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ABSTRACT

Through empirically identified variables that could assist in delineating the role of the supervisor within the school, the supervisor, in his exercise of influence and power, must rely more on the formal than the informal power structure. If the supervisor can modify his own role behavior to a "supportive style" of leadership, he can, to a degree, exercise positive influence outside the formal hierarchical structure; although his adjustment to this leadership style must relate to formal role expectation. The best means at his disposal to exert influence and to exercse power is his own technical competence. Thus, the tags of "democratic supervision" and "creative supervision" seem to be empty cliches, perhaps better relegated to figurative, rather than scientific language. (Author)

DEMOCRATIC SUPERVISION AND CREATIVE SUPERVISION: ARE THEY POSSIBLE MISNOMERS?

by Dr. Carl Helwig

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Says Hills of current educational research:

> But the problem, I maintain, is ...we do not know what the functions of education are. Although there are volumes upon volumes of ideological exhortations and prescriptions concerning what the functions of education should be, there is relatively little in the way of concrete knowledge concerning the actual, objective consequences of existing patterns of educational activity. That is to say, we have a great deal of information regarding the subjective dispositions--aims, motives, and purposes attributed to education, but we know little enough about what schools actually do, and practically nothing about the objective consequences of these activities for the larger structure in which the schools are involved. Similarly, although textbooks, course syllabi, and professional journals are overflowing with normative statements concerning the aims and purposes of teachers and administrators, there is again little concrete knowledge regarding either what they do, or, the objective consequences of these activities. :[1] (My underlinings)

One need not look very far in this course beyond its current textbook, Democratic Supervision in Secondard Schools, second edition, (1961) to see the applicability of Hills' statement. Its authors say they will deal with four major aspects of supervision: its basic philosophy, its techniques, the application of these techniques in secondary education and an appraisal of the supervisory program. It is in the first of these areas with which this paper wishes to deal for in the sweet language of the normative prescription, the authors assert: "Supervision is considered always as a co-operative enterprise of the entire staff--teachers, principals, and supervisors; the supervisor's role is that of an educational leader, and his primaay function is to discover, inspire, and utilize all the talents for leadership among his classroom teachers."[2] Bolstered by their attack on autocratic supervision, the authors describe a phenomenon and offer a process, and the main thrust of their own effort is the development of an organizational phenomenon whose parts are actively inter-dependent as opposed to one whose parts are all dependent upon a centralized source of control. A basic issue, then confronting the supervisor as a participant in an interdependent structual scheme in the concept of influence. Its distribution may be examined through a three-fold analysis: (1) the supervisor as the agent exerting this influence (2) the methods employed by him (3) and the effects of the first two on the recipient, the supervisee. It is the first of these aspects that underlies the basic thesis in this paper.

If the supervisor is in a superordinate position (and he is whether it be camouflaged under such terms as creative and democratic supervision), he can obtain compliance because of the reward and

punishment system inhering with his position. Bennis' 1958 empirical study indicates two major limitations on the effectiveness of the supervisor's influence in this respect: (1) an incorrect perception by the supervisor as to what this rewards system should or should not contain (2) the supervisor's inability to increase or withhold these rewards.[3] The rewards system, economic or other, therefore, would seem to be an important determinant in the supervisor's ability to influence regardless of whether he were empowered directly or indirectly to be perceived as being a participant in the superordinate-subordinate relationship.

However, perceptions of organizational authority, as defined by Peabody through a survey of the existing literature, sees formal authority tied to legitimacy and position as inherent componets in the hierarchical sturcture, but Peabody also notes another source, functional authority, based on technical competence and human relations skills. In his empirical study, all four forms of interaction varied with different levels of importance being attached to them by the three public agencies studied, a county welfare department, a municipal police department and a suburban elementary school. Significantly, the school personnel stressed the authority of competence (technical competence) and for Peabody, this was a "striking" finding. On the other hand, authority of person (human relations skills) rated 42%, 13%, and 15% in the police department, county welfare office and elementary school in that order. Moreover, contrary to Peabody' anitcipation, technical and human relations skills (authority of competence and authority of person) did not bolster the formal authorities of position and legitimacy, but rather produced ambivalence, and at times conflict, between the four interacting bases of authority. This would infer a downgrading of the human relations skills expertise for the role of the supervisor and a substitution in his possible concern "to work with people" the relating, instead, of his technical competence to his formal authorative influential capacities inherent in legitimacy and position of formal authority.

Supporting this contention are Scott's findings. Here the degree of acceptance of routine supervision varies directly with the degree of professional orientation for both the workers as well their supervisors. That is to say, professionally-oriented workers are more critical of the heteronomous system than non-professionally-oriented workers and more professional training begets an increased demand for higher standards from the supervisor, engendering, in addition, more criticism of him.[4] How he would democratize or "creatively create" these relationships may, for him, personally become a spiritual rather than mundane question. However, if his reconciliation to this dilemma is earthly, some scientific basis for an answer would seem to be in order. According to this evidence, he need not be an expert in "working with people"--a well-worn phrase in many endeavors, particularly education.

