion in communications as information flows through the system. At the same time, it means that more people report to each supervisor, and therefore they cannot be as closely monitored. Higher education organizations are typically much flatter than business organizations of comparable size. At People's, there are only two levels between the highest supervisory office (President Potter) and the lowest (department chairs). A business firm of comparable size might have many more levels between them.

The existence (or nonexistence) of an office on the chart and its location in the hierarchy are a signal both inside and outside the campus of the importance of the substantive area. Location on the chart has a practical effect as well. People located near each other on the chart are more likely to interact with—and therefore to mutually influence—each other than people who are distant on the chart. People's is large, and the attention of senior administrators is limited. Those who report directly to senior people are more likely to be able to bring things to their attention—for example, requests for resources—than those who do not. At People's, it is not likely that President Potter believes intercollegiate athletics (which reports to the dean of students) to be as important as does the president of nearby Darwin College, to whom the athletic director reports directly. And since the values of senior officers are likely to differ because of their

roles, the fortunes of programs will often depend on the office to which they report. It is likely, for example, that more attention is paid to the fiscal aspects and less to the academic aspects of the bookstore at People's, which reports to the dean of administration, than would be the case if the bookstore reported to the dean of faculty. The structure of the college thus affects how offices will interact and influence each other. Structure has a major effect on the patterns of loose and tight coupling between offices.

Organizational structure also affects who will be responsible for gathering certain kinds of information, an important issue because whoever collects information also determines how it is to be communicated and evaluated (Cyert and March, 1963). Since data are often equivocal, and since many data potentially available are filtered out by the expectations and experiences of the person encountering them, the assignment of responsibility for data gathering is really an assignment to define the environment for the organization. It makes a difference whether the collection, analysis, and dissemination of student outcomes data, for example, are a responsibility of the dean of students, the director of institutional research, or the director of admissions.

People's as an organization has been consciously structured to facilitate certain organizational processes. But since it is not possible to optimize all values, structures that increase communication between two specific units are likely to decrease communication with other units. Putting the budget office and the bookstore at the same organizational level under the dean of administration makes it more likely that their work will be closely coordinated and that the financial viability of auxiliary enterprises will be protected. At the same time, it makes coordination between the bookstore and the library more difficult because they are supervised by different administrators. Every structure not only provides certain benefits to the organization but at the same time makes other benefits more difficult to achieve. There is no perfect structure, and the creation of structure is therefore a matter of trade-offs.

In addition to the organization chart, there are a number of other specific attributes of People's that would be expected

in a bureaucracy (Anderson, 1963; Weber, 1969). For example, the functions of each office are codified in rules and regulations, and officers are expected to respond to each other in terms of their roles, not their personalities. A new directive on financial aid policy issued by President Potter should elicit the same response even if someone else had been president. In the same way, the new rule would be expected to be administered at People's in the same way by each of the financial aid officers, and all students to whom the rule applied to be treated identically.

The emphasis on written job descriptions and on rules and regulations that guide behavior increases organizational certainty and efficiency at People's. Deans, registrars, and financial aid officers fill specific roles, but the role and the person are not identical. People filling roles can be replaced by others (as long as they are technically competent) without having a noticeable impact on the functioning of the college. Rules and regulations have been created at People's to deal with situations that occur on a regular basis. Rules are one way in which People's coordinates its activities and ensures an acceptable level of predictability in the actions of various offices. Rules also serve as a means by which the college transmits to present personnel what has been learned about appropriate solutions to problems in the past. This means that each problem does not have to be considered as unique, and each new employee does not confront the problem with a blank slate (Cyert and March, 1963). Although college administrators and faculty often become frustrated with rules, rules serve many functions, and by themselves they are neither good nor bad. As Perrow (1979) comments, "they protect as well as restrict; coordinate as well as block; channel effort as well as limit it; permit universalism as well as provide sanctuary for the inept; maintain stability as well as retard change; permit diversity as well as restrict it. They constitute the organizational memory and the means for change" (p. 30).

