

Pursuit of goals in partnerships: Empowerment in practice

Anna M. Sullivan

Curtin University of Technology

Enabling students to pursue multiple and complementary achievement and social goals should positively affect student achievement. Empowering students could facilitate such pursuits. A descriptive study using ethnographic techniques was conducted to examine the nature of student empowerment in a primary school classroom. Findings suggest that there are two dimensions of student empowerment: intrapersonal and interpersonal empowerment, supporting existing literature. Intrapersonal empowerment is the ability and capability of students to pursue appropriate and complementary social and achievement goals through the establishment of agendas. Interpersonal empowerment is the pursuit of goals by students that are not in conflict with peers or the teacher. This research indicates that student empowerment is a fluid and fragile phenomenon to which the teacher can contribute.

Current visions of preparing students for the 21st century advocate that students "must be enabled and empowered in the present and for the future" . Empowering students to take control to lead functional and fulfilling lives should help them meet their needs for power and belonging, and enable them to pursue and realise their social goals. This outcome should positively affect students' achievement motivation and hence learning .

This paper reports exploratory research that examined the nature of student empowerment from a social-psychological perspective. In this paper, I firstly present a conceptual framework for the study. Second, I consider the importance of student empowerment in light of social motivation theory. Third, details of the study are outlined. Then I present the findings and the discussion that focuses on agendas and goal pursuit. Finally, I make some conclusions from the study in relation to the nature of student empowerment, and the link between student empowerment and multiple goal pursuit.

Power

There are three conceptions of power that are useful for examining empowerment: *power-over*, *power-with* and *power-to* . *Power-over* can be considered a negative force of power in the form of domination as the effect on the individual(s) over which the power is wielded is likely to be a position of powerlessness. An alternative to power-over is *power-with*, which can be considered as a positive force of power because it is about equal power relationships rather than domination . *Power-to*, a third conception of power, exists when a person perceives that they have the ability or capability to act and thus can be considered a positive force of power. Both power-over and power-with operate in the interpersonal sphere whereas power-to is an intrapersonal power. These conceptions of power offer a means of examining the power relations in a classroom.

In the classroom, teachers by the very nature of their position have power-over students and are left to decide how they use or exert their power. Teachers who choose to enable student empowerment can share authority or power with students to establish positive forces of power, that is power-with and power-to. So what is student empowerment?

Empowerment

Many educators are calling for students to be empowered but there appears to be little understanding and research on the area. There were some studies conducted in the early and mid nineties but very few conducted more recently.

Empowerment as a term has been used in educational literature since the early 1980s. Boomer called for the empowerment of students and investigated ways in which power and responsibility could be shared. Boomer stated that teachers can empower students by allowing them to "exercise their own powers and responsibilities" (p. 3). Boomer's conception of empowerment is about teachers sharing power so students are able to exercise their power-to.

Ashcroft described empowerment as personal power, which can exist in both personal and social spheres. Ashcroft believed that empowerment should be a philosophy of education. For schools to be successful at empowering students for their futures they need to examine "fundamental beliefs held about the purposes of education, the nature of knowledge, of learning, of development, and of teacher-learner relationships" (p. 151). Empowering is not something that can be turned on and off but needs to be consistent and persuasive. Moreover, obtaining or fostering student empowerment cannot occur by teachers just sharing power, but requires a wholehearted belief and approach.

Kreisberg examined the nature of power and its relationship to empowerment, specifically focusing on the difference between *power-with* and *power-over*. Kreisberg defined empowerment as people or groups gaining control over their own lives and the decisions that affected them. He emphasised the importance of the community, where the empowerment of an individual was connected to that of his or her community. Thus, the empowerment of an individual student is tied to the empowerment of all students in his or her class. Kreisberg suggested that empowerment is enabled by improving lives of a community and community members through dialogue and working collaboratively. Individuals can be empowered to take control over their lives and valued resources, that is gain power-to, through the development of social skills, particularly interpersonal and group skills.

Brunson and Vogt also closely related the empowerment of an individual to that of the group structure or community to which they belong. They described empowerment as a growth process of an individual supported and encouraged by the group structure within which he or she is working to promote learning. Empowerment can be initiated by oneself or by others intervening. Additionally, it is a process that occurs at varying levels and rates of progression. Brunson and Vogt's definition focuses on how to achieve empowerment rather than what empowerment is. The definition states individuals can initiate their own empowerment, however, people are often restricted by external constraints.

Yowell and Smylie, in an examination of how self-regulation develops, suggested that empowerment relates to the development of self-regulation. They defined student empowerment as the translation of a goal into a plan and method of action. Essentially, self-regulation is concerned with intrapsychological processes and therefore highly self-regulated students are probably likely to be empowered intrapersonally, however, they may not be empowered interpersonally.

These conceptions of empowerment develop the notion that the empowerment of individuals is connected to their community. Accordingly, not only is an individual's power-to important, but also sharing power within the community is important. Furthermore, when teachers share power with students to establish a more equal power relationship of power-with, students are more likely to develop power-to.

