Power and Politics in Organizations

IEMA: Organizational Dynamics

Professor Philip Hallinger

A Definition of Power

- A capacity that Person A has to influence the behavior of Person B so that Person B acts in accordance with Person A's wishes.
- "The extent to which I can get you to do what I want reflects my power."
- Power can be used productively or destructively.

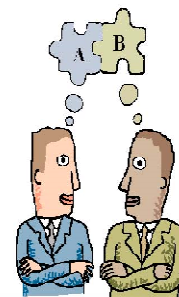## A Definition of Power

power

A capacity that A has to influence the behavior of B so that B acts in accordance with A's wishes.

dependency

B's relationship to A when A possesses something that B requires.
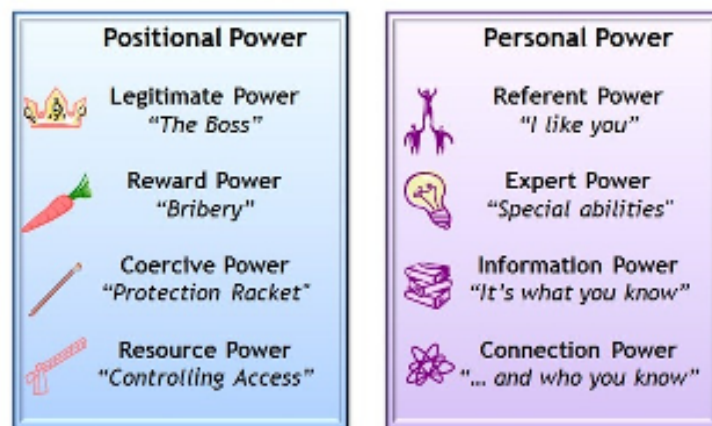
Unit Learning Objectives

- To identify and define the 5 bases of power in Raven and French's model.
- To analyze how different types of power are employed in leading organizations.
- To define organizational politics and analyze its role of politics in education organizations.
- To analyze the consequences of using different types of power and political tactics in schools.
- To apply positive power and influence strategies to solve common managerial problems.

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Positional vs. Personal Sources of Power

Positional Power

Legitimate Power
"The Boss"

Reward Power
"Bribery"

Coercive Power
"Protection Racket"

Resource Power
"Controlling Access"

Personal Power

Referent Power
"I like you"

Expert Power
"Special abilities"

Information Power
"It's what you know"

Connection Power
"... and who you know"

French and Raven's Power Bases

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Raven and French:
Five Bases of Power

- Reward power: Promise or giving of rewards.
- Coercive power: Threats of or actual penalty or punishment.
- Legitimate power: Based on position or formal authority.
- Expert power: Sharing of knowledge, expertise or information.
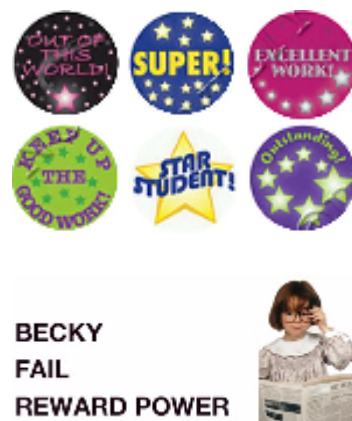- Referent power: Power of one's personality (charisma), informal relationships or personal influence.
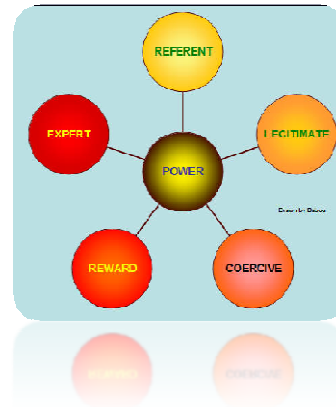
Reward Power

- Reward power is generally extrinsic and links reward or lack of reward to performance.
- Creating opportunity to achieve intrinsic rewards can also be a form of reward power.
- Performance can be based on individual or group performance
- Most effective when the:
  - Reward is achievable and valued by receiver
  - Clear transparent criteria
  - Feedback/reward occur close to the performance

BECKY
FAIL
REWARD POWER

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Coercive Power

- Coercion is based on force, threat, penalty.
- Comes from actual or threat of loss of job, rank, salary, status, benefits, physical well-being, or from social isolation.
- Lacks productive capability and is only useful for short-term effects.
- Useful only in very small amounts; the more it's used the less there is.

Terry Tate at Reebock

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A Case Example of Coercive Power

- Coercive power applies to power exercised inside or outside the limits of the user's authority.
- Joe Clark used coercive power with Mr. Darnell (within his authority) and Mrs. Elliott (beyond his authority)
- What were the consequences of his actions with Mrs. Elliot and Mr. Darnell?
- How did these actions impact the perception of other stakeholders towards him?

