TEACHER POWER BASES AS PERCEIVED BY SECONDARY (HIGH) SCHOOL STUDENTS: A FIELD STUDY AT JERASH CITY, JORDAN

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Abstract

The study aims to identify teacher power bases as perceived by Secondary (High) School students, it also aims to discern the types of power or authority students prefer and the causes thereof. In order to achieve the objectives of the study, the researchers opted for the organized interview method; the selected sample included 85 male and female students. The findings show that teacher power bases are listed in the following descending order as perceived by students: referent, expertise, power/strength and legitimacy. Based on the interviews conducted as new base or power emerged that pertains to attitude/ behavior and hence called "attitudinal/behavioral".

Keywords: Teacher power, secondary (high) school

Introduction

Building effective classroom discipline/ control is considered to be among the most significant concern for school administration, faculty, students and community – for good discipline seems to be everyone's goal. All four stakeholders (administration, teachers, students and community) seek to achieve their own respective objectives. The first two seeks to deliver on their educational outcomes and performance, students would like to receive a satisfactory education, and the local community (or parents) would appreciate having more discipline in the classroom because that would influence their kids' learning, performance and conduct one way or another.

The key to classroom discipline rests with having the students' acceptance and adherence to the power or authority of teachers demonstrating in class, it matters most how teachers manage the individual and group learning and education situations. In-class

education activities cannot be rendered successful save when teachers have the power to control, manage and guide the class, developing teacher power depends on four key areas or aspects: teacher status, effective education, administrative control and discipline, and dealing effectively with unwanted student behavior in the classroom (Kyriaco, 2001).

Conveying teacher image or status to students involves a group of actions that simply make the desired impression so discernible, the way teacher walks around in class – engaging students in a dialogue, guiding activities, managing individual and group learning situations, can all be indicative of the teacher's ability to act responsibly. Effective teaching requires teachers to attain a high level of knowledge or expertise about the subject they teach as well as the ability to identify the scientific activities in a skillful manner that involves planning and preparation. By contrast, ineffective teaching can be interpreted by students as an indication that their teacher has simply not done enough in lesson planning and preparation because he/she believes that his/her students are not worth the hassle. When it comes to showing discipline and effective approaching to unwanted or unacceptable student behavior, teachers should develop clear habits or patterns in this regard as well as student expectations, a teacher should make sure that his/her view prevails at the end since it complies with the ground rules he/she has set forth at the beginning. It is also of paramount importance for teachers to make sure that their words match their deeds.

Rahim & Afza (1992, p. 611) define power as "*the ability of one party to change or control the behavior, attitudes, opinions, objectives, needs, and values of another party*". Education literature shows that Webber (1954, p. 328) was among the first to attempt to explain the reason that can prompt individuals or groups to obey others or follow their orders. He finds that persons with power associated with or attributed to them make it binding for others to listen simply because they have one form of authority. He believes that such power or authority can take one of the following three forms: traditional/ conventional, attractive and legal. Yuki (1981, p. 22-25), however, finds that power or authority has two forms only – that of the center's, and that of the individual's. French and Raven (1960, p. 607-23) classified power bases in five categories as follows: reward, coercive, legitimate or legal, referent and expert powers.

Larrivee (2004) indicates that teacher power bases include the coercive "power" that pertains to reward and punishment where a teacher simply dictates the rules, regulations and procedures. However, opting for the reward and punishment approach requires utmost vigilance and monitoring by teachers, it is described as one of coercion rather than of cooperation or collaboration. The legitimate or job-like form of power indicates that the

teacher's power pertains to the status attributed to him/her by the community. As for the expertise-related power, it is a form that related to the specialized knowledge and competence. The last type, referent power, pertains to the communication-based teacher-student relationship, in other words, it includes the level of admiration and respect students have toward their teachers – noting that admiration is one important to key to obedience.

Gordon (1989) highlights the four forms of power in terms of knowledge, expertise and acquisition of skills, the job-related power in Gordon's view pertains to the job description and powers granted therein. It provides some authority for teachers to influence others and enter into "figurative" contractual arrangements with others. The one related to power of coercion is associated with the ability to control and discipline others rather than influencing and impacting them (positively). Teachers who opt for the powers of expertise, job-related, commitment and contractual arrangements can influence students positively and would attain their cooperation. By contrast, teachers who opt for coercion would fail to solicit student cooperation and prompting their auto-responsiveness and self-learning.

