A conceptual model for understanding the process of self-leadership development and action-steps to promote personal leadership development

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Abstract

Purpose – The goal of the leadership development process is to enable the individual to learn how to become a self-leader and for any organization to develop leaders. Self-leadership represents an individual's ability to exercise control (self-efficacy) over his or her choice of situations in which to participate in and to provide intrinsic rewards that are usually associated with achieving goals. The paper aims to discuss these issues.

Design/methodology/approach – This study presents and describes a conceptual model that will help us to understand the critical dimensions (e.g. self-esteem) associated with self-leadership and the interrelatedness of these dimensions.

Findings – The conceptual model that the author describes in this paper provides a comprehensive overview of self-leadership that extends Neck and Manz's (2010) conceptual model. It does so by identifying all the critical super ordinate mediators referred to by Deci et al. (1981) as internal states (referred to in this study as "dimensions"). These "dimensions" are then organized into his or her own singular system which leads to specific types of behavior. Through elucidating the important mediators and learning about and understanding how behavior, an individual's internal processes and external forces influence each other (in what Manz, 1986; Bandura, 1978 refer to as reciprocal determinism), we can begin to understand how to design more effective leadership development programs. Additionally, by studying these mediators any organization can develop clearly defined profiles of potential leaders; in turn, this will help an organization screen candidates more effectively to fill leadership jobs.

Originality/value – This concept piece offers a comprehensive model of the self-leadership process that includes all the important issues and the relationship among the important issues.

Keywords Leadership, Self-development, Leadership development, Motivation (psychology), Self-assessment, Self-managed learning

Paper type Conceptual paper

Introduction

The goals of this study include: identifying and describing conditions that are needed for an individual to be a self-leader, identifying and describing important dimensions associated with self-leadership and identifying networks that describe the interrelatedness of such dimensions. As some studies have noted individuals and organizations can create the circumstances for developing the self-leadership abilities of individuals (Ashford and Tsui, 1991; Hamel and Prahalad, 1994; Hambrick, 2007). The purpose of this study is to present a conceptual model that can help potential users understand self-leadership, which can help users design a self-leadership development training process using the model as a way to create and develop self-leaders (Cunnington, 1985; Tichy and Sherman, 1993).
If an individual is unable to lead his or herself, then the individual cannot expect to be able to lead others. Leadership involves the individual exercising responsibility and control over his or her personal actions (Neck and Manz, 2010). Upon assuming this responsibility, the individual’s actions represent self-directed initiatives to promote (Norris, 2008). Self-perceptions represent the results of an individual’s efforts to assess his or her personal capabilities. Bandura (1982) posits that the self-perceptions derived from the self-assessment process influence the motivation and behavior of the individual. Furthermore, Bandura stipulates that self-perception of the individual’s capabilities influences the types of performance activities pursued (choice of goals), acquisition of skills and the individual’s ability to achieve his or her goals. Positive self-perceptions lead the individual to select more ambitious goals, and these goals reflect rising personal standards (Bandura, 1977a, b) because the individual feels more positive about his or her capability to achieve these ambitious goals. In contrast, self-doubt leads to a negative view by an individual of their personal capability, which in turn results in lower personal achievement standards. As a result, the individual is seen to have lowered ambitious performance activities because he or she selects less challenging (or no) goals altogether. As a consequence, self-leadership development either atrophies and stops or proceeds imperceptibly.

This study presents a comprehensive model that describes self-leadership as an individual’s overall framework for controlling his or her choice of leadership-related situations to participate in. The self-leadership model is conceptualized as a all-inclusive system of super ordinate mediators (Deci et al., 1981) that function as a network that influences an individual’s choice of behaviors (Deci et al., 1981). Bandura (1978) refers to self-influencers or internal influences (Bandura, 1978) that Deci et al. (1981) calls “super ordinate mediators.” These mediators are referred to as “dimensions” in this study because dimensions imply a range with one end of the range the lower level and the other end of the range the higher level. Bandura identifies and describes the self-influencers as self-esteem and self-concept (Bandura, 1978). These internal self-influencers actuate an individual’s psychological functioning. Bandura’s Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977b) is useful in providing theoretical support for the importance of social interactions impact on the individual’s self-esteem and self-concept. Self-perceptions, self-esteem and self-concept impact the individual’s personal value system. An individual’s values represent the individual’s choice of personal standards which aid the individual in selecting performance goals to achieve both at work and outside of work. Self-perception, according to Bandura (1982), represents the means individuals use to judge his or her capability to perform and achieve goals. Self-perceptions affect an individual’s self-motivation and behavior (Carmeli et al., 2006). Manz (1986) indicates that when individuals overcome challenges, self-perception of personal competence and self-efficacy increases. We associate a positive self-perception with increased self-confidence and increased self-confidence influences the individual’s self-assessment of his or her capability to select more challenging personal goals and achieve these challenging goals (Neck and Houghton, 2006).

Understanding the functioning and properties of the personal leadership development process enables individuals and organizations to perform actions that improve personal leadership development. Learning how the leadership development process functions (Roberts et al., 2005) begins by learning about the dimensions that contribute to someone demonstrating behaviors typically associated with leadership and the interrelatedness of these dimensions. Leader type actions, according to Bennis and Nanus (1985), are behaviors that individuals exhibit and usually we associate with someone identified as a leader.
The author proposes a different approach toward conceptualizing leadership development. By developing a leadership development model which identifies and describes the critical personal leadership dimensions, an explanation of the noted dimensions can work in tandem as a network. Manz (1986) calls the interplay between an individual's behavior, internal processes and external factors (i.e. dimensions) “reciprocal determinism” to characterize the way the factors influence each other.

