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A STUDY OF THE ORGANIZATION AND
ADMINISTRATION OF CLASSIFICATION WITHIN
THE NEWFOUNDLAND-LABRADOR HIGH
SCHOOL ATHLETIC FEDERATION

CENTRE FOR NEWFOUNDLAND STUDIES

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A STUDY OF THE ORGANIZATION AND ADMINISTRATION
OF CLASSIFICATION WITHIN THE NEWFOUNDLAND -
LABRADOR HIGH SCHOOL
ATHLETIC FEDERATION

BY



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ABSTRACT

This study examines the organization and administration of the system of classification used by the Newfoundland - Labrador High School Athletic Federation to determine competition divisions. The study specifically utilized responses from provincial executive members, zone presidents and athletic directors in member schools to examine the perceived functions of the classification system; classification criteria; administrative processes for assigning classification; differences in response patterns of the three target groups; perceived main weaknesses and strengths of the present classification system; and respondents' views on how administration of the system might be improved.

A questionnaire was mailed to each member of the three target groups in the population, seeking their responses to various statements about the Federation's classification system. An overall response rate of 79.8% was obtained. Questionnaire data were analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative methods where appropriate.

Major conclusions of this study suggest that the membership viewed the primary function of classification within the Newfoundland - Labrador High School Athletic Federation to be equalization of competition with school

equity a secondary function. Past performance, school population, future performance and geography were all considered important classification criteria with only slight differences in their relative importance. While the membership indicated a desire for change and clarification in some specific administrative processes used to assign classification, they did not wish the overall procedure changed. There were only slight differences in the views of provincial executive members, zone presidents and athletic directors toward the Federation's classification system. The qualitative analysis of opened-ended questions dealing with weaknesses, strengths and improvement in the administration of the classification system supported findings obtained through the quantitative analysis.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Newfoundland - Labrador High School Athletic Federation (hereafter referred to as the N.L.H.S.A.F. or the Federation) was formed in 1969 through the provincial government's Department of Provincial Affairs. The Director of the Physical Fitness Division at that time recognized a need for a provincial organization to coordinate and administer interscholastic athletics in Newfoundland and Labrador and consequently convened meetings of interested persons to form such an organization (Maxwell, 1982).

The N.L.H.S.A.F. was founded on the belief that "school athletics made an important contribution to the goals of education and as such were an integral part of the total educational process" (N.L.H.S.A.F., 1973, p. 1). Following from that belief the objectives of the Federation were developed, and these subsequently became the basis upon which the Federation developed. One of the key objectives of the Federation as outlined in the Memorandum and Articles of Association of Newfoundland - Labrador High School Athletic Federation (1975) was to "encourage participation in inter-school athletics on the local and provincial levels through promotion and sponsorship of zone, regional and provincial athletic

programs" (p. 1). The promotion of interscholastic athletic competition has remained one of the main objectives of the N.L.H.S.A.F..

The N.L.H.S.A.F. operates on three distinct organizational levels. At the first level there are zone associations which coordinate activities within a local area. There are 35 zone associations which were formed by combining schools within small geographic areas. The 35 zone associations were subdivided to form the second organizational level, that of the nine geographic regions in the province. The third level in the organization of the Federation is the provincial level. This level includes the Provincial Office, the Provincial Executive and the Legislative Council. Each organizational level within the N.L.H.S.A.F. is responsible for coordination at that level. The basic organizational structure of the N.L.H.S.A.F. is shown in Figure 1.

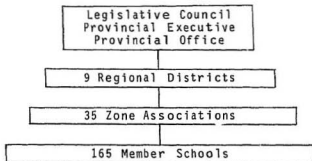


Figure 1. Organizational Structure of N.L.H.S.A.F.

The N.L.H.S.A.F. has experienced tremendous growth since its formation. It has expanded from sponsoring one tournament in 1969 to sponsoring over 300 zone tournaments, some 200 regional tournaments and 31 provincial tournaments in 1984-85. The increase in the size of the N.L.H.S.A.F. brought with it many administrative problems. One problem created by the large number of schools wishing to participate in interscholastic athletic competition, and the accompanying variation in skill levels, was that it became necessary to establish some criteria to determine levels of play.

The criterion used to determine levels of play until 1981 was school population. Therefore, schools with a certain population competed against schools with approximately the same number of students. The administrative processes using the criterion of school population were relatively simple since school classifications could be easily assigned after the September registration and seldom needed to be changed.

In 1981 both the criteria and the administrative processes for classifying schools for competition purposes were changed. The classification committee at that time introduced a classification system which used the criteria described in the following statement:

Teams will be classified on performance during the year and on projected performance in the next year. Zones are in the best position to judge themselves, and the final meeting of the Annual General Meeting will enable the commissioners to compare schools, zones and regions and make adjustments if necessary.

(N.L.H.S.A.F., A.G.M. Minutes, 1981, p. 4)

The administrative process used to determine classification is described in the 1986 Handbook of the Federation as follows:

Schools will be classified in Sections A, 2A, 3A, 4A, by sport, in the following manner:

- A. Zones will classify all schools in their zone, by sport, at their regular spring meeting...
- B. At each Regional Spring Meeting... the region will examine the zone classifications and reassign classifications where necessary.
- C. Final approval of all classifications shall be made at the Federation Annual General Meeting by a separate meeting of.... (p. 6)

The classification system implemented in 1981 has caused some administrative problems for the Federation.

Background to the Problem

Since the adoption of the new classification system in 1981, there have been a number of indicators which suggest the system has not been as administratively

efficient, nor as functionally effective as it could be. In 1982 a resolution was adopted at the Annual General Meeting which attempted to address the problem created when zones and regions failed to classify teams according to the established process. In 1984 the A.G.M. passed a resolution which stated that school population should be the main criterion used when determining classification, with geography and team performance given "some consideration". The use of the term, some consideration, has created confusion over how much weighting team performance and geography should be given when making classification decisions.

In 1983 there were 60 classification changes enacted, in 1984 there were 58 changes enacted, and in 1985 there were 58 changes enacted by the provincial classification committee at the spring classification meetings. Additionally, in 1985-86 there were 15 classification requests and/or appeals made to the provincial executive during the school year. These large numbers of changes reflect the inability of the present system to effectively place teams at an optimal competition level and also illustrate the administrative difficulties involved.

Another indicator of problems within the classification system is the number of complaints received by the Executive Director. He reported receiving "about a

dozen very unpleasant phone calls regarding classification after the last A.G.M." (Stanford, 1985). Some of those calls may have been from self-interested persons upset about being forced to compete at a higher level, but others were from persons who really felt they had been unjustly treated.

Interviews with a number of persons involved in the administration of the Federation at the provincial level revealed a perception of other problems such as disagreement over the criteria used, inconsistencies in the interpretation of the criteria and a lack of adherence to the classification process. Also persons at the zone level, while in the best position to make classification changes based on local standards, may not be familiar with provincial standards and, in some cases, the limited information upon which decisions must be made (Stanford, 1985; Furlong, 1985; Dawe, 1986).

Statement of the Problem

The major purpose of this study was to examine the system of classification utilized by the N.L.H.S.A.F. and, if warranted, make recommendations for change. More specifically, this study utilized responses from athletic directors in the member schools, provincial executive members and zone presidents to answer the following

questions:

1. What function(s) do respondents feel the classification system used by the N.L.H.S.A.F. should serve?
2. How acceptable to respondents are the criteria upon which the present classification system is based?
3. How much importance do respondents feel should be attached to each component of the criteria used?
4. How acceptable to respondents are the administrative processes for assigning classification?
5. Are there significant differences in responses obtained from provincial executive members, zone presidents and athletic directors in member schools regarding the classification system?
6. What do respondents perceive as the main weaknesses and strengths of the present classification system?
7. From the viewpoint of the respondents, how might the administration of the classification system be improved?

Theoretical Framework

Some of the earliest recordings of history show man engaged in wrestling and other sporting type activities. Scott (1951) suggests that from the beginning of civilization, games and sports have been used to train the young in warlike and survival activities. One of the earliest organized sporting events, the Tailtean Games, is believed to have been held at the Fair of Tailte in Tara, Ireland about 2000 B.C. (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1972). Other examples of early sporting events and contests can be found in the writings about the Greek and Roman civilizations. The popular Greek festivals are believed to be the forerunners of the present Olympic Games.

While the Olympic Games are still considered to be the single most important athletic event in the world, there has been a phenomenal growth in other sporting activities. In modern society, games and other competitive sporting events affect nearly everyone. Professional sports, via the media, have become immensely popular with large numbers of spectators. As in the Greek and Roman days, many professional athletes are viewed as public heroes. Amateur sports and recreational type activities have become increasingly popular as man's personal wealth and leisure time has increased.

Accompanying the general growth of sporting activities in society, there has been a parallel growth and acceptance of sport in the schools. Such sporting activities include those offered as part of regular physical education programs, intramural programs and interscholastic programs. While all three aspects of the sports program are very important, the one which often receives the most public attention and support is the interscholastic program. In most provinces and states in North America, interscholastic athletic competition has expanded such that provincial or state athletic associations have been formed to administer such programs.