Tied to the unsuccessful attempts to identify and to define traits in leadership is the seemingly lack of research to define the personal properties needed by the supervisor to exert influence. Needs other than economic may be satisfied or frustrated by the supervisor. Says Likert in this respect: "Each of us wants appreciation,

recognition, influence, a feeling of accomplishment, and a feeling that people who are important to us believe in us and respect us."[5] (A seemingly neat and sound psychological analysis, but questionable as to its scientific demonstrability.) In his research, Wager discovered some contrasting effects of the variable influence and they seem to relate to Likert's "ego satisfaction"-needs concept. According to Wager, no theoretical or empirical explanations exist to support the impact of supervisor's influence within the hierarchical system, and his own research yields a supportive style of leadership for all the areas of the supervisor's role obligations. For employees who think of their work as strongly professional, higher influence has a somewhat less, but similar effect: "...For employees with high autonomy and for employees who judge their work as stronly non-professional, the high individual and group autonomy, certainly attributes of a high professional attitude, could easily become a source of difficulty for even the supportive type leadership.

Wager's empirical findings of the relationship between leadership style and role obligation for the supervisor may be summarized as follows: First, a supportive style of leadership aids him in the fulfillment of his role obligation. Second, hierarchical influence by the supervisor is not directly related to his leadership style; rather, a supportive style of leadership contributes to all areas of the supervisor's role obligations whether his hierarchical influence is high or low. Thus, a supportive style of leadership is not entirely dependent upon, but nearly independent of hierarchical influence. Third, the greater degree of influence the supervisor is believed to have over his own superordinate, the greater the effect of the supervisor's style of leadership in meeting his own role obligations.

Whatever these resources possessed by a supervisor, a reward system or a supportive style leadership or the ability with role obligation, other forms of empirically-determined resources useful to him have been experimentally established by Levinger; this is to say, supervisor knowledge caused more influence attempts and a higher degree or assertiveness by the supervisor. In addition, Levinger related these variables to the decision-making process, because those subjects in his experiment who thought they possessed these characteristics considered themselves to be more influential in the group decision-making process. Superior knowledge in this case seems to be identical with Peabody's authority of competence which, it be noted again, Peabody discovered to be the outstanding trait desired of the supervisor by the suburban elementary school staff. It would by hypothetically reasonable to link the variable technical competence as a highly desirable dimension as well as the means in "establishing rapport" (the latter phrase being borrowed from the fuzzy inventory of educational cliches).

However, both authority of competence (technical competence) as well as authority of person (human relations skills), if improperly employed can quickly become negating forces in the supervisor-supervisee relationship. Although the control of these available resources are at the disposal of the supervisor, it also simply follows that he will not utilize them to exert influence under all circumstances. But the nature of his position will generally force him to exercise influence because

he is caught in the web of organizational task achievement. In the rarer instance, the supervisor may simply gain satisfaction because of his ability to influence others. Whichever the basis, the supervisor must exercise influence to augment his resources and thus gain power. To further strengthen his power, he must continually add, modify, and control his various resources of influence and thus further strengthen his base of power. In short, the supervisor must gain and use power to acquire power.

At this point, it again may be noted that the supervisor may be exerting influence either because of the organizational task achievement needs or because of his own personal ego-satisfaction needs. The motivation for the former can be said to stem from instrumental sources; for the latter from intrinsic sources. Instrumental motivation thus is legitimately tied to organizational objectives, while intrinsic motivation is not and thus can be said to be both illegal and illegitimate. Therefore, in his exercise of legitimate authority, the supervisor makes use of instrumental power motivation and any exercise of intrinsic power motivation can be viewed as a symptom of human relations pathology.

Both forms of power acquisition are also related to role theory, that is, the supervisor occupies a formal position with which a particular role is associated and he engages in specific influence attempts that conform to his view of the expectations others attach to his status. His motivation in the supervisory capacity thus includes the exercise of influence and the fulfillment of role expectation. As the occupant of a given position, the supervisor's influence behavior is guided in part by role expectation, legal and proper if the motivation is instrumental, and contrariwise if the motivation is intrinsic. In either event, the tempts of the supervisor to exercise influence subjects him also to other forms of influence, mostly in role expectation and his own ego needs.

Funk's empirical study of the roles of the functional relationship between high school principal, supervisor, and teacher can now explain why human relations skills theory is inadequate, and too often dysfunctional, in explaining supervisory influence. First, principals perceived themselves as high in responsibility, authority and the amount of delegation of authority, while supervisors perceived themselves as high in responsibility, but significantly lower in authority and delegation. These discoveries were in line with the expected responses to the line-staff hierarchical organization. Say Briner and Iannacone of Funk's finding:

> However the fundamental relationship of these offices does not involve similar line-office characteristics; rather, their incumbents exercise distinctively legitimate (the principal) and expert (the supervisor) power .... Supervisors must share knowledge with teachers; they must be evaluated as experts making personalized work associations with teachers necessary to the exercise of their power. This distinction is rooted in the nature of specialization as located in the supervisor's office and as this office constitutes a key element in a secondary workflow in the organization.[8]

