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Historical Lecture on Power for Advanced School Policy

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The concept of power in the literature dates as far back as 1517, in Niccolo Machiavelli's dissertation on power, *The Prince*. Berle (1967) wrote that The Prince is "the greatest single study of power on record" (p. 19). Machiavelli intended his book for both men and women leaders of religion, as well as armies and states, no matter the party affiliation. People portray Machiavelli and his work as cynical and relate his work to toxic people in leadership positions who will do anything necessary to retain or increase their wealth and power; these are the *power freaks* of any organization or relationship among any group, no matter the populated amount. Based on this information, this will tie into the readings regarding the power and politics of policy decisions and if there is any chance of a compromise to be made.

To be able is a Latin term regarding power (Winter, 1973). Winter's (1973) theory of power is derived from the observation of abilities; these *power abilities* are whether to influence or control people during a myriad of connections. Magee and Langner (2008) opined that people differ based on how they choose to influence people and/or gain social status. "The need for power, or *power motivation*, can only be satisfied when one is able to make decisions or take actions that effect others' lives" (Magee & Langner, 2008, p. 1). Winter referred to Freud's depiction of leadership as the differentiation of the ego and the world in terms of the consciousness of power and ability. This description illustrates the influence on individuals by external forces, for example, politics, toxic power freaks, money and power, intimidation, and narcissism. Think about who may be the policy makers and their character. *Do they want to include others in the policy making, or do they have a personal agenda with no vision on other's input?* Winter continued with three conditions necessary for a useful definition of power, which is to (a) have some impact on a person's behavior, (b) generate control over others to accomplish

a task, and (c) to create a conscious and/or unconscious influence on individuals' behaviors and/or emotions. Winter concluded that when power is used in a positive format, it exemplifies effective leadership, direction, and authority; we hope that leaders in policy development *use good power to lead properly*. Researchers have defined power as the (a) ability to influence others; (b) ability to induce or influence another actor to carry out a directive or any other norms they support; (c) capacity to either ensure or prevent the outcomes one wishes; (d) capacity of a power base that places a manager in a situation to influence others and to circumvent being hurt by any of them; (e) justification to dominate others; (f) capability to attain goals, command respect, prevent undesired interference, control possessions, and exert influence; and (g) ability of persons and/or groups to regulate and control the behavior of others and to shape public opinion regarding personal interests (Aldag & Joseph, 2000; Etzioni, 1975; Gardner, 1990; Kotter, 1999; Ledeen, 1999; Parsons, 1951; Siegel, 2000).

People use power either positively or negatively when they exert some form of influence on others. In 1993, Maxwell stated, "the most effective way to understand the power of influence is to think of the times you have been touched by the influence of a person or an event" (p. 3). A person in a position of power should have qualities to *inspire* and *motivate* employees, resulting in a positive work environment and a climate of cooperation and willing effort (Gardner 1990; Maxwell, 1993). From an opposing point of view, Gardner (1990) observed that the use of power by some administrators create a culture of fear, coercion, and intimidation. Individuals hope to be more influenced, than controlled; they would rather be asked to participate or asked for input, rather than be told what to do and directed to do the work without asking questions.

Types of Power

Aldag and Joseph (2000) perceived power categorically as *relative, perceived, dynamic, and latent*. Relative power depends on an individual's expertise, knowledge, or position in relation to the other. Perceived power occurs when one person believes another person has power over him or her. Dynamic power relates to the interactions of people as they gain or lose certain types of power relative to others. Latent power represents a weapon or tool: An individual can have a lot of power and influence, but never need to use it as others will want to be led out of respect for the individual or the position.

Burns (1978) contended there are two interrelated essentials of power: motive and resource. "Lacking motive, resource diminishes; lacking resources, motive lies idle. Lacking either one, power collapses" (Burns, 1978, p. 12). Psychologists E. P. Hollander and L. P. Offermann list three general uses of power: *power over*, *power to*, and *power from*. Power over is another term for dominance, which is used to make another person act a certain way. Power to, or empowerment, is to influence other people so they can act more freely. Power from, or resistance, helps protect people from those with power (Aldag & Joseph, 2000). Leaders may use power to do more than just change their employees' behavior; it helps people to act openly and free from intimidation. It is more of an *asking* culture, than a *telling* culture.

Elements of Power

Although French and Raven (1959), and Daft (1991) have verified five power bases of legitimate, coercive, reward, expert, and referent, additional literature and recent studies enumerates even more power bases. Daft has determined that these five elements of power used by administrators influence the behavior of employees. Leadership is the utilization of power which brings about change in employee behavior. Dawson (1992, 1994, 1995) expanded upon

the elements of power to include legitimate, coercive, reward, expertise, referent, charismatic, situational, and information. Dawson contended that these eight levels of power are used for performance, persuasion, and negotiating with employees.

In Dawson's 1995 book, *Power: Understanding It and Gaining It,* he believed that each element of power can be developed and that if a person possesses four or more of these elements, an individual or team can be very powerful. In business negotiations, Dawson believed that the most important elements are (a) referent power, because people will trust you based on your consistent set of values; (b) charismatic power, because people will like you based on your character; and (c) expertise power, because people will perceive you know more about specific issues than they do and that they want to learn and be mentored.

Summary

It is essential for administrators and policy makers to have the understanding of how and when to control, influence, plan, organize, and delegate, but at the same time should inspire others in developing creativity. This practice leads to positive leadership and power as influence, not control. In conclusion, for a person to have knowledge and understanding of power, they may apply it in any situation that occurs in the organization. Leaders must understand the human element within the organization (i.e., building trust and commitment, care and respect for others); if they fail with this understanding of human nature, the employees will not follow. The better we understand human interaction and collaboration, the better we can compromise in decision making and policy development.

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