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ABSTRACT

The management style of a school leader deeply influences the ethos of a school. To explicate the workings of power in such leaders, an analysis of education management styles is presented here. The paper works from the premise that effective and productive management styles are empowering. The text acknowledges how difficult it is to frame a usable discourse about power and management styles and sets out to relate particular choices of management styles with access to power and an understanding of the uses and effects of power. It links initial societal experiences of power with an understanding of the effects of that power and offers ways of talking about power and management styles that relate directly to fundamental principles of education and management. The paper focuses on the intersection of different sites of empowerment, on interrupting stereotypical management styles, on choosing a suitable management style, and on emancipatory leadership in the market place. It is concluded that previous experiences of power make it difficult for managers to talk about power because such conversations are usually framed within rigid and limiting categories of race/ethnicity, class, and gender. (Contains 16 references.) (RJM)

'Power To' or 'Power Over': reflections on issues of power raised in development courses for educational managers

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'Power To' or 'Power Over': reflections on issues of power raised in development courses for educational managers

> "I never think about things like that [issues of race, class and gender]: being a man, they don't affect me"
> Deep silence from the rest of the (mainly female) group.

Introduction

It is now taken for granted that the management style of a school leader has a profound effect on the ethos of a school, and on the learning capacity of all those who work in it. It is also clear that those who feel disempowered cannot learn effectively, and conversely, those who are suitably empowered go on to produce far better work than may initially have been expected. This is true for *all* learners in schools, both staff and young people.

This paper works from a basis that management styles which are empowering are effective and productive management styles. It is a reflective rather than an empirical paper: it grows out of the author's work in management development programmes. It begins by acknowledging how difficult it is to frame a usable discourse about power and management styles. The strength and volatility of feelings aroused by introductory discussions specifically about gender and management styles is always unsettling for everyone involved. With foresight and hindsight it is possible to analyse the responses and fit them into the society which encourages these operational differences in the first place. As a lecturer I can thread my way carefully through the introduction of these ideas, trying not to offend. But why should I take *such* apologetic care (except for protection against the fury)? It seems to me that it is important to reflect that the way managers are positioned in society informs the way they work with people. And it is always important to remind those people who have management responsibility for others that their own activities and the responses of others to those activities are shaped by the social and cultural experiences of all the actors involved.

The paper thus sets out to relate particular choices of management styles with access to power and an understanding of the uses and effects of power. It does so by linking initial societal experience of power with an understanding of the effects of that power. It goes on to offer ways of talking about power and management styles which relate directly to fundamental principles of education and management, and which can be heard easily enough to allow those listening to understand that they have a real choice about how they work with people.

In this way, the styles of managers who may otherwise have worked quite disempoweringly with those for whom they have management responsibility, will

be fundamentally changed when informed by an articulation of a set of principles about social justice.

How to talk about it

I have written elsewhere (Gold 1993) how difficult it is to talk about the development of women managers in education. There are two main problems when trying to use classical gender research about management in order to introduce discussion about management styles:

* people find it difficult to "hear" about specific linkages between gender and operational styles;

* focus on gender issues tends to disguise other sites of inequality.

This reflection on the nature and 'place' of power emerges from my work as a lecturer in education management. Despite being deeply committed to encouraging more women into management in education for several years, I still find it surprisingly difficult to introduce discussions about management styles if the analysis I offer attempts to take particular account of gender differences. I never cease to be unnerved by the forceful and emotional arguments of resistance raised by experienced women and men managers when I introduce clear and well-argued examples of research which classify different management styles as predominantly masculine or feminine (not male or female). It is difficult to find a language to make sense of styles of management related to specific power and gender positions that does not alienate or enrage those engaged in the conversation.

Some early writing about management styles in the 1970s and 1980s tried to characterise the styles then divide them into masculine and feminine: for example, Schein, (1976), quoted in Marshall (1984: 25). It has always been clear however, that although in the main, many men work in a masculine way and many women work in a feminine way, there are numerous and notable exceptions. Thus although the theory behind this argument is helpful because it offers a useful framework for further exploration, I have found that it is not advisable to offer it as definitive: it is better to describe it tentatively and with careful explanations. Nonetheless, the debate arouses passion and fury - angry red-faced denials from women who declare themselves to be feminists, and a dissection of the minutiae of the research process from men who claim to be impartial, but who wish to imply that the research methods were flawed. Even when I introduce some of these research findings historically - as ways of thinking about management styles which introduced a whole new feminist discourse of management fifteen years ago - some people cannot contain their anger at the apparent stereotyping suggested by the data.

