

### What is leadership?

Leadership is a complex phenomenon involving the leaders, the followers, and the situation. Leadership is a complex concept, and is therefore defined in many different ways, including:

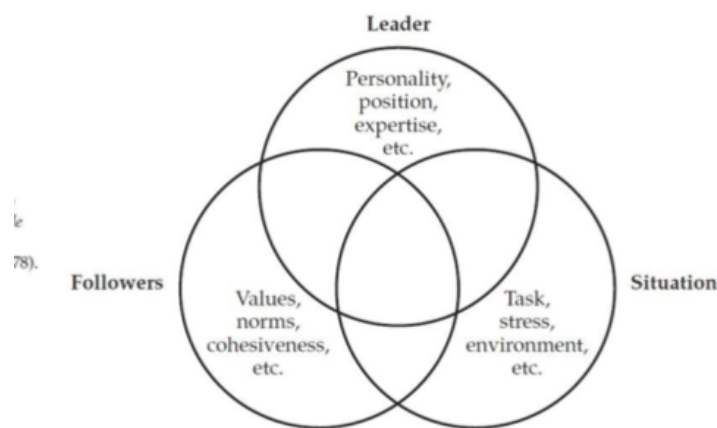
- Encouragement of behaviour
- Direction for a group
- Interpersonal relationship
- Goal achieving
- Creating desirable opportunities
- Getting results, building teams
- Problem solving

## The Interactional Framework for Analysing Leadership

**The Leader:** Some individual aspects of the leader may include:

- Personal history
- Interests
- Traits
- Motivation
- Temperament

It is important to note how the leadership status was reached. Leaders **appointed by superiors** have less credibility, and generally get less loyalty from followers. Leaders **elected from the ranks** of followers are seen as more effective.



**A leader's experience/history in an organisation is important to their effectiveness.**

**The Followers:** Leadership and followership are closely related. Aspects of followers that affect the **leadership process** include:

- Expectations
- Personality traits
- Levels of competence
- Motivation
- The number of followers
- Follower's trust and confidence

**Leader-follower relationship has undergone dynamic change due to:**

1. Increased pressure to function with less resources
2. Trend toward power sharing and decentralised authority
3. Increase in complex problems and rapid changes

Workers that share goals/values of their leader are more motivated.

**The Situation:** Leadership often makes sense only in the context of how the leader and followers interact in a given situation. The situation may be the most ambiguous aspect of the leadership framework.

## There is no simple recipe for effective leadership

**Heroic theory:** a largely discredited assumption that leadership is a personal trait expressed independently of the situation in which the leadership is manifested.

Leadership must always be assessed in the context of the leader, followers, and situation:

- A leader may respond to various followers differently in the same situation
- A leader may respond to the same follower differently in different situations
- A follower may respond to various leaders quite differently.
- Followers may respond to each other differently with different leaders

**Leader Development:** Making the most of experience is key to developing one's leadership ability.

### The Action-Observation-Reflection Model:

Shows that leadership development is enhanced when the experience involves three different processes:

- Action
- Observation
- Reflection

**Leadership is both rational and emotional. Leaders can use rational techniques, and emotional appeals to influence followers. In addition, the rational and emotional consequences of their actions need to be considered.**

# The Spiral of Experience



## The Key Role of Perception in the Spiral of Experience

Experience is not just a matter of what events happen to you, it also depends on how you perceive those events. Perception affects all three phases of the action-observation-reflection model. People actively shape and construct their experiences. Stereotypes represent powerful impediments to learning.

### Perception and Reflection

Reflection deals with how we interpret our observations. Perception is inherently an interpretive, or a meaning-making activity. Reflection involves higher functions like evaluation and judgement, not just perception and attribution.

**The Perceptual Set: A phenomenon that influences any of our senses, and is the tendency or bias to perceive one thing and not another.**

**Attributions:** are the explanations we develop for the behaviours or actions we attend to.

**Fundamental attribution error:** the tendency to over-estimate the dispositional causes of behaviour and under-estimate the environmental causes when others fail.