People's has developed a systematic division of labor, rights, and responsibilities and enforces it through a hierarchical control system. Individuals know what their jobs are, and they understand the limits of their own responsibilities and those of

others. This formal division of labor serves many functions. It prevents duplicating activities, it minimizes the possibility of things "falling between the cracks," and it makes it possible for people to specialize and to develop high levels of expertise in specific areas. In the financial aid office, for example, one professional specializes in federal and state grants and entitlements, while another focuses on bank loans and work-study packages. Together they know more and are more efficient in dealing with issues within their specific spheres of interest than would be two people who shared the same general knowledge about both areas.

Effective and efficient operation of the college depends on compliance with rules and regulations, and compliance at People's is not left to chance or to goodwill. Instead, the organization is organized as a hierarchy. The activities of every lower office are supervised by the next higher office on the organization chart. Administrative rules, actions, and decisions at the college are formulated in writing. The issues with which People's must deal are complex, and the incumbents filling various roles change over time. If rules are to be applied uniformly, there has to be a written record of their interpretation that can serve as precedent for implementation in the future. At People's, written records are kept of trustee resolutions, faculty senate actions, presidential decisions, registrar interpretations, union contracts, and every other facet of institutional functioning. Not everything known by anyone in the college can be codified, and no one in the college can know everything there is to be known. Therefore, rules must also be developed for determining what information is to be available in different offices, and for identifying the channels through which such information will move. These have been codified at People's through procedures such as the use of preprinted "buck slips" by which a single check mark sends copies of a document through any one of six different distribution systems. The information that People's collects and retains, the forms on which it is stored, and the conventions by which they analyze their data affect the college's perception of its environment (Pfeffer, 1981b) and suggest what alternative actions the college may consider (Cyert and March, 1963).

Administrative promotions at People's are based on merit. In some social systems, promotion in rank is based on birth; in others, it depends on personality or other attributes. But in bureaucracies, technical competence and performance are what count. The higher one is on the organizational chart, the greater competence and expertise one is assumed to have. This is why bureaucrats are appointed by their presumably more expert superiors, and not elected. This relationship between organizational status and merit is important, since it reinforces the willingness of subordinates to accept the directives of superiors by associating rank with expertise.

Bureaucracies such as People's are rational organizations. This does not necessarily mean that People's always makes good decisions, or even necessarily efficient ones. Rather, it implies that at People's there is some conscious attempt to link means to ends, resources to objectives, and intentions to activities. "Rationality refers to consistent, value-maximizing choice within specified constraints" (Allison, 1971, p. 30). The hierarchical nature of People's presumes that much of this process of determining goals and deciding on how to achieve them will occur in the senior levels of administration and in particular gives a preeminent role to President Potter.

Rationality requires as a first step the articulation of objectives. The more precise and measurable these objectives can be made, the more accurate will be the calculations of costs and benefits of alternative courses of action. People's emphasizes long-range planning and develops definable subgoals and schedules for their completion. The new vice-president for academic affairs was selected in good part because of having had experience in this type of activity. Administrators give attention to the collection and analysis of data that permits the selection of alternatives that maximize the achievement of stated organizational goals. The development of specific offices (such as institutional research) and procedures (such as management information systems) for this purpose is an important organizational priority.

Faculty and administrators at People's often grumble about bureaucratic procedures and red tape, and it is easy for them to overlook some of the advantages of their system. For

example, existence of written rules and regulations that seem to pose barriers to faculty or student interests in fact also have the complementary function of limiting administrative discretion. Administrators and faculty who function within their roles must apply the same criteria to everyone, ensuring fairness and equity rather than personal favoritism, and subordinates are less subject to administrative caprice. The emphasis on rationality, performance, and expertise also limits the extent to which incompetent people can move into higher positions and reduces reliance on extraneous factors such as social status, sex, or religion in personnel decisions. But perhaps the greatest benefits of bureaucratic systems are those explained by Max Weber: "Experience tends universally to show that the purely bureaucratic type of administrative organization . . . is . . . the most rational known means of carrying out imperative control over human beings. It is superior to any other form in precision, in stability, in the stringency of its discipline, and in its reliability. . . . However much people may complain about the 'evils' of bureaucracy, it would be sheer illusion to think for a moment that continuous administrative work can be carried out in any field except by means of officials working in offices. . . . The choice is only between bureaucracy and dilettantism in the field of administration" (Weber, 1952, p. 24).

