



A STUDY OF POLITICAL STYLES OF MANAGERS IN PUBLIC & PRIVATE ORGANIZATIONS

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ABSTRACT

No organization is devoid of power. The power relationship is the context for political action and encompasses the most basic issues underlying organizational politics. To understand organizational politics played by individuals occupying various positions an analysis of power, coalition, and bargaining is imperative. The study uses Kakabadse (1983) model to find out political style of Indian managers and compare managers working in private & public manufacturing organizations. 80 managers were drawn from lower and middle level management levels. Indian managers' preference of political styles indicates that the preferred styles remain the same irrespective of type of company worked for. Indian Managers are basically Team Coaches followed by Visionary style who are comfortable with criticism, confrontations and conflict. Results indicate the vast difference between what is perceived and what is put into action among Indian managers. When it came to the leadership

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style adopted it was found that the Participative style was the least adopted style in actual work situation. The results are discussed in the context of Indian manufacturing organizations.

Key Words: *Traditionalist, Team Coach, Company Baron, and Visionary.*

Introduction

There is evidence that power systems were well developed when known history began. Robert Ardrey (1962) described power structures among lower animals. Today's organizations could be perceived as politically negotiated orders and not as rational, harmonious entities classified in managerial theory, or areas of class conflict as proposed by Marx. It can be observed that actors in their daily transactions perpetually bargain, repeatedly form and reform coalitions, and constantly avail themselves of influence tactics.

In Indian organizations managers practice a variety of political styles to get work done. Managers' preference of the political style may differ or be in concert with the overall management or organization style. In reality at the end of the getting work done effectively and efficiently is more important than how you got it done. Because survival in an organization is a political act, managers in organizations involve themselves in the tactical use of power to retain and or to obtain control of real or symbolic resources. Organizational structures are emergent entities, i.e., they are the result of the conscious political decisions of particular actors and / or interest groups.

As no organization is devoid of power, managerial politics is specific to the position and the characteristics of the person in that position. This is the determining factor in how managers get work done. The most dynamic factor that influences organizations in successfully achieving their goals is the political behaviour of its members.

Power is one of the most important motive or disposition that individuals strive for. These political behaviour though unseen and not sanctioned by organizations dominate the working relations between supervisors & subordinates to a great extent. Organizations can be perceived as politically negotiated orders and not as rational, harmonious entities, or as areas of class conflict.

Power is an inescapable part of management (Torrington, Weightman, & Johns (1988)). Organizational charges are mainly provided to describe the formal allocation of power to job titles. If there were always total agreement about objectives and how to achieve them, there would be no need to change or influence others, with or without the use of power.

Derived from the Latin root poteré meaning 'to be able'; three qualifications need to be made to give a useful definition of power. Firstly, when one or more persons have an effect on the behaviour or emotions of another person or persons, that can be inferred from observation of behaviour. Secondly, that someone has an ability or can produce an effect strongly suggests that he can do something when, how, and in the way that he wants to do it – according to his intension, and Thirdly, Social power can be thought of as a capacity as well as an action. Thus it is the ability or capacity of a person (O) to produce (consciously or unconsciously) intended effects on the behaviour or emotions of another person (P).

Kakabadse (1983) identifies two fundamental drives which lead to the formation of mental maps - people's perception and their actions. The model shows the dominant values people hold, the attitudes they adopt and the styles they use to put their values and attitudes into practice.

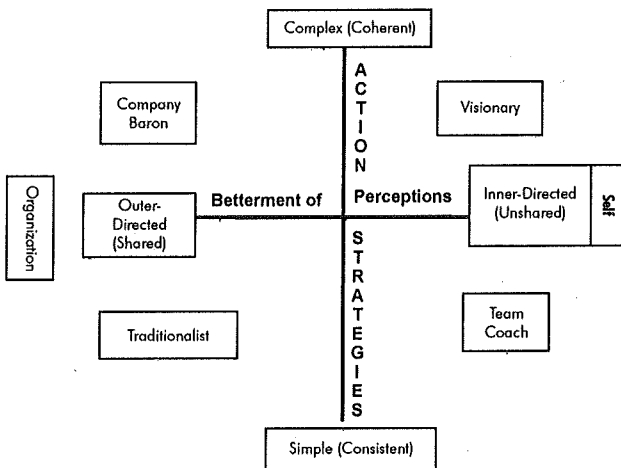


Fig: 1.2 Perception / action model, showing the dominant values people hold and the attitudes they adopt.

Source: Kakabadse (1983). The politics of management.

Perceptions: The horizontal axis represents the determinants of people's perceptions, i.e., their values or beliefs, probably the most powerful factors in personality.

The two extreme ends of the continuum are inner directedness i.e., people who develop their perceptions and views with little references to the outside world and outer- directedness i.e., people who feel a need to comply with the perceived attitudes and behaviour that others seem to exhibit in that situation.