Thus, the variable competence again appears and Charters distinction between division of labor and duplication of labor in the school can now be related to the exercise of competence by the supervisor.[9]

Division of labor, dominant in industry, is a process through which a product is successively and directly worked on by a series of individuals performing specialized tasks with no one worker entrusted with the primary responsibility for the product. If new specializations are introduced, new divisions of labor are inserted into the primary workflow. On the other hand, and characteristic of the elementary school particularly, is duplication of labor where work on the product is achieved through a series of complex and different operations performed by a single individual, in the school's instance, the teacher. Here, a single worker is entrusted with the product. In this instance, the introduction of specialization may change the primary workflow or it may create a secondary workflow affecting the organization's goals indirectly as it influences the individual having primary responsibility for the product. In the latter instance, the primary workflow is again characterized to some degree by the duplication of labor. Thus, because of structure, there is an inherent conflict within the school as to whether the primary workflow will be characterized by duplication of labor (the elementary school and to a certain extent the small secondary school with limited staffs) or by the division of labor (the typical secondary school). Furthermore, there are the questions of the effects of such division on the primary workflow and what the introduction of the supervisory influence identified herein will contribute to the primary workflow and thus act directly on the product, the pupil, or whether both division and/or duplication of labor and supervisory influence will act upon the teacher and not the pupil or even create a secondary workflow which will distort and subtract from the primary workflow. According to Briner and Iannacone:

> The nature of the teacher-specialist work relationship may vary along a continuum involving the amount of discretion assumed by the teacher in allowing the influence of the specialist or the secondary workflow in her work. One end of this continuum gives the teacher alone the power to initiate the relationship with the specialist and complete discretion concerning whether and to what extent he will be influenced by the specialist in his work. The other end of the continuum gives the specialist alone the power to initiate the relationship and obligates the teacher to accept the specialist's influence. Ideal types of organizational phonomena seldom exist. However, it would seem logical that the location of the teacher-specialist relationship on this continuum would depend upon the extent to which the organization delegates complete responsibility for the client's responsibility to the teacher's discretion.[10]

Therefore, on this basis, the ultimate source of the supervisor's influence, and thus power, would be in his formal authority through legitimacy and position, reinforced by authority of competence and most weakly influenced by authority of person (human relations skills). This is not to say that the supervisor, as a human relations

"expert" need not engage in the normal and expected customs of sociability and good manners, but to assert that his task is primarily in human relations skills or in his "ability to work with people" is to oversimplify and assert something contrary to what this research says.

By the nature of its superordinate-subordinate structure, the supervisor-supervisee relationship, in its reality, must rely heavily on formal organization. Even Wager's informal organizational approach under the label of "supportive style of leadership" reveals the necessity of supervisor accomodation to the formal aspects of role expectation and role perception. In his exercise of influence, the supervisor employs his most powerful determinant, the formalities of competence and his subtle exercise of power through influence have been demonstrated herein to be, of necessity, instrumental and also embodied at the same time in the formal organizational structure. Intrinsic motivation in the exercise of influence and power would tend for the supervisor to become dysfunctional rather than functional within the formal organization. Again, this is not to say that the supervisor does not engage in individual and group ego needs-satisfaction, but any behavior in this area by him which would reveal the intrinsic exercise of influence would contribute little to the taskachievement dimension of the organizational objectives. Finally, the supervisor's primary role obligation as a specialist with a certain competence can become dysfunctional or functional depending upon how his own role expectancy is fulfilled in the primary workflow process. To talk of "democratic and creative supervision" is to also perhaps engage in the niceties of educational palaver.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Jean Hills, "The Functions of Research for Educational Administration," Center for Advanced Study of Educational Administration, pp. 11-12.

[2]H. R. Douglas and others, Democratic Supervision in Secondary Schools, 2nd ed. (Boston, Mass.: Houghton Mifflin Co.), preface and passim.

[3]W. G. Bennis and others, "Authority, Power and the Ability to Influence," Human Relations 11 (1958), pp. 143-155.

[4]W. R. Scott, "Reactions to Supervision in a Heteronomous Professional Organization," Administrative Science Quarterly, 10 (June, 1965), pp. 67-81.

[5]R. L. Peabody, "Preceptions of Organizational Authority: A Comparative Analysis," Administrative Science Quarterly,(March, 1962), pp. 463-382.

[6]R. Likert, New Patterns of Management (New York: McGraw-Hill), p. 102.

[7]L. W. Wager, "Leadership Style, Hierarchical Influence, and Supervisory Role Obligation," Administrative Science Quarterly 9:4

(March, 1965), pp. 391-420.

[8]L. Levinger, "The Development of Perceptions in Newly-Formed Social Power Relationships," in Studies in Social Power (Ann Arbor, Michigan), pp. 83-98.

[9]C. Briner and L. Iannacone, "Selected Social Power Relationships in Education," Educational Administration Quarterly 2:1 (Winter, 1966), pp. 190-203, passim.

[10]W. W. Charters, Jr., "An Approach to the Formal Organization of the School," Behavioral and Educational Aministration, 63rd Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education, Part II, 1964, pp. 243-261.

[11]Briner and Iannacone, p. 198.