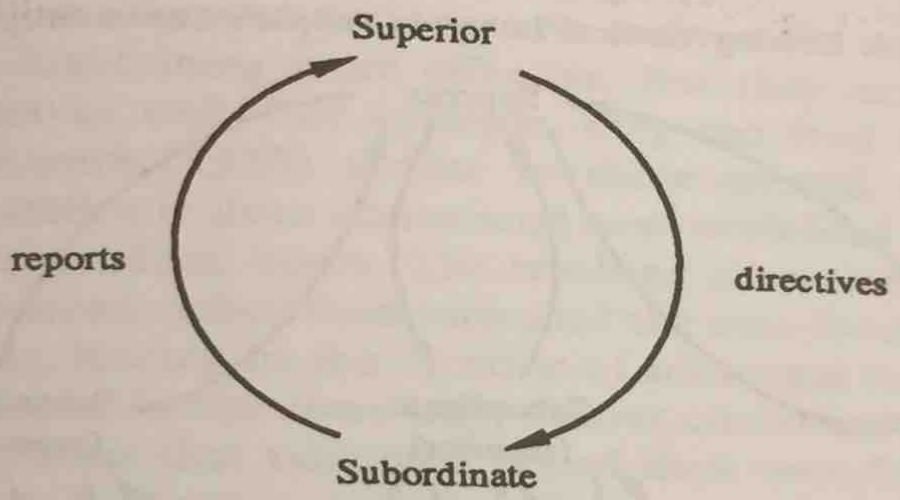
The legitimacy of colleges and universities and their support by society depend at least as much on the appearance of regularity and stability as on the quality of their technical performance. As long as this continues to be true, bureaucratic structures and patterns may be expected to be an essential component of institutional life at People's Community College.

Loops of Interaction in Bureaucratic Systems

People's, like any organization, is constructed of interacting subsystems. The characteristic that identifies People's as a bureaucracy, however, is the expectation that these interactions will be influenced primarily by legitimated hierarchical relationships. People's can be considered as composed of hierarchically arranged relationships between superiors and subordinates. In

such relationships, as depicted in Figure 13, a superior gives directions to a subordinate, who complies and submits a report to the superior. On the basis of the report, the superior then prepares new directives. Each event as it takes place provides feedback that affects its successor as the superior discovers the consequences of the directive and the subordinate is informed of the extent to which performance was acceptable. The interaction not only gets work done but also reinforces the control structure of the organization itself. A decisive statement by President Potter, once accepted and acted on by the dean of faculty, increases the president's tendency to make decisive statements and in turn the dean's willingness to accept them.

Figure 13. Relationship of Superior and Subordinate at People's Community College.