One of the main functions of those athletic associations is to sponsor and regulate athletic competition. This competition must be administered in a manner conducive to maximizing student benefit. As a result of the large numbers of schools with different programs, facilities and personnel, there are wide variations in the skill levels of different teams. Since there is a belief that it is not beneficial to have students with great differences in skill levels compete against each other, it is necessary to establish various levels of play. The system which attempts to establish those levels of play in high school athletic associations is normally referred to as a "classification system".

In order to gain some understanding of classification systems in general, it is useful to examine those systems in terms of the purpose or function, the criteria used to establish divisions designed to fulfill the function, and the processes necessary to implement the criteria. As with other systems, classification must operate within the geographic and resource restrictions imposed by its environment. An examination of components common to classification systems used by athletic organizations throughout the world can be portrayed as in Figure 2.

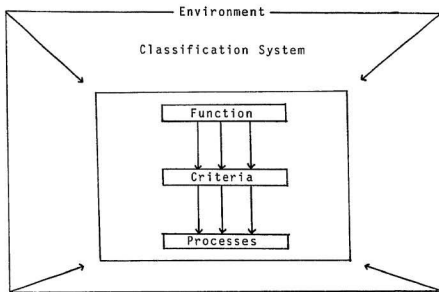


Figure 2. Conceptual Model of Classification

In terms of high school athletics, classification systems are commonly used to serve two main functions. The first function is that of ensuring equitable competition. Players or teams are selected in a manner which ensures that the skill levels of the various players or teams are similar. In order to fulfill this function, classification systems use the criteria of ability. When using ability criteria, players or teams of similar ability compete against each other. The processes used to implement a classification system based on ability are numerous. One of the most commonly used is the rank-order system. Players or teams are ranked in relation to each other. One of the main advantages of ranking systems is that it ensures competition between players or teams of equitable abilities. A major disadvantage of the system is the administrative complexities involved in grouping players or teams according to ability. This disadvantage becomes exaggerated when one of the environmental influences is a volunteer organization with limited resources within which the system must operate.

The second function of high school athletic classification systems is to provide for a degree of equity among competing schools or individuals. The concern is for the equalization of the bases from which teams or individuals emerge, or stated differently, equality of opportunity. The criteria necessary to

achieve the function of equality of opportunity are different from that necessary to achieve equitable competition. Schools must be grouped according to similar physical characteristics using criteria such as school population, size and access to competition. Individuals are commonly grouped according to physical characteristics of age or weight. The processes used to implement classification systems based on physical characteristics are relatively simple. Once the specific criteria are decided, schools can be easily categorized according to the set criteria. The ease of administering the process after the criteria have been established is one of the main advantages of these types of classifications systems. A major disadvantage is that there is no guarantee that the criteria selected will provide equality of opportunity.

In summary, the main component in the proposed conceptual model of classification is the function of the system. Stemming from the function are the criteria, which are designed to complement the function. The criteria will, in turn, directly influence the process required to implement the entire system. All three components of the system are influenced by the environment within which the system must operate.

Significance of the Study

This study will hopefully result in the improvement of the classification system within the N.L.H.S.A.F.. Specifically, this study should have significance for the following groups:

1. Students and coaches by providing a system which can effectively classify schools/teams using the criteria established.
2. Administrators of athletic programs in the schools by providing a degree of stability in the system thus facilitating long-range planning.
3. Zone, regional and provincial executive members who have to make decisions regarding classification by providing clear criteria and procedures to follow.
4. Provincial office personnel who deal with problems and complaints related to the classification system by reducing the incidence of such problems and complaints.

Delimitations

This study is delimited to the organization and administration of the system of classification utilized by

the N.L.H.S.A.F..

Limitations

The results, conclusions and recommendations of this study should be considered in terms of the following limitations:

1. This study is concerned with classification within the N.L.H.S.A.F. and any findings or recommendations are restricted to that organization.
2. This study assumes the responses given by athletic directors in the member schools accurately reflects the opinions of the member schools about the classification system utilized by the N.L.H.S.A.F..
3. This study is partially dependent on the athletic directors' understanding of the classification system utilized by the N.L.H.S.A.F..
4. This study is partially dependent on the return of mailed questionnaires.

Definitions

Newfoundland-Labrador High School Athletic Federation (N.L.H.S.A.F./The Federation): The organization which administers, organizes and promotes high school interscholastic sports activities within the province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Zone Associations: Local organizations formed by schools within a small geographic area which are responsible for organizing and administering N.L.H.S.A.F. sponsored athletic competition in their areas.

Regional Associations: Combinations of Zone Associations within a geographic region who are responsible for organizing and administering N.L.H.S.A.F. sponsored interscholastic athletics within that region. Each region elects a Regional Director who becomes part of the Provincial Executive.

Provincial Executive: The nine Regional Directors and the Past-President join with a President, three Vice-Presidents and a Financial Director who are elected at the Annual General Meeting to form the Provincial Executive. This group is responsible for directing and making all decisions concerning the Federation between Annual General Meetings.

Classification Committee: This group includes a Classification Chairman, who is usually one of the

Vice-Presidents appointed to that position by the President, and the Regional Directors. The Classification Committee reviews all classification requests and authorizes any changes.

Extracurricular/Co-curricular: Activities or programs carried out in or by a school which are not considered part of the prescribed curriculum.

Interscholastic/Inter-school Athletics: Athletic competition between schools.

Intramural/Intra-school Athletics: Athletic competition within a school.

Classification System: The system used by athletic organizations to determine which teams/individuals may compete at each level of competition.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

At the conceptual level there has been very little written about classification as it relates to high school athletic competition. There is, however, a substantial amount of material about other aspects of interscholastic athletics which provides an overview of the setting in which interscholastic competition occurs in today's schools. The first section in the review of literature provides this overview by discussing the development of interscholastics, a rationale for them, and some legal and administrative concerns.

While there is little of a conceptual nature about athletic classification, most high school athletic associations in North America address the practical aspects associated therewith. The second section in this chapter reviews the classification systems used by many such organizations in North America, excluding Newfoundland. The third and final section in the review of literature reviews the development of the N.L.H.S.A.F. classification system from its inception up to the present.

Interscholastic Athletics In Today's Schools

Extracurricular activities have become an integral part of most modern school programs. Raubinger, Sumption and Kamm (1974) write, "today it would be hard to imagine a secondary school without a varied program of student activities" (p. 204). However, such extracurricular programs are relatively new in the educational setting. Keller (1982) indicates the time of acceptance of sporting activities in schools when he writes, "schools officially assumed more responsibility over interschool games during the first two decades of the 1900's" (p. 23). Frederick (1959), writing about student activities in American schools, states:

It can be concluded that at the end of the first quarter of the twentieth century the idea that informal student activities had educative value and should be the direct concern of teachers and administrators was general throughout the country.
(p. 25)

In Newfoundland schools, extracurricular activities have only gained widespread acceptance in the last twenty years. The Report of the Royal Commission on Education and Youth (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1967) recognized the importance of extracurricular activities in schools but stated, "it seems to the Commission that this aspect of the curriculum has been neglected in many Newfoundland schools" (p. 171). The Commission

subsequently recommended that all schools develop co-curricular programmes suited to the local conditions.

Since the report of the Commission there is evidence to suggest that many Newfoundland schools have developed extracurricular programs. A study by Crocker (1973) of the co-curricular programs in the Regional High Schools of Newfoundland and Labrador revealed that all schools who responded to his questionnaire had some form of extracurricular activities. The rapid growth in the number of schools participating in N.L.H.S.A.F. sponsored activities further attest to the involvement of Newfoundland students in extracurricular activities.

Extracurricular activities have become accepted in schools as a result of changes in the philosophy about the function of schools. The writings of John Dewey (1938) about the educative value of experiences in the school had a significant impact on education. Frederick (1959) illustrates this philosophical change by stating:

Where play was once thought to be a waste of precious hours and a sure road to a pauper's grave, if not to the pit of hell, play is now thought to be not only the right and privilege of youth, but an essential and vital phase of their education. (p. 20)

The importance of extracurricular activities in general, and interscholastic athletics in particular, have been addressed by many writers. Since this particular study is primarily concerned with interscholastic

athletics, only literature relevant to that area will be discussed.

Most writers who have addressed the issue of the importance of interscholastic athletics have concluded that there are many benefits associated with good interscholastic programs. These benefits accrue to the student, the educational institution and the community.

Broyles and Hay (1979) list the following as student benefits of interscholastic athletics: health, discipline, development of moral values, recognition, social competence, and emotional maturity. Dannehl and Razor (1971) discuss additional student benefits to include: athletics being fun; athletics teach self-discipline, sportsmanship, self-reliance and cooperation; and, athletics can provide scholarships for some athletes.