Joe Clark Supervising
the Coach

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The Limits of Coercive Power

- Coercive power can achieve short-term results, but its use may also have negative consequences for the leader.

- There is always a risk in the use of coercion since it often raises the level of conflict and reduces trust.

- The use of coercive power often reduces staff satisfaction and may impact longer-term performance.

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Legitimate Power

- Comes from a legal or socially accepted source of authority.

- Accepted by followers as 'legitimate' -- within the role authority of the manager.

- The exercise of legitimate power can be perceived as positive, negative or neutral.

- For example, signing checks to pay the school's bills is a neutral use of legitimate power.

"I was just going to say, 'Well, I don't make the rules.' But, of course, I do make the rules."

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Legitimate Power

- The exercise of legitimate power can be perceived as positive, negative or neutral.
- Evaluating staff and giving a reward is an example of using positive legitimate power
- Signing checks to pay the school's bills is a neutral use of legitimate power.
- Making misbehaving students stay after school is a case of negative use
- All three are considered legitimate and accepted.

But stakeholder perception of the exercise of legitimate power depends on those affected

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Case Example of Legitimate Power

- Notice how Joe reluctantly accepts the use of legitimate power by his boss.
- As such it is legitimate not coercive power, even though Dr. Napier was ordering Joe to do something against his will.
- Notice also how Dr. Napier cleverly uses his referent power coming from his personal relationship to "soften" the use of his legitimate power.

Supervising Joe Clark

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Expert Power

- Expertise, info, knowledge are a source of power, especially when scarce.
- If the school is implementing e-learning, the IT dept., and staff with IT expertise will have more power over use of resources and IT decisions
- A principal with curriculum and instruction expertise can directly influence decisions; one who does not must find expert power in other trusted colleagues and rely on them in making decisions

expert
power™

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Case Example of Expert Power

- Recall the case of Admiral Hyman Rickover in the personality unit.
- Rickover was an expert engineer whose knowledge of nuclear engineering was an important power base.
- However, as indicated in this video clip, he also employed other bases of power as well. Which ones?

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Referent Power

- Referent power is also known as social influence, *baramee* (Thai), *ngo heng* (Chinese), or Charisma
- It is earned through deeds and building relationships
- Referent power is granted to the leader by the other
- Note that referent power can be held by those in managerial positions as well as by others in staff positions

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Referent Power

- Referent power can be exercised through communication of values and expectations.
- Modeling, or walking the talk, is a powerful way of exercising referent power.
- We can also expand our referent power through building relationships beyond our close circle of colleagues and friends.

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Example Case of Referent Power

- Transformational leadership uses referent power.
- This approach engages followers by appeals to deeply held values and a common vision.
- It is transformational in the sense of inspiring others to attempt things they might consider desirable but unachievable.
- Gandhi is a good example.

Mahatma Gandhi

Example Case of Referent Power

- Transformational leadership uses referent power.
- Henry the V is another good example of how referent power can be used to influence people.
- At the battle of Agincourt he led a band of 1,000 men against a French army of 20,000 and won.
- Notice how he appeals to common values and a desire to belong to a worthy group.

Henry V

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Using the Five Bases of Power

- Effective leaders use all 5 types of power based on the goals, needs, personal capacities and situation.

- They blend the various types of power to achieve their goals.

- However, as noted, coercive power is generally used judiciously and infrequently, and at the risk of losing your legitimacy and the trust of followers.

Points of Power

Coercive

Legitimate   Reward

Expert   Referent

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Case Study of Using Bases of Power for School Improvement – Part 1

As a Dean entering a low performing Business School at a university in Thailand, my initial assessment of the context included an analysis of my power to effect change. I was aware that I had substantial legitimate power to exercise due t several conditions. Low performance had created a crisis situation in which my boss and the Board of trustees would support a radical plan for improvement. Although located in a gov't university, the College was independent and therefore only bound by the basic labor law of Thailand; staff were not gov't employees. Moreover, faculty were employed on a part-time basis without formal contracts. These features meant that I could use legitimate power to effect change based on performance.

My own status was full Professor, awarded by a respected foreign university, and my degree was from Stanford U. These along with my knowledge of both management and education gave me a high degree of expert power. This meant that I had credibility in the recommendations that I made for change. Staff and top management respected the basis of my decisions. Expert power was also exercised or demonstrated through giving demonstration lessons and running faculty workshops in new teaching methods.