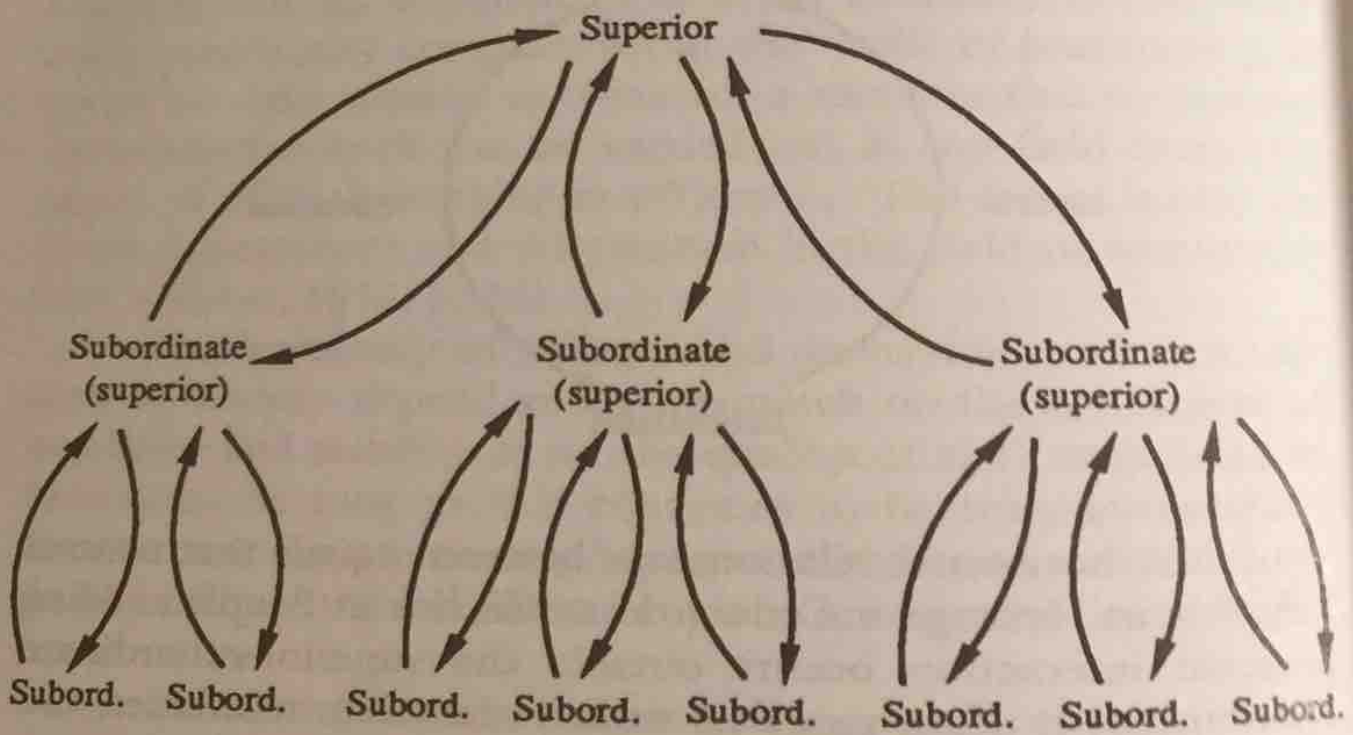


The horizontal relationships between equals that control behavior at Heritage are much less effective at People's. When personal interaction occurs outside the superior-subordinate relationship, it often conflicts with, rather than reinforces, the processes desired by institutional management. President Potter, for example, likes to communicate certain information to staff members through the weekly *People's News and Views* newsletter. But most people find out about really interesting happenings (many of which never make *News and Views)* through the informal grapevine.

Because of the hierarchical nature of People's, superiors

at one organizational level are subordinates at the next lower level, and so the organization can be depicted as a continuous linkage of levels, as shown in Figure 14. Superiors give directives to subordinates as problems are encountered for the first time, but some problems are encountered so frequently that they become part of standard operating procedures (SOPs). SOPs are the systematic processes guided by rules and regulations through which reports are prepared, forms are processed, budgets are developed, and the other work of People's gets done. For example, the processing of class selections by students, the preparation of class rosters, and the determination of student academic eligibility are all incorporated into separate SOPs at People's that permit each process to run smoothly and allow other parts of the college to predict those processes.

Figure 14. Linking Vertical Loops at People's Community College.



SOPs are in turn grouped into sets, or programs (Allison, 1971) that permit coordinated action in specific situations. The SOPs previously mentioned, for example, are part of a program at People's that might be thought of as "class enrollment." Among other programs at People's are those that direct the activities of "annual budgeting," "degree approval," and "faculty

appointment." Clusters of programs initiated under certain conditions can be considered in the aggregate as organizational repertoires. People's, for example, has a "fall registration" repertoire that includes not only the class enrollment program mentioned earlier but also other, related programs, such as those for fee payments and academic advisement. It also has budget and personnel repertoires that are regularly implemented.

SOPs, programs, and repertoires make certain interactions more likely than others, and these eventually come to be considered as a "given" by the organization. They all help to establish a consistency of organizational perception and functioning through the creation of precedents that then direct future behavior. Once budgets are determined, decisions are reached, or responsibilities allocated at People's, they tend not to change (Cyert and March, 1963; Perrow, 1979).