The personal leadership development model incorporates the important issues identified by leadership development theorists as the most salient features useful for differentiating between leaders and non-leader types (see: Chan and Drasgow, 2001; McClelland, 1975; Miner, 2005; Yukl, 2010). Miner (2005) identifies and describes numerous leadership theories that attempt to profile leader types. Minor also describes problems associated with searches for one universal theory that might best define leadership and profile the common characteristics of leaders. The emphasis on one theory to explain leadership and leader characteristics is a dilemma confronting researchers and practitioners. We attempt to avoid the theoretical quagmire associated with attempting to develop a universal theory on leadership development. The emphasis for organizations and individuals is in deciding how to promote an individualized leadership development process based on a particular theory. We avoid the “chicken or the egg” argument whereby someone is born to lead or that leadership is teachable.

The author proposes that individual can learn to be a leader, but only if the individual pursues this as a goal (Brockner and Higgins, 2001). An individual who seeks to lead does so because of his or her interest in assuming greater control over his or her life and behavior (Bandura, 1989). Self-leadership or self-determination (Ryan and Deci, 2000) involves setting personal standards through the use of goals which the individual links with intrinsically derived rewards and these rewards are self-motivating (Courtright et al., 2011; Bandura, 1978).

There are necessary conditions needed for an individual to want to become a leader (Csikszentmihalyi, 1993). Self-leadership represents a process that involves intrinsic motivation (derived from the perception of competence in successfully achieving some personal standard of accomplishment) which leads to greater self-efficacy (Deci, 1976). This process influences self-perceptions of personal competence which influences the selection of higher personal standards or goals to achieve (Bandura, 1977a, b, 1978, 1982; Deci et al., 1981).

Experience is the catalyst that initiates the self-leadership development process. Experiences, but especially successful experiences (Bandura, 1978; Cameron and Caza, 2004) are pivotal in developing self-leaders because successes create the foundation for more successful experiences (Kuvaas and Dysuik, 2009). According to Bandura (1978), self-doubt hinders an individual's learning from bad experiences. In turn, this leads to the individual's inability to apply the lessons learned to future situations. When the individual begins the process of assuming greater responsibility and control over his or herself through choice-making, decisions, acting decisively and benefiting from the positive results of his or her decisions, the individual's self-esteem and self-concept benefit (Bandura, 1982; Weick, 1995).

Experience affects the development of self-esteem. Self-esteem has evaluative and emotional components whereby the individual reflects on his or her emotional judgments (Gecas, 1982; Piaget, 1965).

The process of developing self-esteem and self-concept begins at an early age (Erikson, 1994; Piaget, 1965; Swann, 1983). However, an adult or organization (benefit adults) can initiate leadership development activities for adults with success.
(Tichy and Sherman, 1993). The critical factor is the individual's desire to want to become a self-leader by making personal choices that gives the individual greater responsibility for his or her personal actions (Wrzesniewski et al., 2003). The personal self-leadership development model described in this study offers individuals and organizations opportunities to understand how the dimensions contribute to leadership development and by describing these dimensions illuminated how dimensions potentially interrelate, provide examples for initiating the individual self-leadership development process as well as provide insights on how to maintain the momentum of building when an individual confronts such challenges as a layoff, reprimand, criticism from peers, etc. (Bandura, 1982; Roberts et al., 2005; Zaleznik, 1992).

Figure 1 presents an overview of the proposed self-leadership development model (referred to as “ETVBAMA[1]” leadership development model), showing the important dimensions of the model and the primary directional sequence of the dimensions posit that a positive self-esteem and self-concept leads to a self-confident individual (Knowles et al., 2005; Luthans, 2002; Spreitezzer et al., 1995) who demonstrates a positive attitude (Fineman, 2006; Kahn, 1998). An individual with a positive attitude is self-motivated and demonstrates self-motivation through personal action oriented behaviors. An action-oriented individual's modified behaviors represent proactive decision making that often leads to constructive personal change (Zaleznik, 2004). Positive experiences have beneficial impacts on the individual's self-esteem and self-concept because success leads to external and internal rewards that reinforce the individual's commitment to improve his or her self-leadership abilities. Internal reinforcement is particularly important because the individual learns to shape his or her own behavior which initiates the self-learning process. Only someone who feels (self-esteem) and thinks (self-concept) of his or herself as a successful learner (by achieving personal goals) will continue wanting to learn more. Most often the focus of an organization's leadership development program is attitude modification ignoring critical dimensions that influence an individual's attitude (Bandura, 1982; Erikson, 1994; Piaget, 1965; Stets and Burke, 2003; Swann, 1985; Tichy and Sherman, 1993; Yukl, 2010).

Figure 2 presents an expanded view of the model. Figure 2 incorporates several additional dimensions to the model found in Figure 1. One dimension, “results,”
represents the consequences of the actions taken. For example, “if I swing a baseball bat and strike out, what happens?” Striking out is often interpreted by the individual with negative self-esteem and negative self-concept as “not good”. At the same time hitting the ball is interpreted as “lucky.” However, an individual with a positive self-esteem and positive self-concept is likely to interpret the experience not as a self-esteem and self-concept concern but only what can be done differently to hit the ball better. Furthermore, it is not interpreted as a concern of not feeling good enough (negative self-esteem and negative self-concept). Hitting the ball is the action, what happens is the result and the individual’s interpretation of the result reflects the influence of the feeling of self-esteem and thinking associated with self-concept (Gecas, 1982; Yukl, 2010).

The dimension personal values and the influence of personal values, self-esteem and self-concept have on each other represents a dynamic that works in unison because these dimensions are mutually reinforcing (Ghiselli, 1968; Kark and Dijk, 2007; Knowles, 1984; Lord and Brown, 2001; Swann, 1985; Weick, 1995). For example, a good work ethic (value) is associated with positive self-esteem and positive self-concept (feeling and thinking good thoughts about oneself), which triggers the dynamic cycle illustrated in Figure 2. Thus, modifying a person’s self-esteem/values and self-concept/values are the critical focal points (Roberts et al., 2005; Spreitzer et al., 1995) in any leadership development training program.