The definitions previously discussed all offer varying perspectives. With these in mind, I provide an operational definition of empowerment as a philosophy that creates an atmosphere in which individual students are supported by the classroom community to take responsibility for their lives in trying to meet their needs within learning settings. Empowerment has both interpersonal and intrapersonal dimensions. Interpersonal empowerment occurs when individuals or groups work with each other to meet their needs, that is they have a sense of power-with. Intrapersonal empowerment is when someone has belief in his or her ability or capability to be empowered or a sense of power-to. Empowerment is enabled by working *with* people not *for* people, that is, sharing power within a classroom community.

The Importance of Student Empowerment

Strivings for belonging and to a lesser extent power or influence are embedded in the currently emerging social motivation literature. Social motivation focuses on the intrapersonal and interpersonal needs of students within the classroom and how they translate these needs into social goals. For example, students who strive for a sense of belonging might form a goal to establish and maintain interpersonal relationships with peers. Hence, the intrapsychological strivings or needs are manifested in the interpersonal domain.

Establishing an empowering classroom environment could facilitate enabling students to fulfil their need for power and, indirectly, belonging particularly because a need for belonging is linked with a need for power. Empowerment is about students satisfying their need for power so that they gain a sense of power-with peers or the teacher rather than gaining power-over them. Students who are involved in power-with relations are more likely to feel a sense of belonging than if they are involved in power-over relations. Furthermore, if students satisfy their need for belonging in the classroom and there is a sense of community then it seems reasonable to expect that they are more likely to achieve a sense of power-with. Additionally, gaining a sense of power-to would contribute to students satisfying their need for power because students would be more likely to be able to pursue and realise their social goals.

Research shows that social motivation and achievement motivation are interconnected. For example, meeting students' affiliative needs affects their achievement motivation. Therefore educators are sensible to advocate student empowerment because empowered students would seem to be more likely to satisfy their social needs and pursue and realise appropriate social goals. This study is embedded in the general theory of social motivation and will attempt to identify the characteristics or variables of student empowerment.

The Study

This research was part a wider investigation into examining what student empowerment is and how it can be enabled in a primary school classroom. A descriptive study using ethnographic techniques was used in the natural setting of a primary school classroom.

A purposive sample of one year five class, (mainly ten year olds) including the tandem teachers ("Gemma" and "Mark") and 29 students, was studied continuously for five weeks. The school, an Australian Catholic primary school located in a middle-class area, was

chosen because it was known to emphasise student-centred learning and it was likely that various aspects of empowerment would be manifested in the structure and programmes of the school. In consultation with the principal, a class was selected on the basis of student-centred learning approaches being used and because the teacher, Gemma, made efforts to develop students' self-esteem. Therefore, there was an expectation that empowerment might be a phenomenon occurring in the functioning of the classroom.

This research centred on the teachers' and students' perceptions of daily life in the classroom with a focus on empowerment. I participated in the classroom as far as possible as a student rather than a teacher in an attempt to enter the students' world .

Techniques used for data collection were interviews, observations and field notes. Informal and semi-structured interviews were held with all participants in response to observations to gain perceptions and conceptions of life in the classroom and in particular of empowerment. All semi-structured interviews were recorded and then transcribed verbatim. Observations were used to provide a description of the setting, participants' actions, activities and interactions. Field notes were kept to record observations, points for clarification and reflections.

The analysis of the resulting data was an iterative process, building on ideas throughout the study. Regularities, patterns and topics were identified to initiate the establishment of coding categories. Moreover, irregularities were sought. Words and phrases that represented these patterns and topics were then recorded and called coding categories. Initial coding categories were assigned to data to test the "workability" of the categories. Modifications were made which included adding new categories, discarding and merging other categories. Then the categories were clustered into themes or dimensions and verified with the original data. Key events were identified and used to "provide a lens through which to view a culture" . Finally, Gemma was asked to read the descriptions to verify they contained the essence of her original experiences and whether the interpretations accurately portrayed aspects of classroom life. I attempted to have Mark validate aspects of the study related to him, but unfortunately he had moved from the city and I was unable to contact him. Nevertheless, I am confident that the various data sources helped me to accurately portray life in the classroom with Mark.

This paper considers one aspect of this larger study by addressing the question, what is the nature of student empowerment in a primary school classroom environment?

Findings and Discussion

This section focuses in turn on agendas and goals to provide an organising framework through which the findings of the study can be interpreted, examining the nature of student empowerment. Agendas are examined before goals because they are more overt than goals and hence I collected more data related to them. The section reveals that students who are able and capable of pursuing appropriate achievement and social goals that are complementary and conducive to learning are likely to be intrapersonally empowered. Additionally, students are likely to experience interpersonal empowerment if they have a sense of collective autonomy through the pursuit of goals that are complementary with those pursued by peers and the teacher. Students who are empowered both intrapersonally and interpersonally are likely to realise their goals and meet their needs.

Agendas

An *agenda* is someone's plan of things to do to achieve an outcome or goal. I chose to use the term "agenda" over "plan", which motivational psychology literature often uses, because

it is useful to gain a greater conceptual understanding in explaining the findings of this study. I have adopted the notion of an agenda from Manke and Oyler in preference to other possible notions because it is useful in explaining how the participants went about trying to achieve their goals. Goals cannot be seen, but the pursuit of goals or people's agendas are more explicit. In addition, the notion of an agenda, or plan, is used in motivational literature to gain a greater understanding of people.