Many of the student benefits listed are considered desirable objectives of the educational system. The Aims of Public Education for Newfoundland and Labrador (1984) list a number of aims of education which may be met through interscholastic athletic programs. These include:

- (1) to help students to mature mentally;
- (2) to help pupils to mature emotionally;
- (3) to help pupils to make the best of their leisure time;

- (4) to help students understand the human body and practice the principles of good health; and,
- (5) to seek out and develop pupils' special talents and potentialities and to assist them in developing their strengths and in overcoming or adjusting to handicaps and weaknesses. (pp. 6, 7)

Keller (1982) offers the following as outcomes of interscholastic athletic programs which complement the aims and objectives of education:

- (1) mental, physical and emotional development of individual students;
- (2) enhancement of the educational objectives of the school, providing experiences not otherwise provided;
- (3) provision of wholesome recreation and entertainment to students and spectators;
- (4) fostering school spirit; and,
- (5) gaining community support for the school. (p. 33)

The importance of athletics to Newfoundland schools is reflected in a statement made by Crocker (1973). He reported that principals judged intra-school and inter-school sports as being the best co-curricular activities for meeting the needs and interests of students.

Along with the benefits which accrue to students and schools, the community-at-large benefits from interscholastic sports activities. Maxwell (1982)

discusses two ways in which school athletic programs serve to benefit society. He states: "the schools are serving as leisure delivery agencies by providing wholesome activities for leisure time fulfillment, and are also educating young citizens in lifetime leisure concepts and skills" (p. 6). Considering the importance attached to amateur sport and the development of sound leisure pursuits in today's society, the school athletic program serves a very important function.

The most visible part of school athletics, the interscholastic program, also serves the community in other ways. It is often the most visible means by which a community can identify with its school. The public in a community is invited to various sporting activities which provide both a source of entertainment and community pride.

While there are many widely recognized benefits associated with interscholastic athletic programs, there can also be some negative effects. Some writers have challenged traditional values associated with sport on grounds that the "winning" aspect has taken over. Dannehl and Razor (1971) took a critical look at sport in some American schools and concluded that:

Athletics can be of great value to the educational, psychological, and social growth of students, but moderation is the key to that value. Competition on the athletic

field tends to lose its educational value when victory is the ultimate goal. (p. 65)

Maxwell (1982) emphasized the importance of ensuring that athletic goals and outcomes were in harmony with those of education and that the athletic program did not become dominant over other worthwhile programs.

Interscholastic athletics, as with any other programs, must be effectively administered in order to be successful. Often, in a school, the interscholastic program is very visible and therefore open to public scrutiny. Trump and Miller (1979) write "because of the potential for controversy and the magnitude of the problems involved, athletic programs must be directed by those who are willing to make judgements based on sound principles" (p. 310). Recent developments, particularly in the United States, indicate that sports-related litigation is increasing. In a recent article, Clear (1982) reviewed several court cases and offered some suggestions for administrators of athletic associations to keep in mind when developing or implementing rules and regulations. He suggests that legally:

1. Participation is more than an unregulated privilege but is not a fully protected right.
2. Students have a recognized "significant" interest in participation.

3. Rules must be rationally and reasonably related to a legitimate educational purpose.
4. In certain circumstances, rules will be subject to strict judicial scrutiny, requiring that a compelling state interest be shown.
5. Appeals must be handled without bias. (170)

These types of legal developments clearly illustrate the need for athletic associations to have well-defined, justifiable rules and regulations which are applied through sound administrative procedures.

High School Athletic Classification Systems

Almost every state and province in North America has a high school athletic association. In order to develop an overview of the functions, criteria and processes relative to classification, each athletic association was asked to provide information about its classification system. A copy of the letter used to request information is included in Appendix A. This section of the paper reviews the classification systems used by the 40 high school athletic associations which responded to this request for information. The classification system used by the Newfoundland and Labrador High School Athletic

Federation will be treated separately and reviewed in a later section.

A review of the classification systems used by the various athletic associations reveals that only the Missouri State High School Activities Association state the functions of their classification system. They indicate the primary objectives of classifying schools to be:

1. to provide for more equitable competition in team activities;
2. to provide for more equity among schools competing in team and group activities;
3. to protect the physical welfare of students engaged in contact sports; and,
4. to expedite the administration of district and state events with a minimum of conflict with the academic program;

Most other athletic associations have only written classification policy about the classification criteria and processes used.

The only criterion used in the vast majority of athletic associations is school population (33 out of 40). In the remaining seven associations, two do not classify schools for competition purposes, three use school population as the main factor with some consideration of geography, and the remaining two use school population with some consideration of team performance and geography.

It must be noted that nearly all associations using school population as the main criterion also have defined seasons of play and maximum numbers of allowable games or matches for each sport. The criterion of school population combined with seasons of play ensures that the classification system can largely fulfill the function of equalization of opportunity.

In athletic associations using school population as the main classification criterion, there are two main processes used to determine the number of students in the schools in different classification divisions. In approximately one third of the systems reviewed, schools are divided proportionally. To illustrate, in New Jersey: the top 25% of the schools in terms of enrollment, are classified 4A; the next 25% are 3A; the next 25% are 2A; and, the lower 25% are classified as A.

The second procedure used to determine classification divisions uses pre-set limits. To illustrate, in Nova Scotia all schools which have populations greater than 449 are classified as 3A, schools with populations between 200 and 449 are classified 2A and schools with populations less than 200 are classified A.

The actual processes used to implement the classification system varies from association to association. In New Hampshire, classifications are set

once every five years, while in Alberta classifications are determined each year based on the September 30th enrollment. In athletic associations which use school population as the only classification criterion, the processes involved with implementing the classification system are relatively simple. Once the population in each school has been determined, the central office staff assign classifications to schools according to the established criteria. Since in the case of school population the criterion can be objectively assessed, the assignment process is easy.

In systems using a combination of criteria, the association's executive is responsible for classification of schools. It must again be emphasized that the main criterion used is school population even where there is some consideration of other factors.

Development of N.L.H.S.A.F.
Classification System

The founding meeting of the N.L.H.S.A.F. was held on February 15, 1969. At that meeting the following By-Law was approved:

By-Law 3 Eligibility of Schools for N.L.H.S.A.F.
Sponsored Activities

Section B (i) shall read: "A" Schools are those having a total enrollment of 301 and over in Grades 9, 10 and 11. "B" Schools are

those having a total enrollment of 300 or less in Grades 9, 10 and 11.

(iv) A school may request to play in a higher or lower classification.

(N.L.H.S.A.F., 1969)

This By-Law of the Federation initiated what is now known as the "classification system".

The first indication of concern about the classification system came at the 1971 Annual General Meeting when a question was asked concerning the basis upon which schools were classified. The response to that question indicated that, "it was an executive decision based on school population and subjective analysis" (N.L.H.S.A.F., A.G.M. minutes, 1971). Later in that same meeting a discussion was held concerning schools who won division "B", automatically moving in division "A".

At the 1972 A.G.M. the first major change in the classification system was introduced. The executive classification committee initiated the concept of zone classifications. Therefore, a zone was classified as either "A" or "B" with all schools in that zone receiving the same classification. During the same meeting a motion was passed giving the provincial council power to classify zones at the Annual General Meeting.

In 1973, the delegates at the A.G.M. passed a motion which split the sport of Basketball into three divisions. Therefore, in Basketball, a zone could be classified as

either "A", "B" or "C". This system did not work very well and resulted in major changes being made at the 1974 A.G.M. The new classification system provided for the classifying of individual schools using the criterion of school population. Schools with enrollments greater than 350 were classified "A", schools with 201 to 350 students were classified "B", and schools with less than 201 students were classified "C". Schools could voluntarily move into an higher classification for one year but not move downward. The classification process was simple with schools being assigned classifications based on the April school returns.

At the 1975 A.G.M. a motion was passed enabling schools to move into a lower classification than that determined by their school population, if such was approved by the A.G.M.. Despite study by two different committees, the three level classification system using school population as the main criterion remained in effect until the 1981 A.G.M.. At that time a classification committee, acting on direction from the previous A.G.M., introduced the latest "new classification system". This latest system was radically different from previous classification systems used in Newfoundland and from those classification systems used in most other parts of North America.

Under the latest classification system a different letter grade was introduced. The "A" classification was changed to "AAA", "B" to "AA", and "C" to "A". Instead of schools being classified, individual teams within the schools were classified. The criterion upon which classification decisions were made changed from school population to team performance, both past and predicted. In order to utilize the new criteria, the administrative process was also changed. The onus for making classification decisions was given to the zone and regional associations. The provincial classification committee would only give final approval to classification changes and make adjustments when they felt such were necessary. In addition to the changes already discussed, teams could voluntarily move into an higher classification for one year and, special classification cases could be referred to the executive for consideration.

The classification system introduced in 1981 is still utilized by the N.L.H.S.A.F.. In order to develop some understanding of why this type of system was introduced and why it has continued in use, personal interviews were conducted with President and Executive Director of the Federation for the year 1981.

Dawe (1986), Federation President in 1981, suggested that the classification system was changed due to inequality of competition, dominance by some schools, and

the inability of some schools to compete at their classification level which resulted in discouragement and lack of program development. In his view the classification system has continued to be used because it does provide for a degree of equality of competition. Teams get the opportunity to compete at a level where they can experience some success, and the system is basically good when the prescribed processes are followed.