In addition to a detailed discussion of all of the dimensions identified in Figure 2, the author examines the type of influences (Cameron et al., 2003; Chan and Drasgow, 2001; Cross and Markus, 1994; Csikszentmihalyi, 1993; McClelland, 1975; Roberts et al., 2005; Spreitzer et al., 1995; Weick, 1995) that set into motion the self-leadership development process. Finally, the author identifies and describes examples of possible actions an individual independent of training by an employer or organization can incorporate as part of a leadership development training program to foster self-leadership (Hamel and Prahalad, 1994; Kark and Dijk, 2007; Knowles et al., 2005; Yukl, 2010). The following sections describe each of the dimensions presented in Figure 2.

**Centrality of self-esteem**

Yukl (2010) suggests that self-esteem is the critical dimension that directly influences an individual’s self-concept and that self-concept affect an individual’s self-confidence,
particularly in being able to learn, especially from bad experiences. Self-esteem (the author refers to this as emotional intelligence) affects an individual's motivation and his or her resulting performance (Leach et al., 2005). Furthermore, self-esteem affects the individual's self-regulating capabilities and the ability to focus as exemplified through the use of goals for focus. Leach et al. (2005) define self-regulation as the ability to self-monitor feelings, thoughts and actions, and to assess the status of these as well. Gist's (1987) research indicates that self-esteem (or how an individual feels about his or herself) is an excellent predictor of an individual's level of motivation and his or her ability to perform tasks.

Self-esteem occupies a central role in the individual's psycho-social development because self-esteem provides a sense of self-worth or self-value (Modupe and Ositoye, 2010). Self-esteem is a dynamic concept that evolves through a process and involves the individual's constant comparison between his or her self-views and the views of important reference groups selected by the individual (Ashforth and Mael, 1989). The role of self-concept is twofold. First, self-concept protects an individual's self-esteem (Modupe and Ositoye, 2010) and affects the individual's self-confidence. Self-concept functions as a bridge between self-esteem and self-confidence. Have learned that the self-concept evolves from early in an individual's life based on his or her perceptions of the self as negative or positive; these perceptions are the result of negative and/or positive interactions with the environment (Modupe and Ositoye, 2010). Piaget's (1965) research suggests that significant types of interactions are social interactions that begin at the earliest age and compel the young child to reflect on the status of his or her social relationships and to modify moral rules that guide his or her thoughts and actions to remain in “harmony” with social peers. These moral rules govern the development of the individual.

Self-esteem's importance to the individual's personal growth as a person and in achieving higher levels of self-management requires protection from hostile forces. Because of the vulnerability of self-esteem (emotional intelligence) the self-concept's role includes protecting the self-esteem from external threats (Modupe and Ositoye, 2010). There is a mutuality in the relationship between self-esteem and self-concept because self-esteem creates the emotional conditions that can lead to a positive self-concept, which can lead to growing self-confidence which is a precursor to a willingness to pursue new challenges (Davies and Esterby-Smith, 1984; Higgins, 1987). Self-esteem is the emotional dimension and the self-concept represents the intellectual evaluative dimension of the individual (Gecas, 1982). Both dimensions are evaluative in that the individual makes judgments about his or her self (feeling and thinking).

An individual's positive self-esteem contributes to a positive self-concept. According to Carl Rogers (1945), when self-esteem is negative, it leads to negativity throughout the self-leadership development process; the result is that the individual stays firmly within his or her comfort zone. An individual's uses personal defense mechanisms to justify maintaining the status quo of staying within his or her comfort zone. Rosenberg (1989) calls this process of self-protection creating the “idealized self.” The individual distorts or otherwise hides from his or her actual view of the self.

Self-discrepancy theory helps in understanding how individuals can have views of his or her self that differ from the perceived view of the individual by others (Higgins, 1987). However, the ability to self-regulate to reduce any differences between the self-views of the individual and the views of others is critical if personal growth is to occur (Higgins et al., 1994). The individual draws on various adaptation strategies to reconcile any differences in views (Leonard et al., 1999). If personal growth is to
occur, self-acceptance is critical and a pre-requisite in order for the individual to recognize self-deception practices and to thwart the negative aspects of the defense mechanisms (Maddi, 2001).

Role of self-concept

An individual’s cognitive image of his or her self is commonly labeled “self-concept.” Self-concept represents the individual’s psychological image of the self. An individual’s thoughts about his or her self-concept are fundamental to any leadership development program; likewise, a positive self-view of self-concept leads to a self-confident individual who is becoming a leader (Cameron et al., 2003; Chan and Drasgow, 2001). To develop leaders, either the individual or organization must focus on creating the conditions necessary to design an ongoing self-development process that improves a self-concept that is adequate to cultivate self-confidence and sufficient to produce a positive attitude, which, in turn, leads to a motivated person who becomes achievement oriented (i.e. goal setter).

Positive self-feelings are valued because of “feel good” quality associate a positive self-concept with an action-oriented achievement-focused person. Personal values can reflect this focus. However, the interdiction between the value of achieving and self-concept can result in more talk, but not lead to any actual action-type behavior. This is due to the fact that the negative self-concept dominates the personal value system that reflects this condition. Thus, an individual’s self-doubt about the ability to achieve leads to a set of values that reflect the individual’s fear of failure. An individual with a negative self-concept is not able to cope with the actual idea of doubting his or her abilities. The individual with a dominant negative self-concept does not interpret a failed result as an opportunity to learn from the experience and that success might occur on the next attempt. The individual with a negative self-concept might identify goals that are far too ambitious so as to avoid making a serious effort to achieve his or her goals.

The selection of overly ambitious goals represents an attempt at impressing others without really mobilizing the self for action. Overly ambitious goals lead to non-action or face-saving actions that soon end because achieving the goals is not entirely realistic. Talking about goals is only meant to convey a false impression. An individual with a weak self-concept is very adept at undercutting own efforts for the obvious reason of creating self-fulfilling prophecies that an individual incapable of achieving his or her goals.