Professor Hallinger   **Using faculty evaluation to improve teaching quality**

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Case Study of Using Bases of Power for School Improvement – Part 2

Coercive power was used sparingly but in key situations. I relieved 2 dept. heads when they actively blocked change. A full Professor who was abusive to students was also relieved of his class in the 4th week of the term. While these decisions were also based on my legitimate power, they were coercive in the sense that they were not open to compromise. In this case, coercive power was employed to protect values underlying the new culture and captured the attention of faculty and students.

I used reward power by exercising control over the evaluation and selection of faculty members. Moreover, I designed a system of reward that would explicitly provide financial benefits as well as peer recognition for high performance. Rewards were also designed to foster collaboration as well as high performance and innovation.

Initially, I was new to the organization and had no referent power of my own. Referent power was used by identifying key individuals with influence, giving them responsibility and nurturing their development as formal leaders. Over time, as decisions based on my expert and legitimate power were validated by observable improvements, my own personal referent power grew.

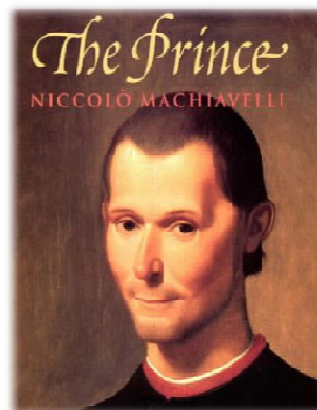**Using faculty evaluation to improve teaching quality**

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Organizational Politics

- Organizational politics were astutely observed by Machiavelli 500 years ago.

- Politics is coming to agreement based on mutual interests.

- Need not have shared values as long as interests are shared and you are seeking mutual benefit.

The Prince

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Ignore Politics at Your Own Risk

- Politics is the allocation of resources and decisions based on common *interests, not necessarily common values or beliefs*
- Politics exist in all organizations including schools
- Achieving our goals involves an understanding of how politics works

"It's almost as if people treat organizational politics as a low-grade virus infection, hoping that if they ignore it and think positively it will go away." Samuel Culbert

Politics is Inevitable

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Organizational Politics

- The Joe Clark case clearly illustrates the role of politics in educational change.
- Different stakeholder groups (parent factions, teachers, the mayor, the fire dept., the State) have different "interests" that they seek to 'protect'.
- Politics is the process by which the groups compete to ensure that their interests are achieved.

The Political Context

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Practice 'Positive Politics'

- Politics need not be negative
- Practice positive politics by knowing your own values, interests and goals.
- Find and focus on common interests rather than on your differences
- Build relationships social networks
  - Inside the organization
  - Outside the organization
  - Vertically and horizontally

The Abundant Community

What's Worth Fighting for Out There?

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Types of Influence Tactics

- **Rational.** Data, reason, logic, persuade
- **Inspirational appeals.** Appeal to values emotions, ideals and common beliefs
- **Consultation.** Involve others in making decisions and changes
- **Ingratiation.** Praise or flattery
- **Personal appeals.** Friendship, loyalty
- **Exchange.** Promises or favors
- **Coalition tactics.** Get allies to persuade others
- **Pressure.** Threats, coercion, sanctions

http://tactics.rulehall.com/influencetactics/

Explosive Influence Tactics

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Influence Strategies: Upward, Lateral and Downward

- ◆ Downward Influence – strategies to influence the behavior of subordinates

- ◆ Upward influence – Actions taken by subordinates to influence their bosses to take actions as the former wishes. Can use rational, ingratiating, or network influence tactics.

- ◆ Lateral influence -- Focuses on persons at the same level of the organization. Often use bargaining and coalition tactics.

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Consequences of Different Influence Tactics

	Frequency of Use	Resistance	Compliance	Commitment
Rational persuasion	54%	47%	30%	23%
Legitimating	13%	44%	56%	0%
Personal appeals	7%	25%	33%	42%
Exchange	7%	24%	41%	35%
Ingratiation	6%	41%	28%	31%
Pressure	6%	56%	41%	3%
Coalitions	3%	53%	44%	3%
Inspirational appeals	2%	0%	10%	90%
Consultation	2%	18%	27%	55%

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Example of 'Cutting Deals' Between Allies with Different 'Interests'

- Notice the different interests in this meeting: Superintendent, Fire Chief, Mrs. Barrett, Mayor

- Mrs. Barrett & Fire Chief ally with each other even though they have very different values

- Also observe how Dr. Napier is 'cut out' of the decision process by the Mayor.

Cutting Deals

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Summary

- Power and politics are facts of life in organization.

- They reflect the 'interests' of people and your ability to manage competing interests effectively.

- Uses of power and influence tactics should be intentional and aimed towards our own interests and goals.

- Positive politics and productive power can be value-driven and principled.

Principle-Centered Leadership 🌐
Principle-Centered Leadership (PDF) 🌐

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Organizational Politics

END LESSON

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