Vertical bureaucratic loops can make some aspects of institutional functioning more effective. But they can cause ineffectiveness as well. For example, they can lead to "vicious circles" (Masuch, 1985) similar to those created at People's when the academic dean announced new work-load rules to increase faculty office hours. The resulting alienation of faculty actually reduced rather than increased the time faculty spent in their offices, leading to the creation of additional rules and further alienation. In the same way, vicious circles can create self-reinforcing ideas that take on a life of their own. Processes initially set up to support goals may become goals in themselves; perpetuating the means may become the ends. At People's, for example, the development of management information systems created large quantities of data that then required further interpretation and explanation. This led to a need for more data and the hiring of people who believed in the importance of collecting and analyzing information (Feldman and March, 1981). As a result, People's allocates significant resources to its management information system, although the system itself is now so complex that managers find it virtually useless for their daily needs. The importance of such information is one of the rational myths of the college. The availability of computerized data is considered by internal administrative groups and by external

political groups to be a sign of managerial effectiveness and efficiency, even though there is little evidence these data have much impact on what actually happens at People's.

The very programs created by People's to enable it to repeat its successes ironically may inhibit its perception of new problems (Starbuck, 1976), and the assurances of reliability that are made possible by SOPs, programs, and repertoires may prove to be the greatest barriers to organizational effectiveness, particularly during times of rapid environmental change. Systems of accountability may lead to "red tape" so that perfectly reasonable actions and rules generated in one part of the organization are thwarted by perfectly reasonable actions and rules created in another. Situations encountered for the first time may create confusion and "buck passing" to higher levels. Heads of organizations of all kinds, from presidents of the United States to academic department chairs at People's, have bemoaned their inability to overcome the inertia of the bureaucratic system. Ongoing processes are difficult to stop and new ones often impossible to start. As a consequence, the ability of leaders to engage in strategic decision making is severely circumscribed, and bureaucracies often go on doing what they have always done and paying relatively little attention to what their participants (sometimes even their most powerful participants) want them to do.

Bureaucratic elements are present to some extent in all parts of all institutions (even the philosophy faculty at Heritage College are on personnel "lines," teach courses at times listed in the class schedule, and keep records of student achievement). Some offices at People's are more bureaucratic than others (compare, for example, the registrar's office, whose activities occur in regular cycles and are guided by extensive procedure and policy documents, with the public relations office, which seems to function in a state of constant disorder as it responds daily to unanticipated events). Some types of institutions appear in general to be more bureaucratic than others (People's has more departments, more regulations, more planning systems, more formal evaluation, and less subunit autonomy, and is therefore more bureaucratic than Heritage). In general, public institu-

tions are likely to be more bureaucratic than independent institutions, because they are often embedded in bureaucratic systems of local and state government. This may often require that certain aspects of personnel processes and administrative procedures in higher education institutions be consistent with those of other public agencies.

Are bureaucratic systems effective at People's? The board of trustees (composed mainly of local businesspeople) and the administration believe that they permit them to be efficient and responsive to emerging needs. Many of the faculty had previously taught in public school systems. They accept administrative dominance as long as it is not oppressive. The environment provides clusters of acceptable if not overabundant resources. The technology of People's, restricted to introductory liberal arts courses and semiprofessional training, is relatively clear. Students differ in level of preparation, but the college has developed batteries of placement examinations so that faculty face few unprecedented problems.

The essence of contingency theory is that different forms of organization and administration prove to be the most effective under different conditions. People's has responded to its particular environmental and technical problems by creating a relatively mechanistic organization that appears to work and that in general is accepted by the participants. The problem of dualism of controls exists at People's, as it does at Heritage, but in both institutions, conflict between them is muted because one control system so clearly dominates the other. At People's, administrative authority is supreme. It is reflected not only in the way decisions are made but also in the culture of the institution. Adherence to rules has created a coherent but in many ways superficial culture that engages the activities but not the full devotion of many participants. People work hard, and many are committed to educating less advantaged youth. But most have a calculative involvement with the college, arriving and leaving at times dictated by the union contract and cautiously assessing changes that might lead to personal disadvantage or inconvenience.

