

Ingratiation and the Use of Power in Malaysian Secondary Schools

¹Sakinah Mat Zin, ¹Nik Fazlin Hiriyati Nik Jaafar, ²Nazlin Emieza Ngah, ¹Rusnah Ismail,
¹Norlaila Ibrahim, ³Kamaruzaman Jusoff and ⁴Asri Salleh

¹Faculty of Business Management,

²Faculty of Office and Management Technology,

⁴Faculty of Administrative Science and Policy Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA,
23000 Dungun, Terengganu, Malaysia

³Faculty of Forestry, University Putra Malaysia, Serdang, 43400 Selangor, Malaysia

Abstract: It is presumed that an ingratiating subordinate would acquire more rewards from a leader. When the leader is receptive to influence, subordinates would attempt to impress him/her by presenting themselves to be competent. This holds true for any type of organizations. The objective of this paper is to analyze principals' exertion of power in Malaysian secondary schools and teachers' ingratiation strategy. This paper argues that generally, principals' leadership in schools can be considered as authoritarian and that therefore, teachers are prone to employing ingratiation tactic in order to obtain the principal's approval and receive favorable outcomes.

Key words: Ingratiation • Teachers • Impression Management • Schools • Interpersonal Attraction
• Subordinates • Promotability

INTRODUCTION

Subordinates within an organization are generally confronted with the errand of influencing their superiors and gaining compliance. It is understandable that by effectively using influences, such individuals would be able to secure desired results and resources from their superiors. In schools, any particular teacher must appreciate that upward power is partly based on the ability and willingness to use influence tactics in order to be effective. Teachers' diligence or effort is likely to improve when they perceive their image as consistent with expectations of being academically competent and that the rewards of projecting such an image would enable them to gain favorable gains from the principal.

The abundance of literature on influence and leadership bears witness to the ongoing quest for a better understanding of the effect of subordinates' ingratiation behaviors on a leader's use of powers. This article focuses on teachers' ingratiation behaviors to traverse for limited resources by appreciating the upward influence

nature of leadership as it relates to assessments of promotability. The objective of this paper is to analyze the insightfulness of teachers' ingratiation strategy and principals' exertion of power in schools.

Ingratiation: Ingratiation involves giving compliments or doing favors for superiors. It is an effort by individuals to augment their attractiveness in the eyes of others and considered as an effective tactic since most people have a difficult time rejecting the positive advances of others. Ingratiation individuals would utilize tactical moves to increase likeability or to get a raise, promotion or positive evaluation. School principals are often intricately discriminating between an honest appraisal and a manipulative ingratiation attempt. However, there are several means to determine whether a teacher's flattery or complete agreement of any given circumstance is fake or genuine. Regardless of the intention of the ingratiator, four common tactics of ingratiation have been recognized. They are; (a) other enhancement strategies, (b) rendering favors, (c) opinion conformity and (d) self presentation [1].

- Other enhancement strategies involve the subordinate's endeavor to praise his/her superior's achievements or qualities by expressing favorable opinions and evaluations of the target person. The use of praise, approbation and flattery in order to raise a person's self-esteem are forms of other enhancement. By making overt verbal assertions about one's own qualities, the probability that the superior will regard influencing subordinates more favorably will be elevated.
- Rendering favors by performing work-related obligations such as offering to take meeting minutes, photocopying materials that the superior needs immediately and presenting gifts upon returning from vacation. It strikes most as a logical means of influence - people generally respond well when someone does something nice for them. This influence tactic involves the subordinate's conveyance of some kind act or special consideration to the superior, under the stipulation that this courtesy is granted out of the subordinate's good will.
- Opinion conformity follows a proposition: persons favor individuals whose values and beliefs seem to be similar to theirs. It consists of a subordinate articulating an opinion or behaving in a conduct that is consistent with the opinions, judgments, or behavior of the superior.
- Self-presentation is behaving in a comportment recognized to be appropriate by the target person or in a manner to which this individual will be fascinated. The aim is to initiate the relationship with the superior who later may perceive him or her as the perfect employee. The subordinate identifies what kind of employee characteristics desired by the superior and then presents him/her as such favored individual.

The Behavior of Teacher and Principal: Leadership is a social influence process at its most basic. Leaders employ a variety of strategies to influence the behavior of others in multiple conditions, including sources of power, lines of authority, nature of the task and desired outcome [2]. In Yukl's taxonomy of behavioral influence tactics, eleven behavioral influence tactics, developed over a decade of research in a variety of organizations, have been employed by leaders in the exercise of their leadership [3]. Behavioral influence tactics have been useful in examining

the differences between the behaviors of leaders in different levels of a hierarchical organization and the differences in influence behaviors between managers and their superiors, peers and subordinates [4].

Leadership is very essential for the attainment of social and organizational goals. From the election of political representatives to the education of children, there is a need for effective leadership in human social process. According to Troman and Woods, principals would feel accountable not only to the authorities, but also to the parents, who approach the school as critical consumers [5]. Educational leadership is synonymous with school administration and teachers are rather followers than leaders.