Manke found in her study that the teachers' agenda was to "control student actions to facilitate learning" (p. 9) whereas the students' agenda was "to act without constraints of adult responsibility, seeking to 'have an interesting day'" (p. 9). In this study however, it seemed that Mark and Gemma's agendas were different from each other's and to the findings of Manke. Mark's agenda was primarily concerned with his teaching and indirectly with student learning and it did not seem to be very flexible. On the other hand, Gemma's agenda focused more on the students and their learning. In addition, Gemma's agenda was flexible as she often negotiated with students until they had agreed upon an agenda together.

The students may have had agendas similar to those of students Manke studied, but they undoubtedly had agendas that went beyond her findings, as many agendas were academic and socially related and the students did not always share complementary agendas. For example, in following episode, one student's agenda was for Mark to allocate time for spelling so he could complete his work. Clearly, this agenda was academic in nature.

On Thursday morning, Mark began the day by addressing the students who sat as a group on the floor. Mark had recorded the programme for the day on the white board. Some students asked Mark if they could have spelling as they normally did on a Thursday because spelling was not included as an activity on the board. Mark tried to establish how much work the students had done and then said, "We might squeeze some in."

The class then had prayer. After prayer, Mark told the students they would then continue with Religion. Some students said, "Ohhh!" Mark asked what the problem was. Jack said that he had lots of work to do on spelling. Mark told them they would do some spelling later.

About one hour later, after the students finished religion and they were sitting on the floor, Jack said to Mark, "You haven't got spelling on the board!" Mark replied, "Just press pause on that for the moment!"

The students did not have spelling that day. (Field notes, 7/8)

In this episode, Jack and other students clearly wanted time to complete their work. Mark had agreed with Gemma to provide time for students to continue their spelling work on Thursdays. The students expected this to happen and persisted in trying to influence Mark to let them have spelling. Interestingly, during the five weeks of data collection Mark did not programme for spelling on a Thursday, but did for spelling tests on Fridays as also planned with Gemma.

Mark, on the other hand, seemed as though he did not intend to give the students time for spelling. Initially Mark did not answer Jack's questions and he indicated that the students would have spelling at some stage. Mark appeared to have made his plans for the day, which he did not seem to want to alter. This indicates Mark's attempt to have power-over the students rather than power-with them.

This episode also demonstrates how Mark and the students often had conflicting agendas. It seemed that when these situations arose Mark rarely altered his agenda to accommodate the students' agendas. In this episode, Mark had an agenda which was hidden, or concealed and did not include spelling. Many students however wanted him to allocate time for them to continue their spelling work. In the pursuit of their agendas, the students attempted to expose Mark's agenda by confronting him with enquiries and expressing concern regarding the allocation of time to spelling. On occasions such as this, both Mark and the students had agendas that were in conflict and they were not prepared to alter them. The way in which Mark kept his agenda concealed leading students to believe they could have spelling was probably a means of retaining a sense of control.

In addition, the students did not always share the same agenda as suggested by Manke . For example, the following episode illustrates how students sometimes formed conflicting agendas to their peers when Mark taught. Additionally, the episode demonstrates how Mark was more concerned with his own teaching than with the students.

Mark asked the students to work in pairs to plan a game for the physical education lesson to be held later in the day. Carl and Simon worked together. Carl explained:

We chose a partner and we started making it (a game) up. And my partner liked baseball and I liked soccer. So I wanted to make up a soccer game and he wanted to make up a baseball game. And I told him, "Why don't we have a cross between baseball and soccer?" ... He said, "Yeah, okay". So we drew out the field and then we writ (sic) down the rules. (Int, Carl, 18/8)

After the students had spent about 25 minutes planning their games, Mark gathered the students on the floor in a circle so they could share their ideas. About three pairs of students explained their games and then Mark said, "We will have to finish there." The students pleaded, "Oh, please?" Mark said, "Alright." The students cheered. A few more students shared their games. Then Mark asked everyone to record their names on their plans and give them to him. A student asked, "Are we going to vote?" Mark replied, " No we will wait until after reading." It remained unclear how a plan would be selected.

After lunch while the students read Mark looked through the game plans. Ten year seven students joined the class for the afternoon as they needed supervision while their teacher was out but Mark did not interact with these students and he did show an awareness of them.

When the students finished reading, Mark asked them to sit on the floor. Mark told the class that he had looked at all the games and he really liked a couple. Mark explained one of the games. Michael called out, "That is already a game!" Mark ignored Michael's comment and went on to explain the other game that he liked, which was Carl and Simon's. Michael called out again, "They were supposed to make their own (game) up. They are already games!" Again, Mark ignored Michael asking some students to collect some equipment. Brigitte told Mark, "We have already got sports monitors!" but Mark did not appear to hear her.

The class went out to the oval. Two of the year seven students hid in the classroom and did not go with the class. It became clear that Mark had selected Carl's game to play as he began to explain it to the class. Later, Carl explained that he was happy that Mark chose his game especially as he thought that someone else's game would be chosen (Int, Carl 18/8). While Mark spoke to the class many students chatted to each other and did not listen. The game started. Mark did not invite the year seven

students to join the game. Most of the year sevens played on the nearby playground equipment but two ran away from the area. While the year five students were playing many sat on the edge of the oval waiting for a turn and some began throwing pieces of bark at each other. Mark asked the students to stop but they did not. Mark threatened to stop the game, return to the classroom and play the game at lunch the following day if the students did not stop throwing bark. Carl said, "Good!" However the game continued.