A positive self-concept enables the individual to recognize the opportunities that exist to achieve personal and professional growth because the individual’s values support learning and associate learning with achieving. An example of the benefits of a positive self-concept compared to a negative self-concept is the individual’s ability to identify choices. A negative self-concept severely limits the individual’s view of what is possible because negativity causes the individual to think “I can’t” or “this is not possible.” A negative self-concept severely limits the individual from being aware that there are options. Options indicate that multiple alternatives are available to facilitate personal learning and personal growth. Because of the fear of failure associated with attempting to achieve something different, the individual with a negative self-concept does not want to learn that there are options (Knowles et al., 2005).

A positive self-concept is associated with the motivation to achieve (Cameron et al., 2003; Kark and Dijk, 2007; Knowles et al., 2005; McCall and Simmons, 1978; Wrzesniewski et al., 2003). The more positive the self-concept, the greater the individual’s propensity to achieve because the individual does not think failure is the most likely
outcome (Brockner and Higgins, 2001; Chan and Drasgow, 2001; Luthans, 2002; Spreitezer et al., 1995). A positive self-concept is the catalyst for actions associated with a leadership development process (see Figures 1 and 2) that requires a motivated person. Understanding the centrality of the self-concept is critical because any effort at changing an individual's attitudes or attempts to instill motivation must focus on the self-concept (and self-esteem). As depicted in Figure 3, there is no endpoint when seeking to improve self-esteem and self-concept because the capacity for growth through self-learning is endless, blocked only by the individual's choice.

Focussing on personal growth is instrumental in working to improve an individual's self-concept (Ashford and Tsui, 1991). Personal growth starts by the individual convincing his or her self that working to change his or her self-concept (thoughts about self-worth) can lead to real, sustainable changes that can result in a better, happier, more successful person. Success in changing the self-concept is measurable through a variety of ways; type of jobs hold, promotions received, pay increases, awards earned, people who want us as friends, possessions, feedback about ourselves from others, self-impressions, personal habits (e.g. quit smoking). There is no lack of measures. What is important is the sense of self-worth that influences the extent that the individual focusses on achieving that which the individual wants to accomplish. The individual's selection of goals that are unrealistic symbolizes the underlying sense of low self-worth associated with avoiding real efforts to change, feeling unfulfilled, or blaming others rather than assuming personal responsibility for not achieving the goal.

Over time, as the self-concept strengthens, the individual begins to turn from the self to focus on others. This is what referred to as the “leadership aspiration” level. The individual with a strong positive self-concept begins to look beyond

![Figure 3. Typology of motivational factors](image-url)
self-leadership and focuses on leading others. The individual believes in his or her ability to proactively and positively impact the lives of others (Rogers, 1945). At this point leadership of others begins to emerge in the form of beliefs, values and actions associated with leadership. The individual emerges from exclusively focusing on self-leadership to leading others seeking to lead others represents a natural outcome in the evolution of the individual’s self-concept. Personal growth by self-leadership now allows the individual to devolve from a mostly self-centered condition to focus on positively impacting the lives of others (Rogers, 1945).

Importance of self-confidence
Self-confidence represents an individual’s beliefs about his or her personal abilities (Neck and Houghton, 2006). Self-confidence can be viewed as a process that involves the individual’s assessment of personal self-efficacy (Bandura, 1982; Neck and Houghton, 2006). A self-confident person believes that the self is capable of achieving. This suggests limits to the scope and depth of an individual’s self-confidence at any point in time because self-confidence evolves over time as the individual learns from confronting and successfully overcoming challenges. Self-confidence is a critical dimension that influences the individual’s decision-making process in the use of goals and in the selection of the type of goals (Bandura, 1982). As the level of self-confidence evolves the individual’s attitude becomes more positive because of the individual’s changing self-perception. Self-confidence is associated with being positive and no confidence associated with a negative attitude. Attitude determines whether the individual is goal-focussed, the type of goal(s) chosen and the level of goal difficulty. Attitude initiates either action-oriented behaviors to achieve a goal or initiates a defense mechanism to create a scenario that justifies the decision to maintain the status quo.

Self-confidence helps to overcome self-doubt. Doubt represents a conditional reaction when the individual considers a goal that involves attempting something new (Cameron et al., 2003; Cameron and Caza, 2004; Fineman, 2006; Knowles, 1984; Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Self-doubt is the negative quality associated with an individual’s decision to remain in his or her comfort zone. “Comfort zone” represents the familiar, what the individual is already able to do, the individual’s perceived self-limits without realizing any risk associated through personal initiatives. Comfort zone also represents a collection of routines associated with some purposeful action. Individuals have hundreds if not thousands of purposeful actions that represent an amalgamation of behaviors referred to as purposeful routines. However, self-confidence enables the individual to look beyond the comfort zone barriers and to consider pursuing new challenges. However, elf-confidence does not eliminate self-doubt. Self-confidence helps to overcome self-doubt by enabling the individual understand that taking risks can lead to successful goal achievement. Failure can occur, but failure does not represent a negative personal statement about the self. The process of continuing to push beyond comfort zone barriers initiates a lifelong process of building self-esteem, self-concept and self-confidence, and eroding self-doubt. The individual uses self-confidence to create a process to push the self. This occurs because the evolution of the self-confidence development process occurs through prior experiences that helped build a positive self-esteem and positive self-concept that are essential in contributing to an evolving and growing self-confidence.