Crott, (1986), Federation Executive Director in 1981, indicated that the system changed in order to provide for more equitable competition at the different levels. Using this system, people saw an increased chance of their team winning. Despite problems associated with this type of system, he still views it as superior to the old one. He attributes the many classification changes to human characteristics whereby persons try to move their own teams into a division where they can compete at the provincial level.

While the basic classification system introduced in 1981 is still being used at present, there have been some changes. In 1982, a fourth division was added to the classification system for the sports of basketball and volleyball. At the 1984 A.G.M. a motion was passed stating that "school population be considered the main factor for classifying schools ... and that geography and team performances also be considered" (p. 12).

Summary

The review of literature indicates that despite some recent criticism of interscholastic athletics, such programs are very much a part of most North American schools. However, there is an increasing awareness of the legal and administrative responsibilities of high school athletic associations. These associations must ensure that all rules are rationally and reasonably related to legitimate educational purposes.

Within this overall setting, athletic associations establish specific rules and procedures concerning the classification of schools for competition purposes. A review of classification systems used in many parts of North America reveal that most high school athletic associations use school population as the only classification criterion. This criterion, when coupled with seasons of play, provide for a degree of equity among schools but does not directly address equality of competition. In these type of systems, it would appear that the administrative processes are relatively simple. The question which remains unanswered is whether this type of system is being used because it is the best method of classifying schools or because it is administratively convenient.

The classification system used by the N.L.H.S.A.F. has evolved from a system of classifying schools using only school population to a performance based system. This type of system attempts to equalize competition by having teams of approximately equal caliber compete against each other. Because a performance based system, which in reality classifies teams for future competition, is based on people's perceptions of how well a team will perform at some future time, it is inevitable that some teams will be incorrectly classified. This system is difficult to administer because of the nature of the classification process used, disagreements over what division a particular team should be in, and the paper work needed to update the many team classification changes. While the system is difficult to administer, it does address equality of competition and it does attempt to place teams in a division where they can best compete.

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

Population

The population for this study included persons involved with the N.L.H.S.A.F. and having decision-making authority. This group consisted of provincial executive members (16), zone presidents (33), and athletic directors (144) in member schools. Since the number of people in each group was relatively small, the entire population was studied.

Instrument

A questionnaire designed to ascertain the views of provincial executive members, zone presidents and athletic directors toward the classification system currently utilized by the Federation was administered. The questionnaire, entitled "Newfoundland-Labrador High School Athletic Federation Classification Survey", contained sixteen items. A copy is included in Appendix B.

The first nine items in the questionnaire were statements concerning classification processes to which the recipients were asked to indicate their degree of agreement or disagreement, using a Likert scale. The five

responses appearing on the questionnaire were: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), Strongly Disagree (SD) and Undecided (UN). Item ten was a multiple choice question where recipients were asked to indicate which level in the hierarchical structure should have final authority for classification decisions. Items eleven, twelve and thirteen required recipients to rate a set of options in response to statements about the function, input and criteria associated with the classification system. The options appearing on the questionnaire were: Essential, Of Great Importance, Of Some Importance, Of Little Importance and Of No Importance. These options were represented by numerical values ranging from four to zero. Items fourteen, fifteen and sixteen were open-ended questions where recipients were asked to discuss their perceptions of weaknesses, strengths, and suggestions for improvement in the classification system utilized by the Federation.

Questionnaire Development and Pilot Study

During the construction phase of the questionnaire, interviews were conducted with the President, Executive Director and Past-President of the N.L.H.S.A.F.. These individuals were asked to comment on the appropriateness of the proposed questions. This resulted in subsequent

item revisions. The questionnaire was also submitted to students in a graduate statistics class who were asked to comment on the clarity and precision of the instrument. Their responses led to additional modification of the questionnaire.

A pilot study was conducted with four persons on leave from their school systems who were familiar with the N.L.H.S.A.F. classification system. None of the participants involved in the pilot study reported any difficulties reading or interpreting the questionnaire items.

Reliability Measures

Prior to being administered to zone presidents and athletic directors, the questionnaire was administered to the sixteen members of the provincial executive. These same individuals were then retested at the same time that the remainder of the questionnaires were administered. When the second group of questionnaires completed by the executive group were returned, the reliability for each item was calculated using Pearson's r . The instrument's overall reliability was calculated by finding the Mean r , using Fisher's Z_r transformation procedure. The results of the reliability testing are shown in Table 1. It should be noted that while the overall reliability

TABLE 1
QUESTIONNAIRE RELIABILITY

<u>Item</u>	<u>Reliability Coefficient</u>	<u>Probability Level</u>
1	.83	**
2	.68	**
3	.22	
4	.13	
5	.80	**
6	.55	*
7	.92	**
8	.91	**
9	.83	**
10	1.00	**
11a	.83	**
11b	.75	**
12a	.75	**
12b	.69	**
12c	.58	*
13a	.95	**
13b	.95	**
13c	.88	**
13d	.74	**

Overall $r = .90$ **

** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$

($r = .90$) is high, items three and four which deal with appeal procedures are not statistically reliable.

Administration of Questionnaire

The initial administration of the questionnaires to provincial executive members occurred at an executive meeting held on February 20 and 21, 1986. During the first week in March, each member of the population was sent a covering letter, questionnaire and stamped, self-addressed envelope. All questionnaires were numerically coded to assist in identifying respondents for possible follow-up. During the third week in March, a reminder letter was sent to those people who had not returned their questionnaire. During the second week in April, a second copy of the questionnaire, complete with cover letter and stamped, self-addressed envelope, was sent to all persons whose questionnaire had not been received. Copies of the covering letters are included in Appendix A.

Analysis of Data

Data obtained from the first thirteen items in the questionnaires were analyzed primarily through the use of descriptive statistics. Data concerning those items were entered into the computer system at Memorial University of

Newfoundland. Computer programs were then developed which provided for recoding and analyzing the data using the SPSS:X (Statistical Package for Social Science) program. The responses to the first nine items in the questionnaire were assigned numerical values ranging from five, representing strongly agree, to one, representing strongly disagree. Responses to items eleven, twelve and thirteen were also assigned numerical values ranging from five, essential, to one, of no importance. Missing data for any item was assigned a value of zero.

The data analysis consisted of calculating: frequencies, percentages, means and sums of responses to each item; ranking order of the responses to each section in items eleven, twelve and thirteen; T-tests to determine whether differences in the means of specific responses were statistically significant; and F-tests to determine statistical differences in the responses provided by each group. This analysis provided necessary information to answer all of the research questions, except numbers six and seven, in the statement of the problem.

Responses to items fourteen, fifteen and sixteen were qualitatively analyzed and used to provide information needed to answer research questions six and seven.

CHAPTER 4 PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Introduction

In this chapter, the results obtained from the analysis of questionnaire data are discussed and presented under the following headings: functions of the classification system, classification criteria, classification processes, response differences, respondents' perceptions of weaknesses and strengths in the classification system and respondents' views on improving the administration of the classification system.

Background Information

There were 193 questionnaires distributed, with a total of 154 returned. As shown in Table 2, each of the three groups in the population returned a high percentage of the questionnaires, contributing to the overall response rate of 79.8%. Since this study included the entire decision - making population of the N.L.H.S.A.F. and had a high response rate, results of the study should reflect the views of the Federation membership.

TABLE 2
QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSE RATES

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Number Mailed</u>	<u>Number Returned</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Provincial Executive	16	16	100
Zone Presidents	33	26	78.8
Athletic Directors	144	112	77.8
Total	193	153	79.8

Functions of the Classification System

Question One: What function(s) do respondents feel the classification system used by the N.L.H.S.A.F. should serve?

Questionnaire recipients were asked to rate the importance which should be attached to two common functions of classification systems in team sports, namely "equitable competition" and "school equity". Tables 3 and 4 present the frequency distributions of responses to questionnaire items dealing with this issue. The tables show that 90.2% of respondents rated equitable competition as being essential or of great importance while only 45.8% of the respondents rated the function of school equity as essential or of great importance.

TABLE 3

IMPORTANCE OF EQUITABLE COMPETITION AS A FUNCTION OF
N.L.H.S.A.F. CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM

<u>Response</u>	<u>Value</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Essential	5	100	64.9
Of Great Importance	4	39	25.3
Of Some Importance	3	11	7.1
Of Little Importance	2	1	.6
Of No Importance	1	0	0
Missing Cases	0	<u>3</u>	<u>1.9</u>
		154	100
Mean 4.58			

TABLE 4

IMPORTANCE OF SCHOOL EQUITY AS A FUNCTION OF
N.L.H.S.A.F. CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM

<u>Response</u>	<u>Value</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Essential	5	36	23.4
Of Great Importance	4	33	21.4
Of Some Importance	3	47	30.5
Of Little Importance	2	24	15.6
Of No Importance	1	5	3.2
Missing Cases	0	<u>9</u>	<u>5.8</u>
		154	100
Mean 3.49			

Another indication of the relative importance of these two classification functions was obtained from a comparison of their rank order. This comparison showed that 60.3% of respondents ranked equitable competition ahead of school equity, 21.4% ranked them equal and 12.2% ranked school equity ahead of equitable competition. These results clearly indicate that a majority of respondents consider the main function of a classification system to be provision of equitable competition.