Other institutions, facing more turbulent environments or

complex technologies, would not find the system at People's acceptable, although they would almost certainly adopt bureaucratic structures and processes in some subunits of the organization. We would expect, therefore, that while bureaucratic systems may not be effective in some parts of some institutions all the time, they would reflect a significant aspect of reality at almost all institutions at some times. While bureaucracies have many significant weaknesses, bureaucratic structure and processes are ubiquitous in colleges and universities. Much of what happens in most institutions is influenced by the SOPs, programs, and scenarios created by the legitimacy of hierarchy and reinforced by structures and rules. This is what allows colleges and universities to continue to perform their functions even as goals are disputed, crises occur, and the external environment becomes more turbulent.

Nonroutine tasks are difficult to bureaucratize. But in general, "when the tasks people perform are well understood, predictable, routine, and repetitive, a bureaucratic structure is the most efficient" (Perrow, 1979, p. 162). It may also be that under these same conditions of relative certainty, bureaucratic structures and processes also lead to greater satisfaction of participants (Morse, 1970). When structure and technology "fit," an organization may be more productive and its members may have a greater feeling of competence and accomplishment.

Tight and Loose Coupling in Bureaucratic Systems

Relating the idea of a bureaucracy to the concept of loose coupling may initially appear contradictory. After all, bureaucratic structure emphasizes precisely the directive and control functions that appear to most tightly couple administrative and instructional subsystems. Tight linkages are certainly not unusual in nonacademic institutions: in many, "managers decide, performers implement; managers command, performers obey; managers coordinate, performers carry out special tasks" (Scott, 1981, p. 254). The administrative and instructional subsystems of People's are by no means as tightly coupled internally as they are in many business organizations, but they are much more tightly coupled than at Heritage.

Tight coupling in one part of an organization leads to loose coupling in another. The various SOPs that make up a program, for example, are more tightly coupled than those in unrelated programs. The close alignment between management structure and institutional production at People's is possible because of loose coupling between the technical subsystem and the environment. As work and management become more tightly coupled, work and environment become more loosely coupled and the institution becomes more of a closed system. Most of the environmental input into People's comes through President Potter, and the curriculum of People's is much more administratively controlled than that at Heritage. Although departmental faculty design courses, new programs are more likely to emerge as a result of the interaction of the president, academic vice-president, deans, and department chairs than as a consequence of faculty debate. This is not necessarily dysfunctional, since President Potter is more tightly coupled to community needs than the faculty. Faculty are locals, rather than cosmopolitans, and the president and senior members of his academic administrative staff are more "professional" than the faculty (they on average have higher credentials). In addition, the purpose of major parts of the educational program is primarily administrative and technical (to articulate most efficiently with programs of four-year institutions) rather than educational (reaching consensus on the knowledge of greatest worth). The degree of professional autonomy involved is relatively small.

To a limited extent, People's can affect the degree to which organizational elements will be tightly or loosely coupled by the way it designs its own structure. There is a tendency to see both problems and solutions in structural terms. When the system does not appear to be functioning effectively, or the quality of performance is declining, President Potter's typical response is to reorganize. Sometimes the change is primarily a symbolic act that indicates that "something is being done," even though it has no instrumental consequences. But at other times, reorganizing severs existing connections between units, thereby loosening the coupling between them, and creates new connections that tighten coupling.

Even though coupling between administration and in-

struction is tighter at People's than in many other institutions, achievements based on plans are still elusive for many reasons. For example, the status differences created by the hierarchy at People's inhibit the full transmission of information between levels. Subordinates, aware of the consequences to them of passing negative information upward, tend to withhold data that might reflect poorly on their own performance or that might anger their superior. The very information for which Potter has the greatest need, because it indicates organizational problems, is precisely the information that is most likely to be either distorted or withheld. In addition, while Potter may tell subordinates what they need to know to do their jobs, he often does not provide them with operating discretion or enough background information to place a directive in organizational context. When subordinates encounter equivocal situations, they must therefore respond according to the directives, even when carrying out the directive in that specific situation might be adverse to larger organizational interests. The distortion or blocking of communications means that it is difficult for subordinates to clarify confusing or ambiguous directives. In response, subordinates may minimally comply by observing only the letter of the law (Katz and Kahn, 1978, p. 444).