Self-confidence provides insight into understanding an individual’s level of self-esteem (i.e. feelings about the self). Self-confidence is a state of being with degrees of differences. Self-confidence provides the individual with the opportunity to understand
the cognitive, emotive and behavioral byproducts associated with self-confidence and to compare these with individuals failing in self-confidence (Bandura, 1982; Erikson, 1994). Comparing these two conditions enables the individual to understand that there are levels of self-confidence as well as causal factors contributing to positive or negative self-confidence. Recognizing the individual with limited self-confidence is fairly straightforward because of the frequent use of “can’t” or proxy statements for “I can’t” or other actions that indicate an “I can’t” view the individual holds about his or her ability to achieve. The individual without much self-confidence attempts to keep the window to the inner self-closed to avoid insights into this condition. However, complete denial is impossible because the individual will receive feedback from various social interactions with peers, colleagues and superiors (Swann, 1985; Tice and Wallace, 2003; Wrzesniewski et al., 2003).

A measure of self-confidence is an individual's choices, aspirations or goals (Brockner and Higgins, 2001; Roberts et al., 2005; Steel and Konig, 2006; Stets and Burke, 2003; Tichy and Sherman, 1993). Choice of goals, whether professional or personal, shed light on how an individual thinks about their ability to succeed. Goals that are not challenging reflect a large measure of self-doubt. Goals that are unrealistic reflect self-doubt because the individual creates circumstances wherein failure is almost a certainty, or, alternatively, the individual creates a scenario where the reasons for doing nothing are overwhelming and therefore action toward accomplishing a goal never commences. Two examples suffice to help us understand the thinking of an unconfident individual. One extreme example of weak self-confidence is when an individual avoids setting goals because of his or her belief that there is no chance to achieve said goals because circumstances prevent success or the individual does not believe in his or her ability to succeed. For example, an individual sets a goal of increasing sales calls by 100 percent when the individual has made the same approximate number of calls over the same specified period of time for a long time. This scenario can create exciting possibilities but represents unrealistic expectations that are unlikely to lead to any meaningful effort to succeed due to the fact that the individual's self-confidence is not sufficient to accomplish goals of this magnitude. Such goals represent an attempt to impress everyone, including the individual. Failure is predictable since without a large measure of self-confidence to support these types of initiatives failure is the most likely outcome.

Importance of attitude
Attitude reflects an individual's assessment about his or her self, others and situations. Leaders do not have negative or indifferent attitudes (Shamir et al., 1998) because a negative attitude and effective leadership do not go together. These represent incongruent attributes that work in opposition to each other because people with negative attitudes are highly unlikely to be problem-solving “can-do” types of people.

According to Roberts et al. (2005), a positive attitude moves an individual to action. A positive attitude stimulates thoughts associated with identifying and achieving a goal. The consequence of having a positive attitude is that the individual begins the process of mobilizing for action. A positive attitude correlates with people who actually follow through and do what they say they will do. People want to achieve something, whether work-related or personal because of the innate desire for self-improvement (Roberts et al., 2005). An individual becomes invigorated by developing a positive attitude which reinforces the desire to act in positive ways. For leaders of others, this process is critical because leaders provide followers with the confidence needed to
influence his or her own attitudes, motivation and actions (Shamir et al., 1998; Yukl, 2010; Zaleznik, 2004). An individual without a positive attitude learns quickly that few follow willingly. An individual with a negative attitude does not usually seek the company of a person with a negative attitude unless commiserating together. Instead, he or she looks to others to help him or her change his or her negative views. This puts the leader in a difficult position because at the same time individual’s (with a negative attitude) comfort zone incorporates a negative. An individual’s comfort zone is not easy to modify without the self-interest to want to change (Roberts et al., 2005; Steel and Konig, 2006; Stets and Burke, 2003; Tice and Wallace, 2003).

A positive attitude influences the individual’s perception of the range of opportunities available (Bandura, 1982; Bandura and Jourden, 1991; Higgins, 1987; Higgins et al., 1994; Kovach, 1989). According to Steel and Konig (2006) a positive attitude initiates a process that incorporates a “What can be done?” outlook. The individual expands his or her search to learn if other realistic possibilities exist and the individual is more willing to engage in unfamiliar actions to achieve the goals. For example, the individual might ask others directly or indirectly for their opinions, read relevant books, conduct Google searches or seek assistance from reference librarians. The list of choices is broad only to the person who has a positive attitude and who sees the numerous opportunities to gain different perspectives.

Often the phrase “I can’t” is associated with a negative attitude. A negative attitude is self-limiting because it reinforces the conclusion that something is not possible (Bandura, 1982; Bandura and Jourden, 1991; Higgins, 1987; Higgins et al., 1994; Kovach, 1989; Yukl, 2010). An alternative view of the meaning of “I can’t” is “I do not want to.” Obviously, a negative attitude represents a closed or narrow view of what is realistically doable because achievement or pursuing some goal that falls outside the parameters of what an individual with a negative attitude is inclined to achieve. Talking about doing something is what a negative person does best, but actually doing something is left to the positive individual because each approach represents the individual’s self-perceptions.

What is significant about understanding the importance of a negative or positive attitude is the type of choices made by the individual. An individual makes choices (Bandura, 1989; Brockner and Higgins, 2001) when selecting goals, makes decisions or deals with circumstances that an individual frequently confronts. An individual with a positive attitude realizes that there are multiple choices available. Whereas the individual with a negative attitude sees few if any choices and often is forlorn in his or her viewpoint of this self-limiting circumstance – a feeling of resignation. The distinction between the two types of attitudes is important because attitude reinforces the perception of the individual with a negative attitude that there are no choices or that the choices available are less desirable. Having choices represents a powerful mental image because the ability to visualize choices has an energizing effect on the individual with a positive attitude who learns that there are options available with positive consequences (Barling and Beattie, 1983; Deci et al., 1981; Kovach, 1989; Manz, 1986).

An example of the phenomenon described above is the condition of boredom. The experience of boredom is common for everyone. However, boredom represents a decision point. The individual can remain bored, feel powerless to do anything to change the situation, might look to others to alter the situation and be dependent on others to decide to do something or might change the circumstances. Thus, the individual has several choices. The individual with a positive attitude attempts to change the circumstances, realizing that his or her efforts can succeed in changing the
situation by altering his or her thinking which leads to behavior change (this is referred to as self-efficacy) (Bandura, 1977a; Barling and Beattie, 1983; Deci et al., 1981; Kovach, 1989; Piaget, 1965). The individual learns that exerting control over the situation stops boredom which offers the additional benefit of greater self-empowerment. Self-empowerment symbolizes the individual’s control over his or her ability to make choices (Bandura, 1989; Brockner and Higgins, 2001).