Some students rejoined the class after participating in a cross-country competition. Mark did not acknowledge these students although students waiting for a turn to play asked them about the competition. Some more year seven students came and then left without speaking to Mark. It appeared they too had returned from cross-country and came to be supervised.

Mark stopped the game and sat the students down. He explained in a serious manner that he was very disappointed with the students because they were being silly, yelling and throwing bark. While Mark was saying this, some of the students were laughing.

The class returned to the classroom. On the way back to the classroom, two year five students ran ahead a different way to the rest of the class. On returning to the classroom, Carl sat at his desk looking very upset and near tears. The students packed up ready to go home before having prayer in the room next door. Carl was supposed to organise prayer but he just sat at his desk. Mark did not seem aware that Carl was not at prayer even though he was one of the organisers. (Fieldnotes, 14/8)

Later Carl reflected on the incident:

Oh, well, everybody played it (the game) and everybody thought it was pathetic. ... They were saying, they were saying it to me. And I tried to get some defence players, but they, but they wouldn't, no one wanted to be defence and we put out the defence idea. ... (I felt) upset ... (because) every time I make up something everybody hates it. ... We told Mr Church. ... He said that he'd talk to them, but I don't know what happened. (Int, Carl, 18/8)

This episode illustrates how Mark seemed more concerned with himself and what he did than the students and what they did. Mark continued with what he had planned disregarding the students' comments and reactions. Mark did not seem to care about the individual student. For example, Mark did not demonstrate that he cared when students were upset and furthermore, Mark did not show concern for the year sevens at all. It was as though these students did not exist. The way in which Mark dealt with the year seven students shows how Mark focused on himself and his teaching rather than on the students for whom he was responsible. Clearly Mark did not acknowledge responsibility for these students and did not consider their safety. It would appear that Mark was more concerned with his teaching plans than with the students, that is Mark was pursuing his own agenda. By pursuing his own agenda, Mark was probably trying to retain a perceived sense of control.

Additionally, Carl did not have the same agenda as the other students when the class was playing a game. It seemed that Carl's agenda was for his peers to accept and play the game he had designed, whereas the other students' agenda was for the game to stop. The findings of this study suggest that teachers' and students' agendas are more complex than Manke suggested.

Establishing agendas seemed to occur in a variety of ways. First, individuals sometimes established their own agendas and hence they were often different from each other's. Second, the teacher and students sometimes negotiated their agendas between them. Third, on occasions individuals accommodated another person's agenda by adapting their own. Fourth, it is likely that students and teachers sometimes adopted someone else's agenda because they had not set one for themselves and an agenda presented to them sufficed, or they were flexible and happy to change their own. Thus, the teachers and students formed agendas by establishing their own, negotiating, accommodating or adopting someone else's.

When individuals established their agendas, they were often different from each others. On some occasions, the different agendas were not in conflict with each other and individuals were able to pursue their own agendas without a negative effect on others. Nevertheless, there were occasions when the different agendas were in conflict. Mark in particular often had an agenda that was in conflict with some of the students' agendas.

Gemma and the students seemed happy to negotiate their agendas. If Gemma had a different agenda to the students or set an agenda without negotiation with the students she usually explained it to them. On such occasions, the students seemed happy to adopt her agenda or rework their own agendas to accommodate it, as their agendas rarely seemed in conflict with Gemma's agenda. The following extract from the field notes illustrates this:

The class has returned from fitness. Gemma is standing in front of the board. She is discussing with some students whether to have maths, as there is not much time before the break. A student says, "It's not worth it." Gemma gained the attention of the class. She says, "Okay, eyes and ears this way."

Scott, the Person of the Day, claps to help gain the class's attention. Gemma says, "... I've talked to a few people and we've decided we haven't time for maths. The students appeared to accept the decision. (Field notes, 4/8)

Mark, on the other hand, was more reluctant to negotiate his agendas with the students. In fact, Mark focused on his agenda rather than considering the students' agendas. The students sometimes accommodated or adopted Mark's agendas, possibly because he seemed unwilling to negotiate.

Goals

As the intention of this study is to examine student empowerment, it is important to consider why students establish agendas. As already stated, an agenda is a plan of how to achieve a goal or goals. What are goals? Motivation literature informs us that students have purposes for what they do, that is they establish and pursue goals. The two main types of goals, achievement and social goals are relevant to this study. Achievement goals are academic in nature and are concerned with "perceptions about the broad, overarching purposes of achievement behavior" . On the other hand, many social goals are interpersonal in nature and can be broadly defined as the intended outcomes of behaviour when interacting with other people . Students simultaneously pursue multiple goals and the goals are "fluid and dynamic" . Namely goals are not set, but rather students are constantly establishing new goals, modifying or abandoning them .

The findings suggest that Gemma enabled students to pursue both achievement and social goals in the classroom and she probably helped them to coordinate these goals. Students were able and encouraged to set and pursue achievement goals particularly as they were required to make many decisions regarding their work. Additionally, Gemma facilitated

students to establish and pursue social goals principally by promoting the development and maintenance of peer culture . The peer culture in this class coexisted with the school culture which probably helped the students to coordinate their social and achievement goals. Additionally, Gemma probably helped students to coordinate their personal goals by not imposing her goals on to the students but rather allowing students to set their own and attempting to negotiate or influence others.