Many studies were conducted with regards to the classroom management issue as well as that pertaining to teacher-students relationship. Adeebi (1990) made a study to analyze the details of classroom management as a process from a teacher's point of view. Key findings include the checklist that teachers need to be acquainted with in order to manage the class effectively with regards to planning, organization and overall classroom setting that is conducive to a learning environment inside the classroom. Abul-Aziz (1994) studied the impact of teacher democratic behavior on student achievement in the History subject at the high school level. The key finding of the study underscored the fact that teachers who opt for a democratic approach in the way they deal with their students in class can very much contribute to the improvement of student academic performance and achievement in History. Al-Ta'ani (1998) conducted a study to identify the extent to which teachers' practice competently the key skills and the relationship therein to variables like gender and experience. The most important finding had to do with ranking: managing student behavior in class ranked first apart from some statistically indicative differences that pertain to the interplay of experience and gender. Dimiati (1999) studied the effectiveness of opting for tolerance/ coercion among (female) teachers in dealing with their (female) students. The study concluded that tolerance is better as a way to manage the classroom successfully, whereas coercion and despotism ranked among the poorest methods in this respect.

Teachers are deemed as role models for students at school, the authority he/she opts for while managing the classroom plays significantly in this area as well as on the future of

students for that matter. Many students look up to their teacher as a role model to be emulated and imitated. Such a status also plays significantly in bringing about the effective teaching and learning in the classroom, for no such activities can be achieved without discipline. The latter needs in turn a form of power or authority to be exercised by teachers in classes. Jordan has launched on 18 November 2009 an initiative called "Toward a Safe School Environment" as part of a partnership between the Ministry of Education and THE UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND (UNICEF) and other partners. The initiative includes a group of steps teachers should follow when students behave unfavorably, it entails showing the student a yellow card first whenever he/she violates the rules, followed by a discussion of the act for a couple of seconds. Other students are engaged in such a discussion as well before arriving at the right procedures without opting to a violent option. The initiative/ campaign included key slogans and statements such as the following: "beating has never been a teaching or disciplining tool; there are other alternatives to teach students discipline while respecting their dignity and maintaining the status/ prestige teachers have". (Queen Rania Al-Abdullah, 2009). Such input requires delving into the details of power and/or authority teachers use in the classroom as perceived by students, there is a need to identify the type of power base students prefer to see their teacher opt for and causes thereof.

The importance of this study can be demonstrated through the projected findings that are related to the identification of the teacher power bases – deemed instrumental in delineating the pattern for teacher-student relationship. The findings also pertain to outlining the causes that prompt students to act responsively, and facilitate, hence, the process of classroom management. The latter process includes managing student behavior and dealing with the learning situations. It is expected that the present study provides education figures at the senior level as well as teacher in the field with information on the nature of power or authority teachers use as perceived by the students. The study also sets out to identify the pros and cons of each power base in order to arrive at the most efficient one, and attain positive impact on the class management process and the teaching/learning setting in general.

Statement of the Problem
The problem of this study can be summarized in the following two questions:

- *What is the power base the teachers use to control their classrooms in light of the Larrivee classification of 2004?*

- *What do the power base students prefer? Why?*

Methodology
Study Population and Sample

A random simple sample was selected from the population of the study. The population includes all 1700 secondary education (high) school students at Jerash City enrolled during the school year of 2011-2012, a representative five percent sample of 85 male and female students was selected.

Study Tool

The researcher used the organized interview method to identify the power bases teachers of secondary education schools in Jerash governorate use to control and manage their classrooms. The sample population was interviewed over the course of half-a-hour interview each. With a total of 42.5 hours of interviews, the session involved two open-ended questions as follows: first, what are the power base school teachers using to control or discipline their classrooms in light of Larrivee 2004 classification of power bases? And second, what is the power base preferred by the respondent, and why? The researcher explained of course the concept of power bases to the respondents, and handed out to them a diagram that explains Larrivee's 2004 classification of such bases. The researcher noted down all interviews, and interviewees were allowed to have a look at what has been written for any additions or omissions.

Findings and discussion
Findings and discussion related to the first question

– *What is the power base the teachers use to control their classrooms in light of the Larrivee classification of 2004, and as perceived by the students?*

With regards to answers given to this question, the frequencies and percentages of the respondents' responses were calculated; the power bases were then ranked in order of significance. Table 1 shows the frequencies and percentages of power bases ranked by significance.