Effective Leadership in Bureaucratic Systems

The work of individuals can be coordinated and controlled by having them follow the directives of a superior. The most effective organizations are those in which the processes through which coordination is attempted are accepted as legitimate. Attempts to exercise control by a person not seen as having the right to do so can lead to alienation and refusal to comply.

There are several different ways in which legitimation can be achieved. One way is through tradition, whereby activities may be coordinated by accepting orders from someone because "it's always been done that way." Work can also be coordinated when people follow the directives of a charismatic leader whose personal authority they accept. Traditional or charismatic legitimation can coordinate work, but there are costs to organiza-

tional functioning and stability that become particularly apparent when changes in leadership take place. The boss's daughter or the chief's son may initially be accepted because of tradition, but they may not be as effective as their fathers. The charismatic leader's lieutenant may take over but may lack that magical ability to keep the organization together. An alternative to control by tradition or charisma is to create a system in which people accept directives from others as legitimate because they are consistent with rules or norms that all accept. Bureaucratic authority at People's rests on a common agreement about rules, including an understanding of what the legitimate range of activities and behaviors of a president is and of the appropriate responses of faculty, students, and other administrators.

This acceptance has profound effects, not only on how people make sense of the college but also on how people behave. For example, before President Potter took office, he was somewhat unsure about his judgments and decisions and often hesitant in his statements. When he became president, people seemed more willing to accept his decisions. He consequently became more confident in his judgment and more able to make authoritative statements, which in turn led people to have increased confidence in him. The acceptance of decisions by subordinates changed Potter's behavior, which made subordinate acceptance of decisions (as well as further changes in Potter's behavior) even more likely in the future. In the absence of the legitimate authority to make decisions conferred by his role, the opposite reaction might have occurred and Potter could have become more hesitant to make judgments as his previous decisions were ignored or rejected.

On the organizational chart, President Potter can be seen as at the apex of a pyramid—the ultimate recipient of all information that flows from the bottom of the organization to the top, and the ultimate decision maker and initiator of all directives that flow down from the top through channels of communication and authority. Deans and other senior executives have similar status in their own organizational subunits. The bureaucratic ethos of competence-based mobility suggests that since those who are more rational get promoted, deans are more ra-

tional than department chairs, vice-presidents more rational than deans, and the person who becomes president the most rational of all. Potter's main source of power is the legitimation conferred by the legal and organizational system, but this can be reinforced by the expertise he demonstrates through the performance of his role. Potter believes in utilizing the resources of his office to motivate others, and he often influences their performance through his power to reward and much less frequently through his power to punish. As a consequence, he has little referent power at People's; he is respected, but few things at the college happen because others identify with him and eagerly embrace his latest projects.

The core of bureaucratic management is seen to be decision making, and Potter is expected to be a rational analyst who can not only calculate the most efficient means by which goals can be achieved but also design the systems of control and coordination that direct the activities of others. He is also cast as a heroic leader, able to articulate noble values and goals, to solve the most complex problems, to energize and motivate people, and to direct an efficient and effective organization. "Much of the organization's power is held by the hero, and great expectations are raised because people trust him to solve problems and fend off threats from the environment" (Baldridge, Curtis, Ecker, and Riley, 1978, p. 44). Bureaucratic structures rationalize the hero role. By legitimating leaders, they give them some of the aura of heroes, so that merely by the nature of their office they have more influence. As heroic leader, President Potter can justifiably accept credit for significant institutional advances whether or not he caused them, but at the same time he risks being blamed for failures that cannot be otherwise explained. The image of the heroic leader can be seen in many higher education processes and arenas. Examples include:

- the advertisement prepared by the trustee committee for the search that ended with Potter's appointment, which listed almost superhuman qualities and competencies expected of candidates
- reports of national task forces and commissions that call for

"stronger presidential leadership," either to arrest significant decline or to forge brave new worlds

- touting of successive management systems (program planning and budgeting system, zero-based budgeting, management by objectives, strategic planning) that will increase rationality and finally permit presidents to "take charge" of their institutions
- calling for presidents not only to clarify institutional goals and objectives as the first step toward increasing effectiveness but to create better goals and objectives

Almost any book on management will contain lengthy lists prescribing presumably effective leader behaviors. Bureaucrats are concerned with planning, directing, organizing, staffing, controlling, and evaluating. They "control activity by making decisions, resolving conflicts, solving problems, evaluating performances and output, and distributing rewards and penalties" (Bolman and Deal, 1984, p. 39). Good bureaucrats collect and analyze the right data in the right amount, follow organizational processes and systems, and follow the orders of their superiors. Better bureaucrats even anticipate these orders, thus making giving directives less necessary.