As most of the writing I use about management styles is highly respectable and is based on solid research and written up in persuasive and carefully argued ways, (Krüger, 1995, 1994a; Al-Khalifa 1989; Shakeshaft 1987; Marshall, 1984) it seems to me ultimately that the resistance is probably not only about the research findings, but possibly about the effects of the research on the listeners or on their own understanding of the world they inhabit. And there is good reason for some of this resistance: among other things, listeners involved in education find it difficult to work with classifications which infer a finality and a permanence because education is about change and development. It is not helpful to offer analyses in which women (or men) are stereotyped. Blackmore (1993) indeed writes that there have been various "historical shifts in the images of administration which have dominated educational work" (page 30), and she suggests that we can move on from the somewhat limiting classifications in order "to facilitate women stepping out of the shadows" (page 45).

In my work, I also wish to allow room for growth and development so that women can "step out of the shadows", but from where and to where? In order to talk about this development (especially for women managers) and to examine the problems and possibilities around management styles, it seems to me that a basic shared and mutually understood vocabulary must be used. It is absolutely necessary that this vocabulary can be employed to make sense of the power imbalances implicit in the inequalities to be addressed in contemporary societies, when examining concepts of educative leadership. In other words, how do we talk about race, class, gender and other axes of inequality and how they relate to management styles in ways that do not arouse offence, but that do give the basis for constructive discussion by people from several different positions within the society?

Intersection of different sites of disempowerment

Clare Burton (1993) writes:

> the parties to organizational situations are not equal in their bargaining power, and their values and beliefs are not equal in status. This is where a more developed concept of the politics of organizational life would take into account the broader social context within which the bargaining takes place. (page 161)

The bargaining power the parties bring to the bargaining table is not only that framed by present organizational situations. The participants are all products of their personal histories and previous experiences of power. They will have different understandings and responses about the bargaining processes depending on where they have previously found themselves and now find themselves within socially constructed power balances. And these intersect in a very complex and nuanced way.

It is difficult (but important to attempt) to offer analyses of the intersections between race, class, gender, sexual preference, disability and other potential sites of disempowerment, without allowing one issue to mask another. For example, black women seem sometimes to have to choose between being black or being women when trying make sense of writing about management styles which only takes account of gender; the man quoted at the top of this paper continued his comments by wishing to make it clear that although he was white, male, heterosexual and able bodied, he was originally working class (and thus understood disempowerment); women with disabilities may well have to decide whether it is their disability or their femaleness that precludes their access to management positions; in one of our classes, a woman with a physical disability spoke so strongly about her lack of power that all other women there, whatever other sites of disadvantage they came from, such as race, were silenced about *their* right to manage. The conflict between these disadvantages has been explored in identity politics, and investigations into "otherness".

In general it seems impossible to hold the different sites together - an ordering of disadvantage seems inevitable - and one form of disempowerment is measured against another, in order to reify or even symbolically advantage another one. However, it is important to attempt to hold the differences and to analyse the intersections between different sites of disadvantage in ways that do not privilege one site more than any other. This is probably the most important argument at the centre of my paper and I would like to illustrate it with a class I was co-tutoring, as a case study. The quote at the beginning of the paper comes from that class.

Several years ago, I was one of three women tutors who were working with a group of middle managers from primary, secondary and special schools. We were three tutors because one of us was retiring, and the other was shadowing her, in order to take over the tutoring next time. The participant group was all women except for two men, one of whom was gay, and two of the women were black. Unusually for such a group, four of the women were in their late forties or early fifties, and all the participants were very experienced teachers. The man whom I quote seems to have disturbed the women right from the beginning. He came in to the room talking and joking loudly, he answered questions quickly, before anyone else, and he took up a lot of space both verbally and physically (and sometimes came to the class in clothing which seemed inappropriately revealing - singlet and short shorts). The most thoughtful and professionally experienced women tried to slow him down and to get him to be more reflective and careful, initially by using the same sorts of joke as he was using: "What are you on?" and "Where are you coming from?". He didn't see their consternation and did not understand what they were asking and why. Slowly, whenever they were working in the same room as him, the rest of the group stopped trying to work with him to change him, and tended to

become quiet when and after he spoke.

