

MICROPOLITICS: WHAT IS IT AND HOW CAN IT HELP?

Workshop prepared for PDN Leadership Conference

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MICROPOLITICS

“how people use it [power] to influence others and to protect themselves. It is about conflict and how people compete with each other to get what they want. It is about cooperation and how people build support for themselves to achieve their ends. It is about what people in all social settings think about and have strong feelings about, but what is so often unspoken and not easily observed” (Blase, 1991, p.1)

MICROPOLITICS

- Fits along a continuum from conventional management practices at one end to 'illegitimate, self interested manipulation' at the other (Hoyle, 1999, p.126)

MICROPOLITICS

- ◉ Power can be understood within the relationships and dynamics between and among people
- ◉ Power is central to leadership
- ◉ Includes power based strategies: on the one end of the continuum: coercion, cooption, favouritism, punishment - at the other end - cooperation, facilitation, shared decision making
- ◉ Use AND abuse of power

3 TYPES OF POWER:

- “**POWER OVER:** leaders achieve goals through their control of resources, persuasiveness, and hierarchical position over followers”
- “**POWER THROUGH:** leaders achieve goals through the motivation and mobilization of followers”
- “**POWER WITH:** goals are achieved through the collaboration of leaders and followers. Leadership and followership may shift”

(Blase & Anderson, 1995)

ACTIVITY

Think of some examples of how you have used:

- ◉ Power OVER
- ◉ Power THROUGH
- ◉ Power WITH

with your colleagues, staff, students and others

VIGNETTE DISCUSSION

- ◉ What are some of the macropolitical pressures bearing upon the schools in both vignettes?
- ◉ Identify and discuss the micropolitical strategies used by the principals in each vignette. Which of these are 'power over', 'power with' and 'power through'?
- ◉ Reflect on yourselves as leaders: what micropolitical strategies have you been known to call upon?
- ◉ How might an understanding of micropolitics and micropolitical strategies help you in your work as school leaders?