Actions: The vertical axis represents people's abilities to put into practice their views & values, i.e., their repertoire of action strategies. The two alternative types of action strategies are simple-people who aim for consistency, irrespective of whether the people in the situation work on shared or unshared meaning, the behaviours they feel they should adopt are predictable, commonly recognized and probably previously practiced. Complex action strategies involve people behaving in ways that they consider suitable to meet only their needs in the situation. The pattern of behaviour may be inconsistent but coherent, i.e., it makes sense once one knows the individual & or his desired objectives.

The combination of the inner / outer directed axis & the simple / complex action strategies axis forms the individual's mental maps. The type of mental maps held by an individual will indicate the quality & the way individuals get work done & interact. Thus the differences in these mental maps gives rise to the action of power i.e., politics, making politics in organizations inevitable.

As a result of having observed managers at work Kakabadse (1983) has developed four particular behaviour patterns: Traditionalist, Team Coach, Company Baron, and Visionary.

Traditionalists wish to fit in with the rest of the organization. They accept the fact that they are dependent on the objectives provided by others, and the way resources are allocated, even if it is detrimental to their interests. If resources were allocated in the past in a particular way, then that is the way it ought to continue.

The Team Coach develops his own ideas & beliefs as to how he would wish to conduct his life and affairs. However, independence of thought is not matched by independence of action. He needs to belong to a group

of like minded people and after becoming one, may see himself as a missionary, whose calling is to shift the predominant values of the organization nearer to the values of the group. He would be sincere in his attempts to help others in the organization experience the same degree of work satisfaction as he does with his group.

The Company Baron has the ability to see the total organization as it really is; and has a continuous strong drive to enhance his position and, if need be, emphasize and amplify his role at the expense of others.

The visionary is one who is similar to the Company Baron and who possesses the ability to see the organization in total. He can think and conceptualize in whole organizational terms, he does not feel the same need for loyalty to the organization. He questions and examines the way resources are allocated in organization but he also explores what are suitable structures for the Organization. He can stand back from the values, views and stereotypes held by the majority in the organization. Such independence of mind is invaluable, if faced with reorganization and restructuring.

The way to manage politics is by influencing individuals and groups of people to our point of view. Being in a position is not sufficient. We may want others to accept our idea, do what we want them to or simply get them to re-examine what they are doing so that they can improve their performance. An unacceptable boss finds that he is blocked, out-manuevered or even out-talked by smarter subordinates. What is required then is to influence others sufficiently to accept one's particular ideas and efforts. The seven approaches to effective interpersonal influence are: 1. Identify the stakeholders; 2. Keep the stakeholders comfortable; 3. Fit the image; 4. Use the network; 5. Make deals; 6. Withhold and withdraw; and 7. If all else fails...

OBJECTIVE: The objective of the study was to use the Kakabadse (1983) model as a tool to find out which political style Indian managers in Private & Public manufacturing organizations adopt to get things done.

PROBLEM: To study the political styles adopted by Indian managers in Public and Private manufacturing organizations.

HYPOTHESIS: There will be significant differences in the perception of political styles and adopted styles in reality to get work done between Private & Public manufacturing organizations.

SAMPLE: 80 Managers were randomly selected from manufacturing organizations. 40 from Public and 40 from Private organizations.

	Private	Public	Total
Middle Level	20	20	40
Lower Level	20	20	40
Total	40	40	80

TOOLS ADOPTED:

1. The political styles questionnaires by Kakabadse, A (1983) was adopted. It consists of four styles: 1. Traditionalist 2. Team Coach 3. Company Baron 4. Visionary
2. An open ended questionnaire was developed to seek information about the various techniques adopted by managers to get work done at the work place.

The above questionnaire was content analyzed and the following techniques were identified: 1. Democratic 2. Autocratic 3. Participative 4. Manipulative

The Statistical techniques employed were simple means, standard deviations and percentages.

Results

Table 1: Indicates the mean scores & the standard deviation for *L.L.M.'s & **M.L.M.'s (Private) on political styles.

Political Styles	LLM's		MLM's	
	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D
Traditionalist	11.80	06.80	08.25	10.02
Team Coach	21.40	22.05	20.25	25.75
Company Baron	20.70	21.30	17.15	17.66
Visionary	16.10	12.75	24.35	25.75

Table 2: Indicates the mean scores and the standard deviation for LLM's & MLM's (Public) on political styles:

Political Styles	LLM's		MLM's	
	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D
Traditionalist	14.15	17.00	12.25	13.11
Team Coach	20.85	21.15	21.05	21.21
Company Baron	17.30	18.39	18.35	18.97
Visionary	17.70	19.93	19.35	19.44

Table 3: Indicates the combined mean scores & the standard deviation for Private and Public organization on political styles:

Political Styles	Private Organization LLM's + MLM's		Public Organization LLM's + MLM's	
	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D
Traditionalist	10.03	06.63	12.70	15.32
Team Coach	20.63	07.25	20.95	21.44
Company Baron	18.61	06.53	17.83	5.34
Visionary	20.73	19.35	18.52	19.90

Table 4: Indicates adopted styles used in getting work done in actual work situations in percentages for LLM's & MLM's (Private)