Table 1. Teacher Power Bases Frequencies and Percentages

Power Base	Frequency	Percentage%	Rank
Referent	55	64.7%	1
Expertise & knowledge	15	17.6%	2
Coercion	10	11.8%	3
Legitimate/ job-associated	5	5.9%	4
Total	85	100%	

Table 1 shows that the referent power base that is based on communications and relations ranked first with 64.7% among other power bases teachers use to control or discipline class as perceived by students. The expertise power base ranked second with 17.6% whereas coercion or authority ranked third with 11.8%, and legitimacy ranked fourth

with 5.9%. From the students' perspectives, the findings show that teachers are more inclined toward opting for the referent power base since it is founded on communication with students to control and manage the class, in other words, such power base solicits student admiration face to face their teacher and respect for his/ her style. The fact that the expertise power base ranked second indicates that teacher authority emanates from the level of specialized knowledge teachers have as far as the subject matter is concerned. Hence, such teachers are able to control their classes simply because students pay attention as long as they realize that there is a value added in their teachers' input. As for the coercion power base that ranked third, the outcome indicates that the notion of reward-and-punishment is invoked in this respect, where teachers set the rules for students. Opting for this power base necessitates that teachers are very alert and attentive – since it is considered to be among the most vulnerable or weakest bases as students are pushed or forced to do things instead of being duly approached in a collaborative manner. Students are not prompted to respond voluntarily, but they are rather forced – it is a matter of coercion rather than cooperation. The legitimacy or job-based power base that ranked fourth indicates that a teacher's power is latent within the status society endows upon him/her because of the profession. It further denotes the job description and statutory powers therein, teachers can thus influence others relatively, for the issue varies from one country to another given the various laws, rules and regulations that outline teacher powers and job description.

Findings and discussion related to the second question
- *What do the power base students prefer, and why?*

Likewise, the frequencies and percentages of sample population responses were incorporated before ranking the power bases as preferred by the respondents in order of significance, table 2 shows the ranking by preference and importance.

Table 2. Frequencies and percentages of power bases by student preference

Power base	Frequency	Percentage%	Rank
Referent	65	76%	1
Expertise	20	24%	2
Coercion	0	0%	3
Legitimate/ job-based	0	0%	3
Total	85	100%	

Table 2 shows that 76% of the respondents prefer the referent power base whereas the remaining 24% opted for the one associated with expertise/ knowledge. None of the respondents indicated any preference for the coercion and legitimacy power bases.

In order to identify the causes that prompted 76% of the sample population to indicate their preference for the referent power base, the respondents were engaged to discuss the

issue, it turned out that the referent power base "prompts students to work hard and actually like the subject" adding that such power base "satisfies the need for caring, passion and respect students have", and stressing that it "fosters the teacher-student relationship – leading to a kind of admiration for the teacher". Other comments referred to the fact that the referent power base actually "reduces the feeling of alienation among students" as some students believed that "when admired by students, the teacher's words and commands would become most welcome by the students who would then try their best not to offend him/her and act responsively and responsibly". Other respondents added that "liking a subject is very much associated with liking its teacher" while noting that this power base "makes students feel that they are more appreciated and can help boost their self esteem and morale". In brief, most respondent comments that were in favor of the referent power base can be summarized in one single statement: "Liking the teacher is one key leeway to obedience".

When approached about the reason behind refraining from selecting the expertise power base as a matter of preference, the respondents indicated that the latter is important, but that it is not enough! They noted that it cannot override the referent power base in addition to the fact that most teachers in secondary education schools are similar in their level of expertise – relatively speaking.

With regards to the causes that prompted only 2% of the sample population to go for expertise or knowledge as a matter of preference, the respondents indicated that their position face to face the issue is associated with their belief that it "offers scientific knowledge high school students need for a better future". Some added that such power base would "prompt the students to respect their teachers for it is very much correlated with better performance". A third group of respondents under this category thought that this power base is "effective because it is based on competence and brilliance" whereas others found it to be "instrumental in showing respect for teachers who convey information and material satisfactorily". In a nutshell, those who advocated this power base believe that experienced teachers can manage the class successfully, achieve the deliverables and offer them satisfactory information.

The reason that the respondents did not prefer coercion as a power base can be attributed to the fact that – in their own point of view – it is "conventional and abhorring" as well as a factor that prompts "discipline for fear of being punished". As perceived by the respondents, this power base is a form of "coercion rather than cooperation" which prompts one to "stick to the rules for the sake of it". They believed that it demonstrates weakness rather than strength on the part of the teacher – that it reveals a lack of influential personality or character which prompts such teachers to resort to coercion instead.

Reference the fourth power base related to the legitimacy or occupation/ job, none of the respondents preferred it on the premise that it is an authority/ power that "all teachers have, but vary in the way they use it well!" They also added that it can neither replace the referent and expertise power bases nor operate independently of them. It should also be noted that this category of power bases (job/ occupation related) is not that elucidated for students since it has to do more with the job description and mandate of teachers – something that teachers most probably never explain to students.