Depending on how well the students are able to coordinate the different goals, the pursuit of social goals and achievement goals can be either complementary or conflicting . When students pursue social and achievement goals that are complementary, their motivation and achievement are likely to be enhanced . Yet, if students pursue social and achievement goals that are in conflict, their motivation and achievement can be undermined . However, teachers can help students coordinate goal pursuit . In this study, it was more likely that the students pursued goals that were complementary when Gemma taught than when Mark taught. When Mark taught, students sometimes seemed to pursue goals that were conflicting. Hence, students were more likely to be motivated, that is invest and participate in learning activities, and achieve more positive intellectual outcomes when Gemma taught than when Mark did.

In enabling students to pursue both achievement and social goals, Gemma was not only allowing but also encouraging the pursuit of multiple goals in the classroom. Students who pursue multiple goals simultaneously and those who pursue both social and achievement goals have been found to be more successful at school . Moreover, enabling students to pursue both types of goals facilitates "optimal school adjustment" . Therefore, it seems probable that when Gemma taught, the students were more likely to achieve success at school.

This discussion of goals provides an organising framework through which the findings of this study can be interpreted. Although I did not question students regarding the goals they pursued, I did obtain data concerning how the students pursued their goals, that is, their agendas. Therefore, I will now discuss the findings with this framework in mind.

Gemma catered for students who were probably all pursuing different achievement and social goals whereas Mark did not. Gemma seemed to accept that students set their own personal goals and tried to support the students in their attempts to achieve their goals. Gemma attempted to empower students to be more able to pursue their own goals successfully by enabling them to pursue their own and negotiated agendas and effectively managing the students in the process. A teacher, such as Mark, who had trouble managing various student agendas, would probably not adequately cater for students pursuing various goals. Mark was more concerned with his own teaching than to enable students to pursue successfully their personal goals. For example, the student Jack seemed to be pursuing an achievement goal when he expressed his agenda for Mark to allocate time for spelling. Mark did not support Jack in trying to achieve his goal. Hence, Gemma facilitated students to pursue their personal goals, but Mark did not facilitate pursuits as successfully and as such, students were more likely to be engaged in activities and achieve positive learning outcomes when Gemma taught than when Mark did.

Although the students were able to establish and pursue their own goals, Gemma actively influenced the pursuit of them. We know that students choose goals that are either appropriate or inappropriate . Gemma tried to guide students towards pursuing appropriate goals by expecting suitable academic and social behaviour and helping those students who did not exhibit such behaviour. For example, one incident that occurred when Gemma was teaching, the students seemed to be expressing behaviour related to achieving social goals that were inappropriate . The following reconstructed dialogue of the incident illustrates how

Gemma influenced students' goal pursuit. In addition, it demonstrates how she encouraged students to coordinate their goal pursuits in an appropriate manner.

At recess time, David was walking back to the classroom when Antonio and Marie ran up to him. Antonio tried to "dack" David, that is pull his pants down. Then Brigitte joined the group and Marie told her to dack David as well. Brigitte tried to dack David. Soon after, David elicited Scott's help and together they dacked Antonio. When they returned to the classroom, students informed Gemma of the conflict. She called a meeting with all the participants involved. Gemma used an eliciting style of questioning.

Gemma What happened at lunchtime, first to start all of this?

David Well, at the end of lunch, recess really, we were all going over to the hall. Well when the bell went ... I was walking back and then Antonio and Marie started running towards me. And then Antonio grabbed me around the neck and started pulling me round and everything.

Gemma Is that right Antonio?

Antonio I did that (demonstrated what he did), I went like that (demonstrated further) but I didn't exactly pull him around but I did grab him.

Gemma Yeah, what did you do Marie?

Marie And then Antonio tried to dack him and like David was just hanging on to his pants and then Brigitte came and....

The conversation continued until Gemma ascertained what happened and who was responsible for what. Antonio admitted to trying to pull David's pants down. Gemma then asked Antonio how he thought David felt to be dacked, checking with David if that in fact was how he felt.

Gemma How do you think David felt about that?

Antonio Afraid and upset, and angry and embarrassed.

Gemma Is that true?

Gemma then questioned Brigitte and established that Marie told Brigitte to dack David. Gemma explained to Brigitte that she chose her behaviour and asked her what a better choice would have been.

Gemma All right, so that was your choice wasn't it? You chose to do what Marie said. She didn't make you do it did she? To make you she would have had to get your hands, and put them on his pants and pull them down. That was your choice. Did you make a good choice?

Brigitte No

Gemma What choice should it have been?

It then unfolded that Marie had held David. Gemma asked Marie and Brigitte how David could have felt during this time. She then asked Scott about his role in the conflict and he explained what happened. Gemma further asked what else he could have done. The conversation ended with Gemma reminding the students to consider other people's feelings. Scott added that they should "try and make the right choice" (Interaction, Gemma, Antonio, David, Marie, Scott & Brigitte, 20/8).

In discussing the incident with the students, Gemma challenged the students' goals and influenced them to set goals that were more appropriate. Furthermore, Gemma led the students through a process that required them to take into account other people's needs and goals which is a requirement of successful goal coordination. Such teacher mediation is said to help students learn to coordinate goals and deal with conflicting goals. In addition, Gemma probably helped students further coordinate the pursuit of social and achievement goals in a complementary manner by employing cooperative learning strategies. It has been found that students who successfully coordinate appropriate goals, in the way Gemma promoted, are more likely to achieve at higher levels.