Classification Criteria

- Question Two: How acceptable to respondents are the criteria upon which the present classification system is based?
- Question Three: How much importance do respondents feel should be attached to each component of the criteria used?

Questionnaire recipients were asked to rate the existing classification criteria (school population, past performance, future performance and geography) in terms of how much importance should be attached to each. Respondents who indicated that a particular criterion should be "Essential" or "Of Great Importance" were viewed as considering that criterion acceptable. Respondents indicating that a particular criterion should be "Of Some Importance" were viewed as not having strong feelings

about the importance of that criterion and were consequently considered neutral. Respondents indicating that a particular criterion should be "Of No Importance" or "Of Little Importance" were viewed as considering that criterion unacceptable. Table 5 shows the distribution of acceptable, neutral, and unacceptable responses grouped according to the definitions established. It can be seen from this table that the number of respondents indicating that each criterion was acceptable was greater than the number indicating that the criterion was unacceptable.

In addition to determining the acceptability of existing criteria, frequency distributions of criteria ratings were used to indicate the amount of importance which respondents felt should be attached to each criterion. Table 6 presents those frequency distributions along with the means, sums and proportional values for each criterion. This table shows that the greatest degree of importance was attached to past performance (mean 3.93), with school population and future performance rated equally (means 3.61) and geography rated least important (mean 3.09).

Table 6 also indicates the relative importance of each criterion. When the amount of importance attached to each criterion is expressed as a proportion of the total importance attached to all criteria, there does not appear

TABLE 5
ACCEPTABILITY OF CLASSIFICATION CRITERIA CURRENTLY USED

	Criterion					
	<u>School Population</u> Frequency Percent	<u>Past Performance</u> Frequency Percent	<u>Future Performance</u> Frequency Percent	<u>Geography</u> Frequency Percent	<u>Future Performance</u> Frequency Percent	<u>Geography</u> Frequency Percent
Acceptable	79 51.3	107 69.5	92 59.8	49 31.8	92 59.8	49 31.8
Neutral	56 36.4	38 24.7	32 20.8	66 42.9	32 20.8	66 42.9
Unacceptable	18 11.6	7 4.5	28 18.1	38 24.7	28 18.1	38 24.7
Missing Cases	<u>1</u> 154	<u>2</u> 154	<u>2</u> 154	<u>1</u> 154	<u>1.3</u> 100	<u>1</u> 154
					<u>1.3</u> 100	<u>1</u> 154

TABLE 6
 IMPORTANCE WHICH SHOULD BE ATTACHED TO CLASSIFICATION CRITERIA

	Criterion							
	School Population		Past Performance		Future Performance		Geography	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Essential	40	26.0	43	27.9	38	24.7	15	9.7
Of Great Imp	39	25.3	64	41.6	54	35.1	34	22.1
Of Some Imp	56	36.4	38	24.7	32	20.8	66	42.9
Of Little Imp	11	7.1	6	3.9	19	12.3	26	16.9
Of No Imp	7	4.5	1	.6	9	5.8	12	7.8
Missing Cases	1	.6	2	1.3	2	1.3	1	.6
Mean	3.61		3.93		3.61		3.09	
Sum	553		598		549		473	
Proportion	25%		28%		25%		22%	

to be meaningful differences between them. The proportions range from a high of 28% for past performance to a low of 22% for geography.

Classification Processes

Question Four: How acceptable to respondents are the administrative processes for assigning classification.

In order to address this research problem, data from questionnaire items one to ten and item twelve were analyzed. Items one to five along with seven and eight proposed changes in the administrative processes currently utilized and asked respondents to indicate their degree of agreement or disagreement. Questionnaire item six stated an administrative process currently used while item nine directly asked respondents to indicate their desire for change in classification procedures. Item ten asked the respondents to indicate which level (zone, regional or provincial) should have the final authority for classification decisions, while item twelve dealt with the amount of input each of those levels should have in classification decisions.

Request Procedures

Questionnaire recipients were asked whether all classification requests should be reviewed at zone and

regional levels before reaching the provincial classification committee. As Tables 7 and 8 reveal, respondents clearly indicated general agreement with these statements. Table 7 shows that 95.5% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that all classification requests should be reviewed at the zone level, while Table 8 shows that 88.9% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that all classification requests should be reviewed at the regional level before being presented at the provincial level.

Appeal Procedure

Questionnaire recipients were asked whether all classification appeals should be reviewed at zone and regional levels before reaching the provincial classification committee. The frequency distributions of responses are shown in Tables 9 and 10. Even though a majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that all classification appeals should be reviewed at zone and regional levels, those responses cannot be considered reliable. The two questionnaire items (numbers 3 and 4) dealing with this issue were not statistically reliable. This lack of reliability may be an indication of confusion over the appeal procedure.

TABLE 7
CLASSIFICATION REQUESTS SHOULD BE REVIEWED AT
ZONE LEVEL

<u>Response</u>	<u>Value</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Strongly Agree	5	111	72.1
Agree	4	36	23.4
Undecided	3	1	.6
Disagree	2	5	3.2
Strongly Disagree	1	0	0
Missing Cases	0	<u>1</u>	<u>.6</u>
		154	100

Mean 4.66

TABLE 8
CLASSIFICATION REQUESTS SHOULD BE REVIEWED AT
REGIONAL LEVEL

<u>Response</u>	<u>Value</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Strongly Agree	5	92	58.7
Agree	4	45	29.2
Undecided	3	5	3.2
Disagree	2	10	6.5
Strongly Disagree	1	1	.6
Missing Cases	0	<u>1</u>	<u>.6</u>
		154	100

Mean 4.42

TABLE 9

CLASSIFICATION APPEALS SHOULD BE REVIEWED AT
ZONE LEVEL

<u>Response</u>	<u>Value</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Strongly Agree	5	75	48.7
Agree	4	52	33.8
Undecided	3	3	1.9
Disagree	2	16	10.4
Strongly Disagree	1	6	3.9
Missing Cases	0	<u>2</u>	<u>1.3</u>
		154	100
Mean 4.15			

TABLE 10

CLASSIFICATION APPEALS SHOULD BE REVIEWED AT
REGIONAL LEVEL

<u>Response</u>	<u>Value</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Strongly Agree	5	63	40.9
Agree	4	57	37.0
Undecided	3	7	4.5
Disagree	2	16	10.4
Strongly Disagree	1	9	5.8
Missing Cases	0	<u>2</u>	<u>1.3</u>
		154	100
Mean 4.15			

TABLE 11

ATHLETIC DIRECTORS AT ZONE LEVEL ARE KNOWLEDGABLE ABOUT
PROVINCIAL LEVELS OF PLAY

<u>Response</u>	<u>Value</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Strongly Agree	5	22	14.3
Agree	4	64	41.6
Undecided	3	5	3.2
Disagree	2	53	34.4
Strongly Disagree	1	8	5.2
Missing Cases	0	<u>2</u>	<u>1.3</u>
		154	100
Mean 3.26			

TABLE 12

PROVINCIAL CLASSIFICATION COMMITTEE IN BEST POSITION
TO IDENTIFY NEEDED CLASSIFICATION CHANGES

<u>Response</u>	<u>Value</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Strongly Agree	5	3	1.9
Agree	4	38	24.7
Undecided	3	14	9.1
Disagree	2	68	44.2
Strongly Disagree	1	27	17.5
Missing Cases	0	<u>4</u>	<u>2.6</u>
		154	100
Mean 2.48			

through the normal procedure are shown in Table 13. A majority of respondents either agreed (26%) or strongly agreed (57.1%) that teams voluntarily moving into higher classification divisions should remain there until reclassified through the normal procedure.

Team Classification

Table 14 presents respondents' views toward the concept of school classification. The table shows that 74% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that all teams within a particular school should have the same classification.

Desire for Change in Classification Processes

Since questionnaire items one to eight, excepting six, all propose changes in the classification process, the means of those items with number six inverted, can be combined to indirectly suggest a desire for change score. When this procedure was followed, a mean desire for change score of 3.76 was calculated.

Item nine in the questionnaire directly asked the recipients to indicate their desire for change in classification procedures. The calculated mean (3.76) was similar to that directly obtained from item nine (3.55), strengthening the position that respondents desire some change in classification processes.