The tutors were concerned with the uncomfortable interactions, and by the control and power that appeared to go to this man by the silencing of everyone else, but they could not see ways of engaging him in the usually prevailing discourse of reflection and listening, other than the practices they already employed in their classroom. At one point, he tried to show how his class position had made him vulnerable too. So, why were the women in the room disturbed by a white man who was loudly using his working class credentials to show that *he* was disadvantaged too? Mainly because his "disadvantage" did not silence him in the ways that women are often silenced by their lack of previous access to power (Gold, 1995); he often talked first and certainly loudest in the group - he had no hesitation in taking the space he thought belonged to him - and he appeared not to listen to the other participants at all. He *did* listen to the women tutors initially but only to rehearse arguments to refute their inputs.

My interpretation of his behaviour is that he wanted the rest of the group to understand that he was disadvantaged by his working class childhood, although he had attended his local selective school. (I am grateful to David Gillborn for suggesting that this apparent confidence could be a direct result of a strategy developed in order to survive as a working class boy in a selective school). He could not seem to see that he was now less disadvantaged than many of the other people in the group perhaps because he had outgrown and forgotten whatever powerlessness he had felt as a child. He appeared to be unaffected by his previous experiences: his lack of consideration for the spaces needed for exploration of their work by everyone else within the learning group suggested that he no longer understood what it was like for those who still felt disempowered. Indeed, he may never have understood how disadvantage and powerlessness affect many people. He appeared never to have reflected on issues of power within learning, teaching and managing relationships. When he takes up his management role in school, if he does not understand that his quick and forceful interventions do not leave spaces for those he manages (who may feel less powerful than him either because of their present position in the structure of the school, or because of their previous access to power) to develop their own autonomous professional activities, he is unlikely to become an empowering manager.

Interrupting stereotypical management styles and choosing a suitable management style

Although western European society privileges white, middle-class, able-bodied heterosexual men, it is clear that some men who fit all these categories do not manage in a patriarchal way. And when women, or people who come from other sites of apparent or potential disadvantage, reach positions of power, they do not always work in an empowering and collaborative way. So, what makes the

difference? How have these people interrupted the inevitability of managing in pre-ordained ways?

In the first place, an understanding of power and the effects of power on other people is of the greatest importance. Most people who have felt less than powerful at some stage in their lives, and realised that they were feeling powerless, find it easier to understand the effects of disempowering management styles. They know at first hand what disempowerment feels like. But knowledge and understanding are not enough. Rather like Kolb's learning cycle (1984), it is necessary to have a reflective intervention, and also to have the opportunity to plan to do things differently. In other words, it is important to *understand* the effects of disempowerment, then to articulate a set of principles to alleviate those effects, and to develop strategies to put those principles into practice. People who work through all of these stages - feeling (or observing empathetically) the effects of the misuse of power; reflecting upon those effects; drawing up principles which counteract those effects; putting strategies in place based on the principles; then observing to see whether the strategies work to empower rather than disempower - are most likely to work with 'power for', rather than 'power over'. They are most likely to be the ones who work towards what Grundy (1993) calls "emancipatory praxis":

> Emancipatory praxis is not a set of behaviours in which an educational leader can be trained. This form of praxis is grounded in a critical consciousness which will manifest itself in action that will always be becoming emancipatory. The question for the educational leader is not, 'Am I emancipated and how can I emancipate my staff?' but, 'How can I engage in forms of critical, self-reflective and collaborative work which will create conditions so that the people with whom I work will come to control their knowledge and practice?' (page 174)

To return to the case study here: as a tutor with some responsibility for the group dynamics of the learning group, I realised that it was time for me to intercede for the silenced majority when our man declared that he had never thought about "things like that". I decided that he was saying that he had never thought about power balances. I knew that I should say something that would free up everyone else in the room to engage with him about power issues in a way that would give them self-respect. So I explained that I thought that he was saying that he probably meant that he had never really *had* to think about those issues. But if those people who came from less powerful positions than those privileged by our society reflected on the effects of their lack of access to power, they would work differently with power when they had it from those who had never had to engage

in such arguments. However, even those people who had been privileged in their societal relationship to power could be empowering managers if they understood the effects of empowerment and disempowerment on those with whom they worked.