Styles	LLM's (%)	MLM's (%)
Democratic	20%	15%
Autocratic	35%	40%
Participative	10%	10%

Table 5: Indicates adopted styles used in getting work done in actual work situations in percentages for LLM's & MLM's (Public)

Styles	LLM's (%)	MLM's (%)
Democratic	10%	10%
Autocratic	40%	25%
Participative	00%	15%

Table 6: Indicates combined adopted styles used in getting work done in actual work situations in percentages for Private & Public Organizations:

Styles	LLM's (%)	MLM's (%)
Democratic	17.5%	10%
Autocratic	37.5%	32.5%
Participative	10%	07.5%
Manipulative	35%	50%

*LLM's = Lower Level Managers ** MLM's = Middle Level Managers

Discussion

The combined means of Indian managers on their preference of political styles indicate that whether you work in Public or Private manufacturing organizations, the preferred styles remain the same.

Indian Managers are basically Team Coaches who are comfortable with introduction of new style to the group. They help in developing potential in the group. They adopt consensual decision – making patterns with respect to changes in work patterns, small changes in resource allocation & tasks. Team coaches are uncomfortable with people who dramatically threaten the unity of the group & criticize non-consensual patterns of decision making.

The backup style is the Visionary style who are comfortable with criticism, confrontations and conflict. They use personal influencing skills and their affiliations with people is low. They like new, innovative & risky ideas and working in poorly structures situations. They like to work in large scale change, controlling people & projects. They are uncomfortable with detail

& routine work, working within role constraints & established procedures, display of warmth from others, lengthy decision making processes, maintaining group cohesion for its own sake, remaining with one job, organization or well developed career hierarchy for too long.

The least preferred style is the Traditionalist style by the groups, who are comfortable with maintenance of superior-subordinate distance. They are comfortable with small recognizable groups of acquaintances developed over time by them. They like to be given directions and standards required for tasks. They supervise well structured tasks. They like administrative tasks, routine, established procedures and detail and keep to the status quo. They are uncomfortable with changes of work pattern, loss of organization structure, confrontation, too much discussion about ideas and developments for the future, involvement in major decision making and supervising poorly structured tasks.

From the above results it could be inferred that Indian managers adjust to the complex (coherent) & single (consistent) action strategies and are inner directed (unshared) in their determinants of perceptions which involves the self and thus preferred Team Coach and the Visionary style as the dominant and the backup styles to get work done. They did not prefer the complex (coherent) or the single (consistent) action strategies that is outer-directed (shared) determinants of perceptions that include the Traditionalist and Company Baron styles.

The only difference in the groups is found in Private manufacturing organizations between LLM's and MLM's. The former group preferred Team Coach as the dominant style and Company Baron as the backup style. The latter group preferred Visionary as the dominant style and Team Coach as the backup style.

Though Indian managers perceived cognitively a particular style to get things done in reality what they do is entirely different in real work situations.

Table 6 indicates the combined percentages on styles adopted to get work done by Private & Public organizations. The percentages indicate that in real work situations managers in Private organizations adopted the Autocratic style followed by Manipulative style. Public organizations managers adopted the Manipulative style followed by Autocratic style. The Participative style was the least adopted style in actual work situation.

Conclusion

The above results indicate the vast difference between what is perceived and what is put into action among Indian managers. Indian managers to a large extent don't practice what they preach. Indian organizations culture and climate may have contributed to this gap between what it professes to its managers and what managers do because of their personality.

Compared to their Western counterparts, Indian organizations have some unique characteristics. The task and the technology determine to a great extent available size and structure, authority pattern, division of labor, departmental differentiations, communication network, work procedures etc. Though organizations do differentiate themselves from the environment, the individuals in it still have and do maintain identities. Individuals do not forget their cultural roots and orientations. They are often reflected in the life of an organization.

An effective manager can manage effectively only by understanding and using power in an appropriate manner to get work done. Survival in an organization is a political act and it is to obtain and / or control real or symbolic resources. Managers though have laid out procedures on how to get work done because of their personality may opt for ways they strongly believe in to get work done in reality. This inconsistency and paradox is evident in this research.

As this was an exploratory study using the Kakabadse model for the first time. A larger sample may have to be studied to confirm the results. How Indian organizations nurture power should be studied. It can be said that Top level managers if studies may confirm to the findings of this study.

The above study would like to highlight some unsettled questions of power and its use in organizations.

1. How does one best organize a group so that the activities of its members are coordinated?
2. Why do so many people react to leaders by displaying either dependence or defiance?
3. Is it possible for groups to be effective without concentrating power in the hands of very few people?

4. How can one keep a group from destroying the individuality and personal freedom of its members?
5. Must strong groups always exploit weaker ones?

Understandably, many people may fear the politics played within organizations. Equally, many people may not wish to play politics. Whatever each individual decides, at least one should not be afraid of being political. Politics is not all negative and bad. At the general psychological level, power corrupts but also uplifts life. At the Sociological level, power is both integrative and divisive. A Society without a power structure is inconceivable at least on earth. Man cannot function with his power motive castrated, at least not as a healthy man.

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