The Nature of Student Empowerment

Finally, how does the pursuit of goals relate to student empowerment? It seems that by enabling students to pursue social and achievement goals, a teacher is enabling students to become intrapersonally empowered because they are likely to experience power-to. Moreover, by helping students to coordinate such a pursuit of multiple goals, a teacher is taking steps to ensure that they have the capability to be successful in their pursuit, further enhancing students' intrapersonal empowerment. It is evident that the students were largely empowered in this study because they were able to and capable of, for example, solving their problems, making decisions about all aspects of classroom life, and contributing to the management of the classroom. However there were times when some students gained power-to in ways that were perhaps not educationally beneficial such as when students gained a capability and ability to pursue inappropriate social and achievement goals when Mark taught. Hence, this study suggests that intrapersonal student empowerment can be defined as the ability and capability of pursuing appropriate social and achievement goals.

In addition, the findings suggest that on an intrapersonal level, students were more empowered at certain times than on other occasions. For example, when students adopted a role such as Person of the Day and when they participated in some of the processes such as solving problems in base group meetings, they assumed more power-to than at other times. Additionally, students' seemed to have different levels of power-to when Gemma taught to when Mark taught. Students' level of intrapersonal empowerment seemed to vary due to the status of the roles they assumed, their personality and ability, and the opportunities provided by the teacher. This not only supports the claim that students can be empowered at varying levels but also suggests that levels of student empowerment vary. Additionally, this suggests that student empowerment may not be durable across situations such as different teachers.

Assisting students to pursue goals and agendas that are not in conflict with others enhances the interpersonal empowerment of students, as they are more likely to experience power-with peers and the teacher. The findings of this study show that interpersonal empowerment is when students have a sense of power-with or collective autonomy with peers and teacher.

Levels of interpersonal empowerment varied because the power relationships among students changed at different times. For example levels of empowerment varied when students adopted roles and responsibilities, such as Person of the Day, because with the role they assumed a position of power thus gaining power-over peers. Some students were

more empowered than others because they were ready to become that empowered or they had the necessary skills. In addition, students perceived that some of their peers had power, because for example they were popular, and thus those peers had power-over those who held the perceptions. Therefore, levels of interpersonal empowerment seemed to vary due to roles students assumed.

Levels of interpersonal empowerment also seemed to vary due to the teacher. The findings indicate that the students had more consistent power-with relationships with peers when Gemma taught than when Mark taught. For example, Carl probably did not feel as though he had power-with his peers when they began to put his game down and refused to participate. This change was probably due to the nature of the social goals that students pursued. The power relationship between the teacher and students often changed, especially for different learning activities. For example, students assumed more power when they ran prayer sessions. When this occurred, Gemma retained ultimate power but shared her power with the students so there was a greater sense of equality in the power relationship. She usually only exerted her power in this type of situation when she perceived students required support. Gemma consciously varied the amount of power she shared, and she controlled this. For example, Gemma assumed more power when she addressed the students on the carpet and less power during prayer, spelling and class meetings. Mark, on the other hand, varied the amount of power he shared but it seemed that he did not plan for this to occur. Sometimes the students took power from Mark by ignoring his requests. It seemed that if Mark had used effective classroom management strategies he would have had more control over the power relationships he had with the students. Hence, student empowerment is controllable to some extent by the teacher.

Student empowerment does not appear to be a static state, but rather it seems to be fluid. For example, students who had skills that helped them gain power-to in one aspect of their life may not have had skills in another area. In addition, students who were empowered in the role they assumed may only have been so temporarily, usually as long as they held the role. Moreover, the findings suggest that student empowerment is fragile and therefore support the call for teachers to be consistent and persuasive backed by a wholehearted belief and approach to foster it .

The relationship between intrapersonal empowerment and interpersonal empowerment seems to be very important. Students seem more likely to achieve intrapersonal empowerment when they experience power-with their community members. This is evident because when Mark taught, students began to lose power with their peers and those students also seemed concurrently to lose their power-to. For example, Carl experienced power-to when his game was selected but when he lost support from his peers he also lost his confidence and thus his power-to. Carl began to perceive that he was not able to call a base group (peer support) meeting until it was suggested to him. Thus it seems that for students to be empowered successfully then both intrapersonal and interpersonal aspects of empowerment are important.

Finally, students who are able to coordinate and pursue appropriate social and achievement goals are more likely to be successful at school due to improved engagement and more positive intellectual outcomes. Enabling students to coordinate the pursuit of social and achievement goals requires facilitating students to pursue their agendas.

Key Emerging Concepts and their Interrelatedness

The key emerging concepts and their interrelatedness may be summarised as follows (see also Figure 1). Students have needs that they translate into social and achievement goals, which can be "appropriate". In an attempt to realise these goals students establish agendas,

which are plans of things to do to achieve goals. If students are able and capable of pursuing their agendas then they are likely to have a sense of power-to or intrapersonal empowerment. If the students' agendas are complementary to the peers' and teacher's agendas then they are likely to sense power-with or interpersonal empowerment. Students who sense both power-to and power-with are likely to be

empowered. If students are empowered both intrapersonally and interpersonally then they are likely to realise their social and achievement goals and fulfil their needs.