TABLE 13

TEAMS WHICH VOLUNTARILY CLASSIFY THEMSELVES UPWARD
SHOULD STAY THERE UNTIL RECLASSIFIED THROUGH
NORMAL PROCEDURE

<u>Response</u>	<u>Value</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Strongly Agree	5	40	26.0
Agree	4	88	57.1
Undecided	3	4	2.6
Disagree	2	14	9.1
Strongly Disagree	1	6	3.9
Missing Cases	0	<u>2</u>	<u>1.3</u>
		154	100

Mean 3.93

=====

TABLE 14

ALL TEAMS WITHIN A SCHOOL SHOULD HAVE THE SAME
CLASSIFICATION

<u>Response</u>	<u>Value</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Strongly Agree	5	7	4.5
Agree	4	26	16.9
Undecided	3	6	3.9
Disagree	2	61	39.6
Strongly Disagree	1	53	34.4
Missing Cases	0	<u>1</u>	<u>.6</u>
		154	100

Mean 2.17

=====

Zone, Regional and Provincial Input

Questionnaire recipients were asked to indicate which of the three levels should have final authority for classification divisions. A majority of respondents (66.7%) indicated that final authority should be at the provincial level; 17.6% indicated final authority should be at the regional level; and 12.4% indicated final authority should be at the zone level.

While the majority of respondents felt that final authority for classification decisions should be at the provincial level, they also indicated that there should be significant input from the zone and regional levels. Table 15 presents the respondents' views on how much input zone, regional and provincial levels should have when making classification decisions. The table indicates that 81.8% of respondents viewed zone input as essential or of great importance; 78% viewed regional input as essential or of great importance; while only 46.9% viewed provincial input as being essential or of great importance.

Response Differences

Question Five: Are there significant differences in responses obtained from provincial executive members, zone presidents and athletic directors in member schools regarding the classification system?

Responses obtained from provincial executive members,

TABLE 15
 IMPORTANCE OF ZONE, REGIONAL AND PROVINCIAL INPUT IN CLASSIFICATION DECISIONS

Response	Value	Zone		Region		Province	
		Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Essential	5	77	50.0	52	33.8	58	37.7
Of Great Imp	4	45	31.8	68	44.2	28	18.2
Of Some Imp	3	24	15.8	29	18.8	58	37.7
Of Little Imp	2	3	1.9	3	1.9	8	5.2
Of No Imp	1	0	0	1	.6	1	.6
Missing Cases	0	1	.6	1	.6	1	.6
		154	100	154	100	154	100
		Mean 4.31		Mean 4.09		Mean 3.88	

zone presidents and athletic directors for each questionnaire item were compared using a one-way analysis of variance with Scheffes procedure where applicable. Table 16 presents the results of this analysis and indicates which groups were significantly different. The table shows that there were significant differences between groups' responses on items six, ten, twelve(c) and thirteen(c). The Scheffe procedure further revealed that executive members' responses were significantly higher than athletic directors' and zone presidents' provincial responses on item six. This indicates that provincial executive members felt more strongly than did zone presidents and athletic directors that the provincial classification committee was in the best position to identify needed classification changes. On item twelve(c), provincial executive members rated the importance of provincial input significantly higher than did zone presidents and athletic directors. Provincial executive members' responses on item ten were also higher than those of athletic directors, indicating that provincial executive members felt more strongly than athletic directors that final authority for classification decisions should be at the provincial level. Even though the one-way analysis revealed an overall significant F-value (5.04) for item thirteen (c), no two groups were significantly different at the .05 level.

TABLE 16

ONE-WAY ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE OF
 PROVINCIAL EXECUTIVE (GRP 1), ZONE PRESIDENTS (GRP 2),
 AND ATHLETIC DIRECTORS (GRP 3) RESPONSE^c

<u>Questionnaire item</u>	<u>F-Value</u>	<u>Significant Differences</u>
1	.26	
2	2.37	
3	1.49	
4	1.25	
5	1.55	
6	15.24**	Grp 1>Grp 2, Grp 1>Grp 3
7	1.25	
8	1.28	
9	2.55	
10	3.79*	Grp 1>Grp 3
11a	1.48	
11b	1.14	
12a	2.63	
12b	1.38	
12c	7.44**	Grp 1>Grp 2, Grp 1>Grp 3
13a	.80	
13b	.24	
13c	5.04**	
13d	.93	

P<.01**, P<.05*

=====

Respondents' Perceptions of Weaknesses and Strengths in the Classification System

Question Six: What do respondents perceive as the main weaknesses and strengths of the present classification system?

Weaknesses

Questionnaire recipients were asked, "What do you consider to be the main weaknesses of the classification system currently used by the Federation". Responses to this question were analyzed to determine similarities for categorization purposes. This process revealed that a majority of comments were related to the following five major categories: abuse of the system, criteria, zone and regional input, procedural problems and, problems inherent within the system.

Abuse of the system. The most commonly perceived weakness of the current classification system was that a coach could often manipulate the system to ensure that his/her team was in a weak division, thus enhancing their chance of winning a provincial title. A total of 27 respondents referred to this weakness with a typical response being,

Lack of honesty by some schools and zones in placing their schools in lesser classifications versus the higher ones. Most schools are content to win provincial championships year after year in a lower class.

Criteria. Twenty-four respondents indicated problems with criteria used to determine classifications. Their responses varied with many individuals expressing their personal feelings on criteria which should or should not be used. Since the issue of which criteria should be used for classification purposes was addressed earlier in this chapter, it will not be further addressed in this section.

Zone and regional input. Eleven respondents indicated there was not enough input from zone and regional levels. A typical comment was "not enough input from, or consideration given to, zone decisions". This perceived weakness in the classification system was also evidenced in an earlier section in this chapter where respondents indicated that zone and regional levels should have greater input into classification decisions than the provincial level.

Procedural problems. Many comments were related to perceived procedural weaknesses in the current classification system. These comments were varied and referred to weaknesses such as the classification process not being clearly defined and/or not being adhered to, problems within the appeal procedure and lack of communication between different levels.

Problems inherent within the system. A number of respondents revealed particular insight into the classification system by commenting on problems inherent

within the type of system. Two such comments were:

Small schools are being punished for hardwork (coaches and players) and having a well organized system, by being forced into higher classifications. Larger schools, with a greater athletic base, are being rewarded for a lack of preparation and work by being moved down.

Nobody is knowledgeable enough to be able to objectively rank all competing teams.

These arguments can be applied to any classification system that uses subjective criteria such as past performance and predicted future performance to establish competition levels.

Strengths

Responses regarding strengths of the present classification system were reviewed and subsequently categorized under the following four main headings: equitable competition, multi-level input, criteria and flexibility.

Equitable competition. The strongest point of the classification system most frequently referred to by respondents was that the system provided a degree of equitable competition. Respondents stated that the system gives teams from smaller schools a chance to compete against teams of similar ability and advance beyond zone and regional levels. While many respondents recognized

weaknesses within the system, and that some teams were sometimes incorrectly classified, they believed that in most cases competition was equitable. Two comments illustrating this point were, "for the most part the better schools are playing the better schools" and the system "attempts to promote fairness and equality of competition within the Federation".

Multi-level input. Many respondents indicated that use of zone, regional and provincial input in classification decisions was desirable. Some expressed the opinion that the system tended to involve persons at all three levels and that since classifications were reviewed three times, there was less chance for error within the system. Even though respondents liked the concept of input from all three levels, a few respondents indicated that a provincial classification committee with final authority was an attribute since zone and regional persons often cannot evaluate classification from a provincial perspective.

Criteria. Just as some respondents perceived the use of specific criterion as a weakness, others indicated that it was a strength. A number of respondents particularly liked the systems' use of multiple criteria.

Flexibility. Nine respondents referred to flexibility of the present classification system as a positive feature. The concept of teams being able to

compete at a given level and then move upward as their skill increased, seemed appealing. One comment indicative of this type of response was, "it gives most schools an opportunity to compete at their skill level and if they improve, they can move up to another classification". Other respondents indicated that the system gave large schools just beginning a new sport, a chance to be competitive at a lower level and thus become established.

Respondents' Views on Improving the Administration
of the Classification System

Question Seven: From the viewpoint of respondents, how might administration of the classification system be improved?

Questionnaire recipients were asked for suggestions for improving the effectiveness of the classification system. While many people did not respond to this questionnaire item, the most frequent response suggested greater use of zone and regional input. Many respondents suggested that where a zone and region both approve a classification change, the provincial classification committee also approve that change. Other respondents suggested the use of specific criteria to improve the classification system.

While a majority of suggestions indicated greater use of zone and regional input or referred to criteria, other

frequent suggestions included: greater effort be made to collect statistics useful in making classification decisions; more specific delineation of request and appeal procedures; an education program for win-oriented coaches; designated classification chairmen at zone and regional levels; and, the Federation should lobby for increased funding since economic considerations dictate some classification decisions.

CHAPTER 5
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The major findings resulting from the data analysis are summarized in this chapter along with conclusions and recommendations resulting from the study.

Summary of Findings

Respondents indicated the main function of the classification system utilized by the N.L.H.S.A.F. should be to ensure equitable competition. The function of school equity was considered to be important, but not to the same degree as the function of equalization of competition.

All four classification criteria currently utilized by the Federation were deemed acceptable by the respondents. In terms of the amount of importance which should be attached to each classification criterion, past performance was considered most important with a proportional rating of 28%; school population and future performance were considered equal with each receiving 25% of the ratings; and, geography was considered the least important at 22%.

