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Knowledge and Power are two concepts that could be either perceived as complimentary or contradictory. I believe that there are two types of knowledge: one can be built from life experiences (also known by wisdom) and the other through formal education such as through a college degree. An individual could possess either one of the two or both. Also power can be interpreted in different ways; it could either represent authoritarian power like Machiavelli’s the Prince, or power through knowledge. The latter interpretation of power shows its complimentary nature with knowledge whereas the former interpretation of power conflicts with knowledge. To discuss the following assumption, “Knowledge is a greater requirement for leading others in comparison to power,” I will look at any of the two discussed types of knowledge, however, I will talk about the Machiavellian connotation of power as suggested by the assumption.

**Knowledge > Power**

In my current job, I report to my Director and to the assistant Director. The Assistant Director is an educated, talented young woman who has a PhD in Linguistics. In her efforts to improve the English Language program, her recommendations have been research-based. She uses her research skills as a scholar to meet the needs of a particular student population, and faculty members have witnessed the high quality changes for the program as a result of her knowledge. Improvements have been made through more collaboration across George Mason’s departments in order to bridge the gaps between International students and faculty members across the disciplines. This person possesses the two types of knowledge: experience and education, and she makes a good fit for her position.

**Power > Knowledge**

The Assad family in Syria has been leading for decades by power and not by knowledge. First Hafez Al Assad and now his son Bashar have been leading their people by fear, threats, and providing them with little money to live. Although Hafez Al Assad has a military background, however, he did not use his knowledge for his people’s satisfaction. He wanted to conquer more land and repress his people by conducting massacres and impoverishing them. His successor, Bashar, his son, has got the same approach to ruling, and now that his people have revolted against him, he is promising reformation. Has he been ruling by knowledge, his people would have loved him, but because he ruled by fear, his people rebelled against him.

**Knowledge = Power**

I have been working lately with someone whose title is “Vice President” of a university in Lebanon. What’s striking about him is that although he is young and does not have enough knowledge and experience to fill his position, he has an inquisitive mind that allows him to look for external resources to help him in developing the University’s programs. He has a PhD in political science but he is filling a higher education position that requires varied expertise. His high position at the university has granted him the “Power” and more opportunities to make decisions which might be sound or unsound. Based on my collaboration with him, I have felt that some of his decisions have not been studied well and that is probably due to his lack of knowledge in higher education.

**Attributes of each of the Cases**

In all three cases, leading is taking place, but it’s influencing its surrounding in different ways. In the model case, the assistant director has a positive influence on her work environment due to her research-based decisions that prove firm grounds. This individual can work in any other environment that requires the same responsibilities and still succeed because she follows the “learning organizations” method as suggested by Senge (2006). She involves stakeholders in decisions made for the department as well as involving a whole body of faculty across campus to figure out solutions for the English Language Institute and meet the needs of a special student population.

In the contrary case, the leader cannot achieve the same results if he leads at a different timing and in a different country. Because Al Assad family has been leading the Syrian people for decades and not giving them the opportunity to be educated, the revolution took a while to become what it is now. Leading by power is possible but it leads to the fall of a system because that system becomes outdated and repressive to an extent that it could destroy both its people and its leaders. Knowledge is an important component of leading as suggested by Wheatley (2006).

In the borderline case, the vice president of that university lacks knowledge in the position that he’s filling, but he’s got a PhD so he possesses an inquisitive mind and can analyze data and make sense of it. I can’t tell that this is the best case because I have worked with this individual and I believe that he should have more knowledge in the field of higher education. His powerful position has granted him the permission to make mistakes, and in this case power is detrimental to his people because in acting by power he is ignoring details.

Bottom line, not everyone who has power can lead if he does not have the knowledge. Knowledge is more important than power because it is detrimental for the growth of organizations. I concur with Wheatley (2006) who discusses the importance of information/knowledge in Chapter 6 in which she emphasizes the role of knowledge in leading:

“innovation is fostered by information gathered from new connections; from insights gained by journeys into other disciplines or places; from active, collegial networks and fluid, open boundaries. Knowledge grows inside relationships, from ongoing circles of exchange where information is not just accumulated by individuals, but is willingly shared. ” (Wheatley, 2006, p. 104)

The quote above also suggests that any person at any position who has the knowledge and uses it fluidly can be leader.