Figure 1. Key emerging concepts and their interrelatedness of what student empowerment is and how a teacher can enable it.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have examined the nature of student empowerment in an elementary school classroom environment. I have argued that there are two dimensions of student empowerment, namely intrapersonal and interpersonal empowerment. Intrapersonal empowerment is the ability and capability of students to pursue appropriate and complementary social and achievement goals through the establishment of agendas. Interpersonal empowerment is the pursuit of goals that are not in conflict with peers or the teacher. It is a sense of collective autonomy. Student empowerment seems not to be a static state but rather a fluid phenomenon that varies at different times. Additionally, student empowerment seems to be a fragile state, but also one that appears to be teacher controllable. Therefore, a consistent approach by teachers should enhance the enabling of student empowerment. This description of student empowerment contributes to a greater understanding of the nature of student empowerment in an elementary school classroom.

This study contributes to a greater understanding of why enabling students to become empowered is important. Students who are empowered both intrapersonally and

interpersonally are able and capable of pursuing their agendas that are complementary to their peers' and the teacher's agendas. Thus, students are likely to realise their social and achievement goals and fulfil their needs for power and belonging. This is significant because students who can coordinate academic and social goals so they are complementary are more likely to be motivated and to achieve. Additionally, research shows that students who pursue multiple goals simultaneously are more successful at school. Moreover the extent to which students' needs are met greatly influences the level of student engagement. Thus, the findings of this study indicate that students who are empowered are more likely to be motivated to participate in learning activities and to achieve successfully at school.

Furthermore, this study indicates the importance to student motivation and achievement of encouraging students to establish and pursue appropriate social goals that are complementary. Typically, schools encourage students to pursue achievement goals but not social goals, hence schools should reconsider this priority. In order to increase motivation and achievement, teachers should consider how they enable students to establish and pursue both social and achievement goals in the classroom. In addition, they should consider how they help students to coordinate these goals by negotiating or influencing them so that they are complementary.

References

- Anderman, L. H., & Anderman, E. M. (1999). Social predictors of changes in students' achievement goal orientations. *Contemporary Educational Psychology, 25*, 21-37.
- Ashcroft, L. (1987). Defusing "empowering": The what and the why. *Language Arts, 64*, 142-156.
- Bank, B. (1997). Peer cultures and their challenge for teaching. In B. J. Biddle & T. L. Good & I. F. Goodson (Eds.), *International Handbook of teachers and teaching* (Vol. 3, pp. 879-937). Dordrecht; Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Battistich, V., Solomon, D., Watson, M., & Schaps, E. (1997). Caring school communities. *Educational Psychologist, 32*(3), 137-151.
- Baumeister, R. F., & Leary, M. R. (1995). The need to belong: Desire for interpersonal attachments as a fundamental human motivation. *Psychological Bulletin, 117*(3), 497-529.
- Blase, J., & Blase, J. (1996). Facilitative school leadership and teacher empowerment: Teacher's Perspectives. *Social Psychology of Education, 1*, 117-145.
- Boomer, G. (1982). Turning on the learning power: Introductory notes. In G. Boomer (Ed.), *Negotiating the curriculum: A teacher-student partnership* (pp. 2-7). NSW, Australia: Ashton Scholastic.
- Brunson, D. A., & Vogt, J. V. (1996). Empowering our students and ourselves: A liberal democratic approach to the communication classroom. *Communication Education, 45*(January), 73-83.

- Burkill, S. (1997). Student empowerment through group work: A case study. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 21(1), 89-94.
- Clark, R. W., Hong, L. K., & Schoeppach, M. R. (1996). Teacher empowerment and site-based management. In J. Sikula & T. Buttery & E. Guyton (Eds.), *Handbook of research on teacher education: A project of the association of teacher educators* (2nd ed., pp. 595-616). New York: NY: Simon & Schuster Macmillan.
- Coll, R. (1986). Power, powerlessness and empowerment. *Religious Education*, 81, 412-423.
- Corsaro, W. A. (1985). *Friendship and peer culture in the early years*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing Corporation.
- Cumming, J. (1993). Middle schooling for the twenty-first century. *Incorporated association of registered teachers of Victoria: Seminar series*, 28.
- Danielewicz, J. M., Rogers, D. L., & Noblit, G. (1996). Children's discourse patterns and power relations in teacher-led and child-led sharing time. *Qualitative studies in education*, 9(3), 311-331.
- Davies, B. (1982). *Life in the classroom and playground: The accounts of primary school children*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd.
- Davis, T. (2001). *Student empowerment: College activities and involvements that empower students*. Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association, Seattle.
- Dodge, K. A., Asher, S. R., & Parkhurst, J. T. (1989). Social life as a goal-coordination task. In C. Ames & R. Ames (Eds.), *Research on motivation in education: Goals and cognitions* (Vol. 3, pp. 107-135). San Diego, CA: Academic Press.
- Duhon-Haynes, G. M. (1996). *Student empowerment: Definition, implications, and strategies for implementation*. Paper presented at the Third World Symposium, Grambling, LA. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 396613).
- Dweck, C. S. (1996). Social motivation: Goals and social-cognitive processes. A comment. In J. Juvonen & K. R. Wentzel (Eds.), *Social motivation: Understanding children's school adjustment* (pp. 181-198). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Fetterman, D. M. (1990). *Ethnography: Step by step*, *Applied Social Research Series: Vol 17*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Fitzclarence, L., & Giroux, H. A. (1984). The paradox of power in educational theory and practice. *Language Arts*, 61, 462-477.
- Hatch, J. A. (1990). Young children as informants in classroom studies. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 5, 251-264.