Driving force of motivation
Motivation is a condition that is the result of an individual wanting something (Maslow, 1943). A motivated person is recognizable by the type of behaviors exhibited. There are many theories that identify and describe different types of causal factors that motivate individuals (Miner, 2005). Among many, Maslow’s (1943) Hierarchy of Needs theory represents a long-established theory on motivation and serves as a useful paradigm to demonstrate needs-based causal factors. Maslow emphasizes that there are different types of causal factors arranged in a hierarchy of levels of different types of needs. Using levels is a useful paradigm for explaining how variations in an individual’s motivation reflect a change in the individual’s needs. Figure 3 represents a model showing how individuals can evolve based on different types of needs. Needs, according to Maslow’s theory, range from basic survival type needs to higher order needs.

At the survival level, the intent of the individual is to create a living situation that reflects his or her efforts to provide for his or her self. This level is equivalent to Maslow’s lowest two levels. The next level, social acceptance, represents a condition in which the individual seeks acceptance and a feeling of self-worth from family, friends and co-workers. This requires the individual to engage in a process involving cognitive insights that result in behavioral actions that culminate in acceptance. Failure to gain acceptance leads to either different cognitive insights that alter behavior so as to gain acceptance or cognitive insights shaped by defense mechanisms and which justify maintaining the status quo (Rogers, 1945).

As the individual gains in self-esteem, societal acceptance becomes a motivating factor. Societal acceptance involves gaining approval from valued community members beyond the individual’s immediate social circle of family and close friends. Achieving societal acceptance requires the individual to gain acceptance within the workplace (i.e. superiors and subordinates), among community groups and community leaders, from interested prospective employers, peers who are acquaintances but not friends, and seniors citizens who have the experience and wisdom to determine the individual’s value if motivated to do so.

The next level, self-direction, represents the first consistent effort toward demonstrating leadership qualities. This level initiates the process of self-leadership (Neck and Houghton, 2006; Houghton and Neck, 2002; Yukl, 2010) transitioning from self-management which involves self-care without using goals (Frayne and Latham, 1989). At the self-leadership level, the individual seeks to exercise greater control (i.e. self-efficacy) over his or her behavior through the selection of goals that require changes in attitude which lead to changes in behavior to achieve these goals. Improving self-esteem and self-concept provides the impetus to improve the individual’s self-confidence which is necessary to select and pursue change altering goals. At the self-leadership level, the individual identifies realistic choices as goals and demonstrates sustained initiative toward achieving the goals.

The top level is leadership. By moving to this level, the individual recognizes his or her potential for leading others. This perception originates from successful experiences
that occurred during the self-directed leader level and incorporates the lessons learned from successful and unsuccessful experiences that occurred at this level. These experiences shaped the individual's self-perceptions of being capable of meeting society's normative criteria that define leadership (Bass, 1990; Bennis and Nanus, 1985; Chan and Drasgow, 2001; House, 1973; McClelland, 1975; Shamir et al., 1998).

Self-leadership and self-management are associated with wanting to achieve. The difference between the two is that self-leadership emphasizes achieving performance enhancing goals. Self-management focusses on the individual reducing the difference between an actual behavior and the desired behavior (Markham and Markham, 1995). The standards associated with self-management originate from the preferred behavior and are taken from the views of others. Self-leadership focusses on setting goals that lead to performance standards and which conform to an idealized view of how the individual should act. A self-leader is motivated to reach this standard of performance. Successful self-initiated experiences provide useful feedback that reinforce the individual's belief that achieving more challenging goals is possible (based on expectancy theory) (see Isaacs et al., 2001) through the expenditure of additional effort. To become an achieving individual is to want to continue to reach higher performance standards and to believe that these standards are achievable. Expectancy theory (Miner, 2005) and self-efficacy theory (Padilla et al., 2007; Neck and Houghton, 2006) provide a clear understanding and description of this process.

A motivated individual demonstrates initiative through his or her actions (Bennis and Nanus, 1985). Actions such as volunteering for extra assignments, assisting co-workers without prodding, initiating social contacts and proactive involvement in family activities represent only a few examples of self-initiative. These examples represent self-directed personal actions associated with initiative. Initiative is frequently associated with motivation because the linkage between the two concepts is the desire to want something (motivator) and the recognition that the individual must take action (initiate) to be in a position to fulfill the want. Even if directed by others the individual showing initiative by his or her actions represents a motivated person though not self-directed. Thus, anecdotal evidence provides support for he view that levels of motivation exist (Manz, 1986; Markham and Markham, 1995; Neck and Houghton, 2006).

Inevitably, a self-motivated individual becomes focussed. The link between (motivation and focus) is strong because a motivated person seeks to achieve (see Maslow's, 1943 theory of motivation). The individual's attention becomes riveted on identifying tasks to accomplish to achieve the goal. Motivation requires focus because the individual diminishes the benefits that motivation provides without focus. Attention is dissipated from the failure to focus which lessens the effort. Another way to understand the importance of focus is by comparing a focussed person's efforts to the blast from a shotgun. Much of the scattered shot does not strike at the selected target because the focus is not precise. A focussed individual uses a rifle shot, targeting a specific point with the greater likelihood of hitting the selected target.