Table 3 shows the description of the teacher power bases as perceived by the respondents.

Table 3. Description of the teacher power bases as perceived by the respondents

Power base	Description
Referent	Cooperation without coercion
	Liking the teacher is one of the keys to obedience
	Respect
	Appreciation
	Stimulation
	Motivation
Expertise/ knowledge	Sufficient information
	Competence
	Achieving the deliverables
	Diversified style
Coercion	Coercion without cooperation
	Forcing/ coercion
	Punishment
Legitimacy/ occupation or job-related	Pertains to job description
	Pertains to rights and duties

Upon taking stock of the sample responses during the interviews, it turned out that many indicated the importance of these power bases each in its own different way. The responses also revealed that power bases are interconnected, and that some teachers use one base more than another. Hence, no single power base can be used as a panacea on its own to manage, control or discipline the classroom. Those who prefer the referent power base would still need to incorporate it expertise counterpart; likewise, both bases might call for the application of some power or coercion on certain occasions while invoking legitimacy oftentimes. Therefore, it can be suggested that a teacher's power base at school depends on the situation at hand as well as the interconnectivity with other bases. Figure (1) below demonstrates the interrelationship among the various power bases.
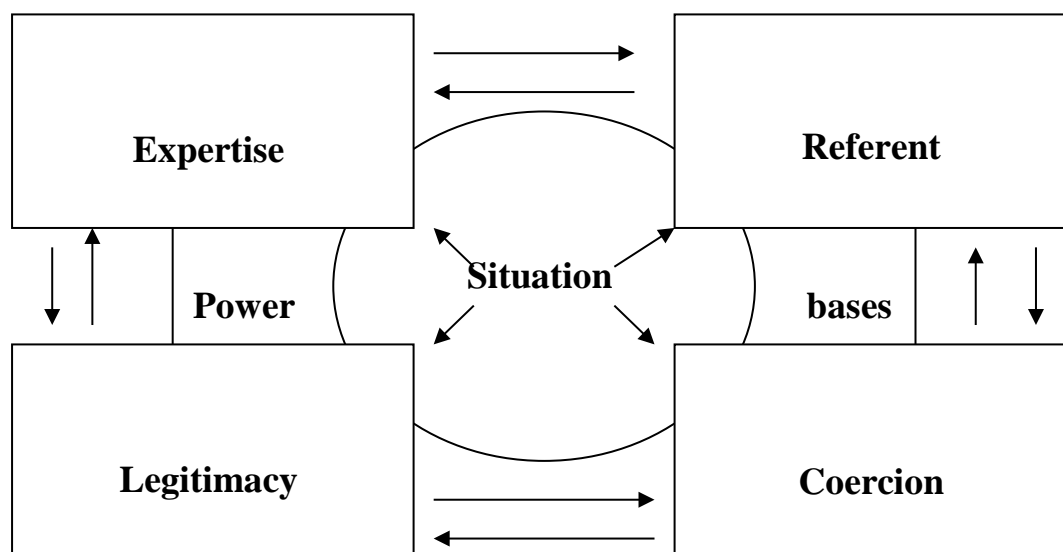
Figure 1. Interrelationships among the various power bases

Figure 1 illustrates the fact that power bases are very much associated with the situation. Teachers might opt for the referent power base when needed; they can also call upon the expertise, coercion or legitimacy as per the developments of that situation. The figure above shows that power bases overlap with each other, for teachers might use more than one base simultaneously since they are interconnected.

Conclusions
The researcher has reached the following conclusions:

- Power bases the teachers use at school as perceived by students can be ranked in the following descending order: referent, expertise, coercion and legitimacy. The researcher recommends that more research be conducted to study power bases as perceived by teachers themselves.

- Power bases as preferred by the students can be ranked in as follows: referent followed by expertise, it is also recommended that more research be done to study further details about the reasons students prefer these two power bases in particular and the possibility for maximizing the benefit therein.

- The findings reveal that power bases are interrelated, if not interconnected and that teachers may opt for more than one base, it can be concluded, therefore, that the situation is inherently related or connected to the selected power base. The researcher recommends that a model for teacher power bases be developed at the school level to be based on aligning the situation at hand and the type of power base that corresponds to it, it is also recommended that such a model be put to test and piloted.

- The researcher recommends that courses be held for teachers to train them on power bases and classroom management (management of learning situations and student behavior).

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