Hood, S., Kelley, P., & Mayall, B. (1996). Children as research subjects: A risky enterprise. *Children and Society, 10*, 117-128.

Juvonen, J., & Wentzel, K. (Eds.). (1996). *Social motivation: Understanding children's school adjustment*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Kreisberg, S. (1992). *Transforming power: Domination, empowerment, and education*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Luechauer, D. L., & Shulman, G. M. (1992). *Moving from bureaucracy to empowerment: Shifting paradigms to practice what we preach in class*. Paper presented at the Midwest Academy of Management Convention, St. Charles, IL. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 360666).

Maehr, M. L., & Midgley, C. (1996). *Transforming school cultures*. CO: Westview Press.

Mahon, A., Glendinning, C., Clarke, K., & Craig, G. (1996). Researching children: Methods and ethics. *Children and Society, 10*, 145-154.

Manke, M. P. (1997). *Classroom power relations: Understanding student-teacher interaction*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Mauthner, M. (1997). Methodological aspects of collecting data from children: Lessons from three research projects. *Children and Society, 11*, 16-28.

McCaslin, M., & Good, T. L. (1998). Moving beyond management as sheer compliance: Helping students to develop goal coordination strategies. *Educational Horizons, 76*(4), 169-176.

McQuillan, P. J. (1995). *Knowing empowerment; or, Student empowerment gone good*. Boulder, CO: School of Education, University of Colorado. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 360666).

Oyler, C. (1996). *Making room for students: Sharing teacher authority in room 104*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Pervin, L. A. (1989). Goal concepts in personality and social psychology: A historical perspective. In L. A. Pervin (Ed.), *Goal concepts in personality and social psychology* (pp. 1-17). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Phelan, P., Davidson, A. L., & Cao, H. T. (1991). Students' multiple worlds: Negotiating the boundaries of family, peer, and school cultures. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly, 22*, 224-250.

Phelan, P., Yu, H. C., & Davidson, A. L. (1994). Navigating the psychosocial pressures of adolescence: The voices and experiences of high school youth. *American Educational Research Journal, 31*, 415-447.

Pintrich, P. R. (2000). An achievement goal theory perspective on issues in motivation terminology, theory, and research. *Contemporary Educational Psychology, 25*, 92-104.

- Portman, T., & Portman, G. (2000, March 20-25). *Empowering students for social justice*. Paper presented at the American Counselling Association Conference, Washington DC.
- Robinson, H. A. (1994). *The ethnography of empowerment*. Bristol, PA: The Falmer Press.
- Schneider, E. (1996). Giving students a voice in the classroom. *Educational Leadership, 54*, 22-26.
- Stephens, R. E. (1994). *An ethnographic study of student empowerment in a second and a fourth grade classroom*. Unpublished Dissertation, Boston College, Boston.
- Stone, S. J. (1995). Empowering teachers, empowering students. *Childhood Education, Annual Theme*, 294-295.
- Sullivan, A. M. (2002). *Student empowerment in a primary school classroom: A descriptive study*. Unpublished doctoral thesis, Edith Cowan University, Perth.
- Sullivan, A. M., & King, L. (1998). Conceptualising student empowerment: A sweep through the literature. *Unicorn, 24*(4), 27-38.
- Sullivan, A. M., & King, L. (1999). *An investigation into empowering students through cooperative learning*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Montreal, Canada. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 430180).
- Urdu, T. C. (1997). Achievement goal theory: Past results, future directions. In M. L. Maehr & P. R. Pintrich (Eds.), *Advances in motivation and achievement* (Vol. 10, pp. 99-141). Greenwich, Connecticut: JAI Press.
- Urdu, T. C., & Maehr, M. L. (1995). Beyond a two-goal theory of motivation and achievement: A case for social goals. *Review of Educational Research, 65*, 213-243.
- Wade, R. C. (1995). Encouraging student initiative in a fourth-grade classroom. *The Elementary School Journal, 95*(4), 339-354.
- Weiner, B. (1996). Forward. In J. Juvonen & K. R. Wentzel (Eds.), *Social motivation: Understanding children's school adjustment*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Wentzel, K. R. (1996). Social goals and social relationships as motivators of school adjustment. In J. Juvonen & K. R. Wentzel (Eds.), *Social Motivation: Understanding children's school adjustment* (pp. 226-247). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Wentzel, K. R. (1997). Student motivation in middle school: The role of perceived pedagogical caring. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 89*, 411-419.

Wentzel, K. R. (1999). Social-motivational processes and interpersonal relationships: Implications for understanding motivation at school. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 91*, 76-97.

Wentzel, K. R. (2000). What is it that I'm trying to achieve? Classroom goals from a content perspective. *Contemporary Educational Psychology, 25*, 105-115.

Yowell, C. M., & Smylie, M. A. (1999). Self-regulation in democratic communities. *The Elementary School Journal, 99*(5), 469-490.