Being self-motivated means that the individual recognizes that more effort is necessary to achieve a goal. To achieve a goal requires that the individual initiate a goal directed process that involves unfamiliar or untried actions that require the individual to move outside of his or her "comfort zone." Comfort zone represents familiar and successful routines (Cross and Markus, 1994; Csikszentmihalyi, 1993). People operate within a comfort zone because the comfort zone generates no stress associated with performing familiar tasks. A comfort zone's benefits include greater
economy of effort, efficient time management and greater predictability of results from actions taken. These benefits are offset by the failure to learn other effective ways to achieve a goal or save time through the use of new approaches (i.e. increased efficiency) or achieve more challenging goals which require risk-taking (i.e. getting outside of the comfort zone) behaviors. As discussed previously, the comfort zone encompassed known and predictable behavioral routines which provide the individual with the benefit of known ways to do something but at the cost of being dogmatic about maintaining the status quo. Self-motivation provides the impetus for the person to consider ways to move beyond the boundaries of the comfort zone. The process of moving outside of the comfort zone initiates a learning process. This is because the individual needs to discover new ways to achieve the goal and during this discovery process there are a series of trials and errors made that lead to uncovering different ways to achieve the goal. Trial and error generates invaluable knowledge to help the individual to differentiate between a successful actions and actions that do not work during the process of achieving the goal.

**Behavior of a self-motivated individual**

Motivated (self-leader) and unmotivated (non-self-leader) individuals demonstrate different types of behavior. Behavior reflects the manifest intentions of the individual. Thus, behavior is the act of doing with the intended consequence of achieving a particular purpose (Neck and Houghton, 2006; Rosenberg, 1989). Actual behavior confirms that the individual made a decision to achieve some end (i.e. making a choice).

Behavior associated with a self-leader represents his or her choice of actions to accomplish a goal. For example, an individual who wants certain types of people as friends must demonstrate specific behaviors that are necessary to appear to be similar to these people in order to accomplish this end. Self-directed actions demonstrate to the potential friends similar interests and values that represent the individual’s capability of being friends. One of the central premises of social learning theory (Bandura and Jourden, 1991; Frayne and Latham, 1989) is that individuals learn through frequent and ongoing interactions with others.

Careers and specific jobs reflect choices made in terms of whether the individual is proactive and goal oriented (i.e. self-leader type) or aims to maintain the status quo in his or her career or job (i.e. self-manager). A reactive or proactive approach reflects a choice made. The difference between the two is that a proactive individual initiates responsibility and control (i.e. self-efficacy) over his or her actions because his or her self-confidence creates the basis for acting in ways required to accomplish goals. The self-confident person considers failure as a learning experience that will then lead to future efforts to accomplish the same goal. If a person shows little to no self-confidence, learning still occurs, but the focus is then on the specific desire to avoid failure. At that point, the individual focusses more on staying within the comfort zone because of the association linking failure to initiative. Proactive individuals make the choice of job and career early in their professional lives because early successes create a foundation of positive self-esteem, leading to positive self-concepts and resulting in growing self-confidence. Self-confidence initiates self-motivation and leads to the behaviors associated with a self-confident person (i.e. researching career fields by talking to others, reading about job opportunities, learning about a particular business by visiting a company web site, etc.). The range of behaviors is broad, but the common theme linking the behaviors is a initiative-taking, self-motivated, self-confident individual (Neck and Houghton, 2006).
Self-initiated social interactions reflect the individual’s intention to have successful social relations (Maslow, 1943). The desire to have successful social relationships with subordinates, peers or superiors, or non-work related relationships, shows in an individual’s actions. The individual defines his or her own success. The individual adapts his or her behaviors according to feedback received through social interactions and these interactions enable the individual to achieve the intended benefit. After achieving the desired results, the individual’s future actions serve to maintain the situation until circumstances change (a condition referred to as homeostasis). The individual who expects others to modify their behaviors or chooses to maintain the status quo demonstrates self-motivation behaviors. This individual’s actions to get others to change or to maintain the status of existing relationships reinforce the perception of low self-esteem and low self-concept because social relations are dynamic processes involving change by all involved (Neck and Manz, 1996; Neck and Houghton, 2006; Norris, 2008; Piaget, 1965). Self-esteem and self-concept reflected through personal values control the actions of the individual. We interpret actions that aim to improve social relations as moving toward positive homeostasis and actions to maintain the status quo of relations as negative homeostasis.

The choice of social relationship goals influences the types of behavior demonstrated by the individual as well as the intensity of the behavior. Motivated people are goal-oriented because goals provide focus and reaching goals is a measure of achievement and contributes to a positive sense of the self. To achieve a goal requires a series of interconnected sequenced behaviors encompassing a specific time frame. We can conceptualize this chain of behaviors as actions defined by a series of sub-goals or interconnected milestones and that accomplishing the sub-goals is a prerequisite for achieving the overarching goal. The choice of individual behaviors linked to achieving sub-goals is derived from prior experiences, lessons learned from others and research performed by the individual who wants to achieve a particular goal and who takes the initiative to learn what is necessary to achieve success (Bandura, 1982; Neck and Houghton, 2006).

Leader behaviors are important to observe to understand how behavior reflects cognitive processes at work so as to develop a better understanding of the meaning of the concepts “leader” and “leadership.” Leaders think and act differently from non-leader types. By defining the concepts of leader and leadership from a behavioral perspective can develop a leadership model from which leadership development training programs can evolve (Neck and Houghton, 2006; Parker et al., 2008).

An important distinction about a leader’s behavior is that such behavior most often reflects a positive attitude because associate a positive attitude with the demonstration of goal-directed behavior (Hamel and Prahalad, 1994; Kark and Dijk, 2007; Miner, 2005; Yukl, 2010). In short, leaders are goal driven. A leader’s self-selected choice of behaviors reflect a general willingness to assume risks because there is always some level of risk the pursuit of goals that require changes that move individuals from the known to the unknown. To focus on change requires goals that reflect a leader’s positive self-esteem, positive self-concept, and self-confidence. Risk assumes that there is the chance of failure because not all the actions required are proven based on prior experiences. A leader’s level of self-confidence determines the leader’s selection of goals from a range of goals that represent different levels of challenge. The choice of goals incorporates the leader’s prior experiences that shaped self-esteem and self-concept. The resulting self-esteem and self-concept influence levels of self-confidence. The self-confidence then influences the selection of goals that go on to help maximize the
chance for success and reduces the risk (and fear) of failure (Yoe, 2011). Achieving change-oriented goals builds self-confidence because self-esteem and self-concept benefit. Thus, change oriented goals reflect a positive attitude because the leader demonstrates through his or her own actions the conviction that the goal is achievable. The leader also demonstrates that risks are manageable and that self-esteem, self-concept and self-confidence can successfully cope with the failure to achieve the goals (Yukl, 2010).

