

Micropolitics of the Staff Meeting in a Taiwanese Primary School

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Abstract

Problem Statement: Micropolitics can be used as a useful lens to investigate how shareholders within the school exercise their formal and informal power to achieve their goals and protect their interests. Although quite a few studies have concentrated on teacher culture and school management, less attention has been paid to staff relationships through the lens of micropolitics. This study focuses on the staff meeting, which as part of a weekly routine within the school, can become a political arena. The study explores, through the lens of micropolitics, how teachers and administrators (including the principal) interact with one another at the researched site.

Purpose of the Study: The research aims to investigate how teachers and administrators use formal and informal power, particularly at the staff meetings at the researched site, from the micropolitical perspective, taking into account power struggles, professional dilemmas and political tensions that impact school innovations and teacher culture and practices.

Methods: This study employs the ethnographic case-study approach, through participant observation and in-depth interviews, conducted over a 5-month period in a Taiwanese primary school. The data was triangulated and analyzed thematically.

Findings and Results: Research findings indicate that the staff meetings at the school reinforced collegial intimacy and enhanced staff morale. However, despite some positive outcomes, such as building a sense of community, the staff meeting is under the political control of administrators (particularly the principal) who often transmit information through pseudo-participation to legitimate and maintain the nature of hierarchy. In addition, micropolitical tensions between teaching and senior staff due to their divergent interests could be found at the staff meeting.

Conclusions and Recommendations: On the whole, the relationships among school members at the investigated site seemed to be positive, with a positive outlook for the future; however, hidden conflicts might still emerge. This study suggests that the micropolitical lens should be applied

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to both negative forms (i.e. conflict) of interpersonal relationships as well as in cooperative ones (i.e. collaboration, collegial) within school settings.

Keywords: Micropolitics, collegial intimacy, intergroup conflict, pseudo-participation