Most respondents (over 90%) indicated that all classification requests should be reviewed at zone and at regional levels before being presented to the provincial

classification committee. Respondents' opinions about whether athletic directors at the zone level are knowledgeable about provincial levels of play were somewhat divided. Approximately 56% of respondents indicated they believed athletic directors at the zone level were knowledgeable about provincial levels of play.

A majority of respondents (61.7%) indicated they did not feel the provincial classification committee was in the best position to identify where classification changes were needed. However, a large majority of respondents (83.1%) agreed or strongly agreed that teams which voluntarily move into a higher classification should remain there until reclassified through the normal procedure. Seventy-five percent of respondents did not feel that all teams within a particular school should have the same classification.

Both an indirect and a direct measure of respondents' desire for change in classification processes indicated respondents want some changes. On a five-point scale, where five represents a strong agreement with change and one represents strong disagreement with change, the mean of the indirect measure was 3.76 and the mean of the direct measure was 3.55.

A majority of respondents (66.7%) indicated that final authority for classification decisions should reside at the provincial level. However, when requested to rate

the importance of zone, regional and provincial input into classification decisions, zone input was considered the most important, regional input second in importance and provincial input least important.

Analysis of variance in the responses from the three target groups in the study population revealed significant differences on three questionnaire items. Provincial executive members' responses were higher than both zone presidents' and athletic directors' responses on items six and twelve(c), and higher than athletic directors' responses only, on item ten. This indicates that provincial executive members felt more strongly than zone presidents and athletic directors that the provincial classification committee was in the best position to identify where classification changes are needed; that provincial executive members rated provincial input in classification decisions higher than did zone presidents and athletic directors; and provincial executive members felt more strongly than athletic directors that the provincial classification committee should have final authority for classification decisions.

Qualitative analysis of responses to the open-ended question dealing with weaknesses within the classification system revealed most responses could be categorized under one of five major headings. The weaknesses most frequently referred to include: inability of the system

to accurately classify teams whose coaches were win-oriented and always attempting to have their team classified into a division which they could win; use of specific classification criteria; not enough emphasis on zone and regional input; classification processes such as request and appeal procedures not clearly defined and/or not followed; and, weaknesses inherent within the system such as the inability of any one level to objectively rank all teams, especially when that ranking is partially based on subjective criteria.

A majority of respondents referred to one of four major strengths of the classification system. These include: the system provides a large degree of equitable competition even though there were occasional errors with particular teams being incorrectly classified; the systems' use of input from zone, regional and provincial levels; use of specific classification criterion and/or the use of multiple classification criteria; and, flexibility of the system which allowed developing teams to move into higher classification divisions and be challenged while allowing weaker teams to compete against teams of similar abilities.

Many respondents' views on improving the administration of the classification system were a reflection of their perceptions of weaknesses in the current system. Respondents' suggestions included:

greater use of zone and regional input; use of suggested criteria; effort should be made to collect statistics to aid in making classification decisions; request and appeal procedures be clearly delineated; an education program for win-at-all-cost coaches; classification chairmen at zone and regional levels; and, lobbying for increased funding.

Conclusions

It can be concluded from the results that while placing some degree of importance on school equity, the membership clearly views equalization of competition to be the primary function of the classification system. The membership views all four classification criteria to be important, with past performance slightly more important than the others, and geography slightly less important. Respondents' views concerning classification criteria were congruent with their views about the functions of the classification system. In order for the classification system to fulfill the function of equalization of competition, teams must be classified using performance criteria. In this study, past and future performance were considered two very important classification criteria.

Items concerning procedural changes indicate the membership desire specific changes in the request procedures, in the amount of zone and regional input and

in the voluntary movement process. They do not wish change in the process of team classification as opposed to school classification or in final authority for classification decisions residing with the provincial classification committee.

Analysis of variance in responses from provincial executive members, zone presidents and athletic directors revealed significant differences on three questionnaire items. Considering that nineteen items in the questionnaire were analyzed, it can be concluded that there are only slight differences in the views of the three target groups toward the N.L.H.S.A.F. classification system.

Weaknesses in the classification system identified by respondents were largely consistent with those problems identified in the introductory chapter of this study. While some of those weaknesses such as lack of clearly defined request and appeal procedures can be addressed, other weaknesses such as the inability of the system to correctly classify all teams cannot be overcome due to the subjective nature of some of the classification criteria utilized.

Respondents' perception of strengths in the classification system were the basic tenets upon which the system is based. These included the systems' attempts to equalize competition at different levels, use of multiple

classification criteria and use of zone, regional and provincial input into the decision-making process.

Many respondents' suggestions for improving the administration of the classification system were realistic. Suggestions such as increased use of zone and regional input, better collection of statistics, and clearly defined request and appeal procedures are incorporated into the recommendations resulting from this study.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Following from this study, the following recommendations regarding the classification system used by the N.L.H.S.A.F. are offered:

1. The basic classification system with team classification, various levels of play and multiple decision-making input remain as is.
2. The criteria for deciding classification be a combination of past performance, school population, future performance and geography with each criterion assigned a specific weighting.
3. The classification process continue to use input from the zone, regional and provincial levels with the request, appeal and decision-making

procedures clearly delineated.

4. A person at the zone level be given the position of zone classification chairman and be assigned the responsibility of ensuring that zone classifications are discussed at the zone spring meeting and a written report forwarded to the regional director.
5. A reporting mechanism be established to facilitate the collection of information needed to make fair classification decisions.
6. The classification section in the N.L.H.S.A.F. Handbook be changed to reflect the recommendations contained in this study (see Appendix C).
7. Future research be conducted to examine:
 - a) the issue of appeal procedures within High School Athletic Organizations;
 - b) the extent to which various criteria used in classifying teams/schools for competition purposes fulfills the intended function of the classification system; and,
 - c) methodologies applicable to the objective application of criteria such as past performance and future performance.

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APPENDIX A
CORRESPONDENCE



MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY OF NEWFOUNDLAND

St. John's, Newfoundland, Canada A1B 3X8

Department of Educational Administration

Telex: 016-4101

Tel.: (709) 737-7647/8

100 Carters Hill
St. John's, Newfoundland
A1C 4C3
November 20, 1985

Saskatchewan Education
School Sports Division
2220 College Avenue
Regina, Saskatchewan
S4P 3V7

To Whom It May Concern

I am a graduate student in the Department of Educational Administration at Memorial University of Newfoundland. My graduate thesis research will involve a study of the organization and administration of the classification system within the Newfoundland and Labrador High School Athletic Federation. As part of that study it is my intention to review and compare systems of classification in other similar provincial/state organizations. To allow me to make such comparisons, I request your cooperation in forwarding a copy of your organization's system of classifying school for competition purposes.

May I thank you in advance for your interest concerning this request.

Respectfully,

W. D. L. Ireslan,
Thesis Supervisor

Wade Major



MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY OF NEWFOUNDLAND

St. John's, Newfoundland, Canada A1B 3X8

Department of Educational Administration

Telex: 016-4101
Tel.: (709) 737-7647/8

February 25, 1986

Mr. Glenn Stanford
Executive Director
Newfoundland and Labrador High
School Athletic Federation
Torbay Recreation Centre
St. John's, Newfoundland

Dear Mr. Stanford:

We are writing to request permission to conduct, through the N.L.H.S.A.F., a research project entitled:

"A Study of the Organization and Administration of classification within the Newfoundland - Labrador High School Athletic Federation."

The proposed study will be conducted by Wade Major under the supervision of Dr. D. Treslan. Your cooperation is requested in providing Wade Major with any documents relating to the classification system used by the N.L.H.S.A.F. Your permission is also requested to administer a questionnaire concerning classification, to all members of the N.L.H.S.A.F.

A copy of the thesis proposal, including the questionnaire, is enclosed. If this study is acceptable to you, we would appreciate your reply to that effect. Should you require any further information in this regard please contact us.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Dennis L. Treslan
Thesis Supervisor

wade major
Researcher

Newfoundland Labrador
High School Athletic Federation

83

Bldg. 25, Torbay Airport, St. John's, Nfld.
A1C 5T7 Telephone: 737-2795

March 4, 1986

Mr. Dennis L. Treslan
Thesis Supervisor
Memorial University of Newfoundland
St. John's
Newfoundland
A1B 3X8

Dear Mr. Treslan:

Thank you for your letter of February 25 requesting permission to conduct, through our Federation, a research project dealing with our classification system.

We are pleased to give Wade Major permission to conduct this study and assure you that he has access to any documents relating to the classification system. As well, we will assist where possible, in administering Mr. Major's proposed questionnaire.

This research project is of great interest to our Federation, as classification has been an annual problem for many years. If I can be of any assistance to you or Mr. Major, then please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Glenn Stanford
Executive Director

GS/sdr



Member
Canadian School
Sports Federation

100 Carter's Hill
St. John's
Newfoundland
A1C 4C3

Dear Colleague:

During the present school year, I am on leave from my regular position in order to continue my studies at Memorial. I am writing this letter to ask for a few minutes of your time, realizing the busy schedule you must have at this time of the year.