The distinctive value of a bureaucracy is that Potter and other administrators need not do all the work of the institution themselves. They may empower others to do it through the concept of delegation of authority. In the academic bureaucracy, the right to make authoritative decisions stems initially from a charter or legislation approved by civil government. In the case of People's, the charter gives the board of trustees "the powers, rights, and privileges that are incident to the proper government, conduct, and management of the college, and they may make and ordain, as occasion may require, reasonable rules, orders, and by-laws not repugnant to the Constitution and Laws of the State." The legal authority given to the trustees then serves as the basis for the delegation of specific authority by them to President Potter. If President Potter could do everything himself, then good trusteeship would require only one rule—"Hire the right president"—and good administration only

one corollary—"Do the right thing." But Potter has neither the time nor the expertise to do everything, and the bureaucratic structure is designed specifically to enable him to expand the influence of his leadership by delegating some of his authority to subordinates.

Potter's predecessor talked constantly about delegation but in fact never practiced it. Instead, he exercised close supervision over his subordinates and reviewed their decisions before giving final approval. To delegate in the full sense, responsibilities have to be assigned, the right to make decisions or expend funds has to be granted, and the person to whom authority has been delegated must be held accountable by the authorizing agent. President Potter's effectiveness as a leader depends on his ability to delegate. His delegations usually follow the "lines of authority" on the organizational chart, which flow in an unbroken chain from the civil government granting the charter to the person exercising authority in a specific instance.

As long as the person receiving an order from a superior believes in the legitimacy of the rule of law that provided for the delegation, that person is likely to expect to receive such orders and to be predisposed to accept them. But we know through our experiences that not all orders are obeyed. To understand why, it is necessary to examine the idea of authority from an organizational, rather than a legal, perspective: "a subordinate is said to accept authority whenever he permits his behavior to be guided by the decision of a superior, without independently examining the merits of that decision. When exercising authority, the superior does not seek to convince the subordinate, but only to obtain his acquiescence" (Simon, 1961, p. 11).

This remarkable definition may superficially sound similar to the legal concept of authority, but in fact it is quite different. Authority is no longer defined by the power of the person giving an order but instead by the willingness of the person receiving it to accept it. It is the subordinate at People's, not the superior, who establishes an authority relationship. In essence, the subordinate defines the area in which orders will be accepted without concern for what those orders are, and the authority

relationship exists only within that area and not outside it. This area in which the subordinate will accept orders has been called the "zone of indifference" (that is, the subordinate is indifferent as to whether the superior orders *A* or *B*). At People's, for example, faculty accept the right of administrators to call meetings, and they are usually indifferent to when they are scheduled. But a dean who called weekly meetings on Friday afternoons would quickly discover that few would attend. It is the faculty, not the dean, who would decide which directives would be obeyed.

This understanding of the nature of authority has significant implications for the application of the bureaucratic model to colleges and universities, since professionals have relatively narrow zones of acceptance (Simon, 1961). This means that the greater the professional level of institutional staff members, the less effective bureaucratic controls will be in coordinating their behavior. It suggests why bureaucratic controls are usually less influential in dealing with faculty than in dealing with administrators. It also suggests why bureaucratic controls may be more effective at People's than they would be at Heritage. Fewer faculty at People's have the doctorate, and they are therefore less professional. They are also more likely to have had experience in secondary school systems and therefore to have been socialized to expect less involvement in decision making. As long as Potter is seen as equitably administering institutional processes, as consulting with faculty even though reserving to himself the right to make final decisions, as maintaining or expanding institutional resources, and as providing for the faculty's own economic interests through fair dealings with their union representatives, his leadership at People's is likely to be accepted.