There should be individual and collective sense-making processes to support the effective structures in education. This means that working conditions are never neutral. Hence, the principals' approach to their task and its concrete implementation in terms of action and interaction, strongly determines how teachers experience and deal with their work as mention by Ballet and Kelchtermans [6]. The type and quality of their relationship with the principal is extremely significant in this respect [7]. Many teachers consider support as an important aspect of their relationship not only with their pupils, but also with their principals. Honig and Hatch notify that if there are discrepancies between their principals' actual and desired style of leadership, the demand for supports seems to be compelling [8]. Pressure among teachers would be increased, if the principals stress on procedures and formal agreements rather than a relationship of support and recognition [9]. The support and recognition would build principals and school leadership teams that tend to create a caring and supportive school environment that nurtures teachers' leadership. In doing so, the principals should:

- Advocate for instructional resources. Find out teachers' need and make it readily available for them. Teachers will be motivated and more successful in completing required tasks when their requests for resources such as curriculum materials, technology and classroom supplies are met.
- Encourage collaboration. Effective collaboration with others, provided to teachers in school that enable them to plan and solve problems, will create a supportive environment in which teachers shall feel free to express themselves as individuals.

- Support teachers learning new strategies. Help teachers see the value in connecting new pedagogical and knowledge content to their current teaching responsibilities through professional development, peer observation or teacher evaluation.

Power and Influence Behavior: Many researchers find that the manner in which power is embedded in the organization may affect upward influence activity. Phillips emphasizes that employees derive power from a rich and complex array of both formal and informal factors embedded within the overall organizational structure [10]. Measures of this power include organizational role, place within the organizational hierarchy, number of employees supervised, gender ratio of work groups, participation in influential networks and favorable perceptions of others [11, 12].

It is equally imperative to understand individual and organizational behavior by comprehending power and influence behavior used by members of organizations in order to get what they want [13]. According to Kipnis and Schmidt, understanding power and influence is vital since such behavior affects both individual and organizational effectiveness [14]. Examining influence behaviors may be particularly important given the changes that challenge traditional influence and power relationships within organizations [15]. The decentralization of authority and decision making, the use of teams and the empowerment of teachers - all of which imply changes in traditional power relationships - focus on power and influence behaviors [16]. Specifically, these changes bring the attention of teachers attempting to influence their principals (i.e. upward influence) [17].

Teachers should recognize that their upward influence is shaped by both informal and formal measures of power within the school. Moreover, principals may want to implement empowerment tactics so that teachers are encouraged to exert a rich variety of upward influence activities so that both teachers and schools can be more successful.

The concept of power has thoroughly been discussed in many studies. Fundamentally, French and Raven have identified five types of power available to principals [18]. The elaboration of these powers have been done by Hersey and Natemeyer who categorized French and Raven's power bases into seven which were grouped into: positional and personal. Ideally, these categories were based on the teachers' perception of the principal [19].

The Positional Power Bases Are:

- Reward power based on the perceived power to determine distributions of rewards;
- Coercive power based on the perceived power to punish;
- Legitimate power based on the perceived authority to prescribe behavior;
- Connection power based on the perception that the principal has relationships with influential people inside or outside the school organization.

The Personal Power Bases Are:

- Referent power based on the teacher's identification with the principal;
- Information power based on the perception that the principal has valuable information;
- Expert power based on the perception of the principal's special knowledge or expertise.

According to Stimson and Appelbaum, teachers would view their principals as relying on personal rather than positional power [20]. Principals who rely on personal power and understand their own power styles well are most favored by the teachers. Ingratiation in schools is an effective way for people without power to influence people with power. People who are highly in need for power are also highly in need for ingratiation and are likely to reward those who flatter them.

The Impact of Ingratiation Behaviors on the Effectiveness of Schools:

Ingratiation behaviors are everyday occurrences that give impact to organizational effectiveness [21]. Ingratiation, when used skillfully, will work. However, when used badly or excessively, it will most likely represent one of the behaviors that workers disdain about their colleagues. This situation is commonly known as 'the ingratiation's dilemma'.

It can be argued that ingratiation behaviors of teachers would have positive impact on the effectiveness of the schools. When an ingratiating teacher whose performance is similar or of a lower level than other individuals is rewarded better compared to the accomplishment of real performance benchmark, definitely, the feeling of dissatisfaction might appear. This statement is true in the workplace since an individual's outcomes are measured in 'dollars' (e.g. raises). Such measurement allows teachers to make

comparisons with their colleagues more easily rather than comparing inputs into the job. Therefore, the principals should understand how and when teachers use ingratiation tactics so that they would have a clear view of their behaviors in schools.

The management and delivery of education always come under the increasingly watchful eye of public scrutiny. The question of how best to manage teachers is receiving greater attention. As for the management, the ultimate goal is to have teachers with high self efficacy, assigned where they are most needed, with low levels of turnover and incentive system that encourages teachers' commitment and professionalism.

Whenever there is an ingratiation teacher in school, individuals who believe in their capabilities to achieve a particular goal would be unsatisfied with their principal. This is understandable as the ingratiation teacher is being favored by the principal over those non-ingratiation ones who are more capable and high in self-efficacy. If the unfair treatment continues, relationships between principals and teachers with higher motivation will deteriorate. Eventually, this deterioration will result in lower outcomes such as decreased motivation, lesser commitment as well as mediocre performance by the non-ingratiation but effective teachers.

Apart from forming a stronger sense of commitment to their interests and activities, these highly motivated teachers are the real valuable asset of the school since they can identify goals they want to accomplish, focus on things they would like to change or achieve.

CONCLUSION

Principals must comprehend and identify ingratiation behaviors so that they may have the capability to treat all individuals in their domains of supervision more fairly. Only when teachers believe that they are being treated evenly will they perform at their highest level and as such generate better performance.

A strong relationship between the way principals interact with teachers and the overall climate and culture of the school have tremendous possibility for creative a proactive approach in the leadership of school systems. A principal's leadership behavior may as well become the indicator of what is happening to a school's culture and climate and eventually student achievement. Ultimately, principals and teachers must be able to comprehend the ingratiation behaviors and the exertion of power as they would assist in smooth functioning and healthy climate of schools.

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