As part of my program, in conjunction with the Newfoundland and Labrador High School Athletic Federation, I have undertaken a study of the classification system used by the Federation. It is felt by some people (maybe even yourself) that there are problems with the classification system currently used and, it is hoped that this study will result in changes beneficial to all concerned.

I would appreciate it very much if you would take the time to complete the enclosed questionnaire and return it to me in the enclosed, self-addressed, stamped envelope at your earliest convenience.

Thank you in anticipation of your cooperation and assistance.

Yours truly,

i

WM/mk

Wade Major

100 Carters Hill
St. John's
Newfoundland
A1C 4C3

March 20, 1986

Dear Colleague:

Over the past few years there have been indications that some people feel there are problems with the system used by the Newfoundland-Labrador High School Athletic Federation to classify schools for competition purposes. About two weeks ago a classification questionnaire was sent to all athletic directors, zone presidents and regional directors. It is hoped that the information gathered from those questionnaires will provide direction for any changes in the classification system. It is therefore very important that all persons connected with the Federation express their views.

To date, I have not received a reply from you. I would appreciate it very much if you could find a few minutes during the next day or two to complete the questionnaire and return it to me.

Thank-you.

Sincerely yours,

Wade Major

WM/mk

P.S. Should your questionnaire already be in the mail, please accept my sincere thanks.

100 Carter's Hill
St. John's
Newfoundland
A1C 4C3

April 8, 1986

Dear Colleague:

The Annual General Meeting of the High School Athletic Federation is scheduled for May 9 and 10. At that meeting I hope to provide some information regarding the views of the membership about the classification system. Since this information will likely become the basis upon which changes in the classification system will be made, it is important to obtain the views of all persons involved.

Some time ago I sent you a questionnaire connected with the study I am conducting on the classification system utilized by the Federation. To date, I have had no reply. Perhaps the questionnaire was mislaid, or did not reach you in the first place.

In any event, another copy of the questionnaire is enclosed. I would appreciate it very much if you would please complete it in the next day or two, and return it to me. Your cooperation and assistance is needed in order for me to complete my study.

In anticipation of a prompt reply, thank you.

Sincerely yours,

WM/mk

Wade Major

P.S. Should the questionnaire already be in the mail, please accept my sincere thanks.

APPENDIX B

QUESTIONNAIRE

NEWFOUNDLAND-LABRADOR HIGH SCHOOL
ATHLETIC FEDERATION
CLASSIFICATION SURVEY

Please indicate your degree of agreement with each of the following statements by circling how you feel about the classification procedures used by the Newfoundland-Labrador High School Athletic Federation. If you wish to make any comments regarding particular questions, please feel free to do so in the space provided beneath each question.

	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	UNDECIDED
1. <i>Before any classification request is brought before the provincial classification committee it should be reviewed at the <u>zone</u> level.</i>	SA	A	D	SD	UN
<hr/>					
2. <i>Before any classification request is brought before the provincial classification committee it should be reviewed at the <u>regional</u> level.</i>	SA	A	D	SD	UN
<hr/>					
3. <i>Before any classification appeal is brought before the provincial classification committee it should be reviewed at the <u>zone</u> level.</i>	SA	A	D	SD	UN
<hr/>					
4. <i>Before any classification appeal is brought before the provincial classification committee it should be reviewed at the <u>regional</u> level.</i>	SA	A	D	SD	UN
<hr/>					

- | | STRONGLY
AGREE | AGREE | DISAGREE | STRONGLY
DISAGREE | UNDECIDED |
|---|--------------------|----------------------|----------|----------------------|-----------|
| 5. Most athletic directors at the zone level know enough about the provincial levels of play to make classification changes consistent with the philosophy that, teams of approximately the same caliber should compete against each other. | SA | A | D | SD | UN |
| 6. The provincial classification committee is in the best position to identify where classification changes are needed. | SA | A | D | SD | UN |
| 7. Any team which voluntarily moves into a higher classification to compete will remain in that classification until reclassified through the normal classification procedure. | SA | A | D | SD | UN |
| 8. Within the limits of the system, all teams in any particular school should have the same classification. | SA | A | D | SD | UN |
| 9. My school would like to see changes made in the procedures through which the High School Athletic Federation makes classification changes. | SA | A | D | SD | UN |
| 10. From the options listed below, please <u>circle</u> the <u>one</u> which indicates where you think the <u>final authority</u> for classification decisions should be. | | | | | |
| (a) Zone Level | (b) Regional Level | (c) Provincial Level | | | |

For the following three items, please indicate the degree of importance you feel should be attached to each option provided by circling the appropriate number. (A 0 represents no importance and a 4 represents essential.)

- | | Essential | Of Great Importance | Of Some Importance | Of Little Importance | Of No Importance |
|--|-----------|---------------------|--------------------|----------------------|------------------|
| 11. Below are listed two possible functions of the classification system used by the N.L.H.S.A.F. Using the scale to the right, please indicate how much importance should be attached to each of those functions when determining classification. | | | | | |
| To provide for equitable competition
<u>i.e.</u> groupings based on ability | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| To provide for equity among schools
<u>i.e.</u> groupings based on school population and/or geography | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 12. The N.L.H.S.A.F. currently uses input from the zone, regional and provincial levels when making classification decisions. Using the scale on the right, please indicate how much importance each level should have with regard to making classification decisions. | | | | | |
| Zone Level | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| Regional Level | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| Provincial Level | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 13. The N.L.H.S.A.F. currently uses a combination of school population, performance and geography as its classification criteria. Using the scale on the right please indicate how much importance should be attached to each of those criteria when determining classification. | | | | | |
| School Population | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| Past Performance | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| Predicted Future Performance | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| Geography | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |

14. *What do you consider to be the main weaknesses of the classification system currently used by the Federation? (Please discuss below.)*

15. *What do you consider to be the main strengths of the classification system currently used by the Federation? (Please discuss below.)*

16. *What suggestions do you have for improving the effectiveness of the classification system used by the Federation? (Please discuss below.)*

APPENDIX C

PROPOSED NEW SECTION FOR N.L.H.S.A.F. HANDBOOK

IV CLASSIFICATION

Philosophy

The primary objectives of the classification system used by the Newfoundland-Labrador High School Athletic Federation shall be:

1. To provide for equitable competition in team activities.
2. To provide for a degree of equity among schools competing in team and group activities.
3. To protect the physical welfare of students engaged in contact sports.

Structure

The N.L.H.S.A.F. has a four level (4A, 3A, 2A, A) classification system for the sports of Basketball and Volleyball; a two level system (4A, 3A) for the sports of Hockey, Soccer and Badminton; and a one level system for the remaining activities.

Criteria

Teams shall be classified after consideration of the following factors: past performance, school population, future performance and geography. The weighting which shall be assigned each factor are: past performance - 28%; school population - 25%; future performance - 25%; geography -22%

Request Procedures

Any team wishing a change in classification must submit a request in writing at the Zone Spring Meeting.

A zone may recommend classification change for any team within that zone by submitting a recommendation in writing at the Regional Spring Meeting.

A region may recommend classification change for any team within that region by submitting a recommendation in writing at the Provincial Classification Meeting.

The Provincial Classification Committee may institute changes in the classification of any team at the Spring Classification Meeting but will normally act on direction from the zone and regional levels.

Decision-Making Procedures

At the Zone Spring Meeting each zone shall vote to recommend or reject classification requests from individual teams within that zone. These requests, whether recommended or rejected, shall be further submitted to the regional level for consideration. Each zone shall also review all team classifications within that zone and where change is recommended submit that recommendation to the regional level.

At the Regional Spring Meeting each region shall vote on all requests and recommendations received from the zone level. These requests and recommendations, along with any recommendations originating at the regional level shall be submitted at the Provincial Classification Meeting.

At the Provincial Classification Meeting the Classification Committee shall vote on all classification requests from the individual schools, zone recommendations and regional recommendations. The Provincial Classification Committee will also review team classification within the province and make changes where it feels changes are needed.

At the zone level, each school representative shall be permitted one vote. In case of a tie, the Zone Classification Chairman will cast the deciding vote. At the regional level, each zone is permitted one vote and in the case of a tie, the Regional Director will cast the deciding vote. At the provincial level, the Classification Committee will consist of all Regional Directors and a Chairperson appointed by the President. Each member of the Committee will have one vote with the Chairperson only voting in case of a tie.

Appeal Procedure

Any team shall have the right to appeal a classification request made by them which was denied or appeal any classification change made without their request.

All classification appeals must be received at the Federation Provincial Office no later than October 31 of the current school year.

All appeals will be heard by an Appeal Committee consisting of the Federation President and two other persons appointed by him who were not involved in the original decision.

A representative of the appealing team has the right to be present at the hearing in addition to any person called upon by the Appeal Committee to provide information.

Supplementary Regulations

Notwithstanding any of the preceding, a team may voluntarily move into a higher classification at any time by notifying the Executive Director, in writing, of their desire to do so.

The Provincial Executive shall have the power to deal with any classification problems or concerns not covered in the preceding regulations.