I realised that although I was a tutor on this course, as a woman I had allowed myself to be disempowered and somewhat silenced. I felt as though I was taking a great risk by trying to explain about power positions, and so I could not look directly at anyone while talking, but spoke into the middle distance. After I finished speaking, I looked around, and saw the black women grinning, the gay man nodding, and the other women sitting more upright. They at least, had responded to my long overdue intervention! And as the course continued, they engaged with our man and he became gradually quieter and more reflective. The rest of the group began to talk to him and to invite him into their discussion groups, and his comments at the end of the course included how much he had learned from listening to the other course members.

Having either experienced or empathetically understood disempowerment, and having reflected on the effects of disempowerment on the autonomy of someone who is managed in this way, the empowering leader will manage in a way that will encourage autonomy in others. In other words, they will use the power invested in them by virtue of their management position to empower those they manage to work autonomously, creatively and productively.

Emancipatory leadership in the market place:

Management in education in western Europe is a tempestuous and fraught activity, especially at a time when most phases of education are expected to survive in the marketplace. In New Zealand, Court (1997) describes the drive to make the principal's role that of 'chief executive':

> who will rationalise staffing, finances, plant and curriculum to make the school more efficient, effective and competitive in an educational market. The entrepreneurial market model of the principalship is highly compatible with powerful forms of masculinity, such as those inflected with technical and calculation skills ('necessary' in balancing the ever tighter budgets) and a confident competitive toughness (as 'required' for marketing a school's image, or for ensuring staff 'measure up'). Inequalities grounded in 'differences' of gender, ethnicity and class are legitimised here, as competition means the 'best man (sic) wins'. (page 19)

Although these constraints are real and powerful, emancipatory or empowering managers have a set of educational values which will inform both the ethos of their

organisation and their management practice in this context. Within the direction of their philosophy of education, their educative leadership will lead to a conscious attempt to balance the needs of the individual, the task and the team or organisation. John Adair (1986) shows that a lack of balance of these needs will lead to organisational dysfunction - a school cannot work well if the needs of one individual are superimposed on all other needs, or conversely, if the needs of individuals are never attended to.

In order to reach this balance, it is necessary to take time to reflect on ways of managing with people. The basic premise of many management textbooks is that managers have a choice about the styles of management they employ. I would argue that people only have a choice if they are first presented with the opportunity to make sense of the management "behaviours" they have lived through. And we try to offer the opportunity for this in our management development programmes. If managers are then able, through reflection, to link this understanding to notions of choice about ways of operating, then they will be much clearer about their use of management as empowering, as having 'power for' or 'power with', rather than 'power over' (Shakeshaft and Perry, 1995: 17, Hall, 1996: 188).

In other words, the management style chosen will be a set of different responses which encourage those who are managed to work autonomously, ethically and productively. Shakeshaft and Perry (1995) write:

> The language of empowerment is a language that may sometimes be tentative, that asks questions, that encourages participation. Quite simply, teachers are more likely to feel that they are being treated as professionals and equals if they are encouraged to speak, to give opinions and to problem solve.
>
> (page 19)

Managers who have understood the effects of power and have chosen to manage empoweringly will find themselves functioning like the women headteachers in Hall's (1996) research:

> A picture emerges of women heads enacting strong leadership within a collaborative framework. In spite of this, the women heads ... were firmly committed to the belief that sharing leadership still required them to take the lead when appropriate, including having a personal vision for the school. They saw themselves (and were seen) as key players, co-ordinating, developing and using others' efforts to the benefit of the school's purpose. (page 190)

Conclusion

It may be that school leaders have an understanding of power when managing that is based on their own experience of power during their formative years. However, their previous experience of power is difficult to talk about because it is usually framed within fairly rigid and limiting categories of race/ethnicity, class and gender. It is particularly difficult to talk about these classifications when they intersect because they tend to mask each other, and vie for supremacy or an ordering of disadvantage.

The intervention allowed by opportunities to reflect on management styles and use of power will allow educative managers to frame management styles and strategies which are not necessarily constrained by their own previous access (or lack of it) to power. These management styles will instead hopefully be informed and influenced by clearly articulated values and principles about education, which will guide all management activities.

Note:

I have been fortunate enough to have the services of Marian Court as a wise and empowering midwife to this paper: she initially suggested that I should write my ideas down, and further read a draft of it with typical tact and encouragement. David Gillborn, too, read and commented seriously and helpfully on a draft and encouraged me to be braver about my explanations of power and management.

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