**Self serving bias:** the tendency to make external attributions for one's own failures, yet make internal attributions for one's success.

## Illustrating the Interactional Framework: Women in leadership roles:

- Women taking on more leadership roles than ever before.
- More women receive on the job mentoring than men.
- Stereotypes create problems for women in managerial roles.
- Management attributes thought to be masculine in surveys
- Men tend to describe themselves in transactional terms, women in transformational terms
- Women encourage participation and shared power (**interactive leadership**)
- **The glass cliff** – female candidates put into executive positions, but only if the organisation is failing.

## Questions:

**We say leadership involves influencing organised groups toward goals. Is there any disadvantages to restricting this definition?**

A situation involving a leader can emerge in many different contexts. Restricting the definition to only organised groups erases the possibility of leadership in informal situations.

**Are some people “the leader type” and others not?**

Many factors affect the ability of people to lead others. It is not as black and white as one being “the leader type” or not. It is more related to how one deals with a situation where they are required to lead. Leadership skills can also be taught, and developed.

**Does every successful leader have a valid theory of leadership?**

There is no simple recipe for leadership, and no theory of leadership will be more valid than another. What is relevant is the context of the leader, and how the leader interacts and works with the followers/situation.

**Actor/observer difference:** refers to the fact that people who are observing an action are much more likely than the actor to make the fundamental attribution error.

### **Perception and Action:**

Research shows that perceptions and biases affect supervisors' actions towards poorly performing subordinates.

**Self-fulfilling prophecy:** occurs when our expectations/predictions play a casual role in bringing about the events we predict.

Studies show that having expectations about others can subtly influence our actions, and these actions can, in turn, affect the way others behave.

### **Reflection and Leadership Development:**

Reflection offers leaders insights about framing problems differently, viewing situations from multiple perspectives, and understanding subordinates better. Leaders tend to ignore reflection due to a lack of time or a lack of awareness of its value. Intentional reflection may prompt leaders to see potential benefits in experience not initially considered relevant.

**Leadership and Management:** Leaders are thought to do *the right things*, managers are thought to *do things right*. Some distinctions between managers and leaders:

- Managers administer, leaders innovate
- Managers maintain, leaders develop
- Managers control, leaders inspire
- Managers have short term view, leaders have long term view
- Managers ask how, leaders ask what and why.
- Managers imitate, leaders originate.
- Managers accept the status quo, leaders challenge it

### **Action Learning:**

Traditional **training programs** involve personnel taking leadership classes during work hours. Such training addresses common leadership issues, but its artificial nature makes it difficult to transfer concepts to actual work situations. **Action learning** involves the use of actual work issues and challenges as the developmental activity itself. The philosophy of action learning is that the best learning involves learning by doing.

### **Development Planning:**

**Development planning** is a process that helps leaders to accelerate the development of their own leadership skills. Good development plans are constantly being revised as new skills are learned, or new opportunities to develop skills become available. Development planning provides a methodology for leaders to improve their behaviour even as they go about their daily work activities.

### **Coaching:**

Coaching is a key leadership skill that can help leaders improve the bench strength of the group, and retain high-quality followers.

**Coaching:** the process of equipping people with the tools, knowledge, and opportunities they need to develop and become more successful.

**Informal coaching:** takes place whenever a leader helps followers to change their behaviours.

**Formal coaching:** programs are designed for the specific needs and goals of individual executives and managers in leadership positions

### **Questions:**

**Is it better to be a good leader, or a good manager? Can you be both?**

A manager can be a leader, vice versa, however, the two can exist exclusively. Leaders are thought to do the right things, and managers are thought to do things right. It is not better to be one or the other, as both are important in their own right.

### **Can leadership be studied?**

Leadership as a concept cannot be learned, however, developing leadership skills is a process that may help with becoming a better leader. Methods of studying leadership include:

- **Action learning** – the use of actual work issues and challenges as the developmental activity.
- **Development planning** – helps leaders to accelerate the development of their own leadership skills. Provides a methodology for leaders to improve their behaviour as they go about their daily activities.
- **Coaching** – a key leadership skill that can help leaders improve the strength of the group