The choice of behaviors is essential to reaching a goal(s) because the best actions increase the probability of successfully achieving the goal. Behavior reflects the individual's commitment to achieving a goal. Behavior reflects the individual's intentions and intensity of his or her convictions that the goal is achievable. Behavior reflects a commitment. People are pragmatic in his or her actions (Rosenberg, 1989). An individual committed to accomplishing a particular goal demonstrates this commitment through behavior. An uncommitted individual demonstrates a choice of behaviors that confirms this commitment to being uncommitted. A leader with a positive self-esteem and positive self-concept possesses the self-confidence to act proactively in the selection of challenging goals and in creating a process to accomplish these goal(s).

**Importance of personal values**

Values represent a system of beliefs that guide individuals in determining right from wrong, good from bad and discerning between what is important from what is not important (Chan and Drasgow, 2001). An individual's values system provides guidance in deciding how to act. We interpret behavior or actions as proxy measures representing an individual's values because behavior is tangible whereas values are difficult to objectify (Power et al., 1989).

Values are critical elements in the process that influences how the individual makes choices. Values work in synchronization with the individual's self-esteem and self-concept (see Figure 2) because values represent the individual's beliefs; beliefs are influenced by the individual's perceived self-worth (Shamir et al., 1993). Self-assessment to evaluate an individual's self-worth involves the application of the individual's value system. Most likely, value acquisition starts during the first few days of birth (Power et al., 1989). Likewise, the process of developing self-esteem and self-concept begins during these first few days of birth as well (Erikson, 1994; Maddi, 2001; Modupe and Ositoye, 2010; Piaget, 1965; Power et al., 1989). From birth onward, values, self-esteem and self-concept evolve simultaneously. Which originates first (values or self-esteem) is irrelevant. What is important is the interrelatedness among the concepts and that a proactive change in self-esteem and self-concept requires a corresponding change in values. A change in personal values requires changing how feel (self-esteem) and think (self-concept) about ourselves. The choice of a starting point is less important than understanding the need to make the connection between values, self-esteem and self-concept. The linkage among the three dimensions ensures that initiatives that focus on change also incorporate a change in all the dimensions; a change in values is inexorably linked to changing self-esteem and self-concept.

Understanding how an individual acquires values, self-esteem and self-concept and how an individual can change his or her behavior by modifying these dimensions is important in facilitating behavioral change. Insight into the acquisition and development processes for creating and influencing an individual's value system, self-esteem and self-concept enable the individual to develop intervention strategies
that hasten the change process among the value system, self-esteem and self-concept (Shamir et al., 1993). Change can occur passively or through self-initiated change strategies (Neck and Manz, 2010; Neck and Houghton, 2006).

Changing values, self-esteem and self-concept can occur through passive means. The fetus in the womb has no control over his or her circumstances. As the fetus emerges, the infant begins to influence his or her circumstances by crying and other behaviors because individuals are driven by the need to survive (see Maslow, 1943). As individuals age, the potential to initiate change increases. However, most often, individual allow others to dictate the type of experiences that he or she is exposed to. It is only through experience that changes in values, self-esteem and self-concept can occur (Rosenberg, 1989). The passive approach involves letting serendipity determine how experience influences the individual.

Individuals can proactively initiate change in his or her personal values, self-esteem and self-concept. Acting proactively involves the individual selecting the types of experience(s) that likely will result in a change in values, self-esteem and self-concept. There is no assurance that change will occur or that a particular type of change will result. What is certain is that by selecting certain types of experiences some form of change likely will occur. Examples include selecting a new career, changing employers, selecting new friends, getting married, having children, dealing with community crises and helping others. These represent some of the many types of values, self-esteem and self-concept changing experiences. However, the change in values, self-esteem and self-concept is not the individual's only focal point. These change as byproducts of wanting something different. To live, act and be different from the present requires personal change driven by some causal factor(s) that necessitate the need to be different in some way from a current status.

Actively seeking to change values, self-esteem and self-concept is a difficult undertaking. The difficulty stems from personal resistance to change (whether individually induced or promoted by external sources). Change requires different feelings, thoughts and actions to move the individual outside his or her comfort zone. Keeping the status quo is often easier because change involves meeting new, more challenging standards of behavior. Continuous change (where the individual seeks self-improvement) represents a constant raising of standards (Power et al., 1989). This process of facilitating change is a difficult and challenging proposition that often overwhelms most people without a strong positive self-esteem and self-concept during this process of changing values, self-esteem and self-concept. The difficulty occurs because the individual must confront challenges, the unexpected and failure during the change process. These experiences test the individual's commitment to change. However, if the individual wants to be effective in leading his or herself and organizations want leader types of managers, the individual and organization need to commit to a process that focuses on changing personal values, self-esteem and self-concept (Ashford and Tsui, 1991; Boyatzis et al., 2006; Cameron and Caza, 2004; Collins, 2001; Cunnington and Trevor-Roberts, 1986; Zaleznik, 2004).

An individual's personal value system represents a set of guidelines that aid the individual who must decide how to respond to non-traditional situations. An individual's personal value system can help him or her decide how to respond. A personal value system can help to identify opportunities when negative situations occur. A personal value system can enable the individual to realize that they have control over the choice selection process. Knowing that there are choices is empowering because the individual understands that he or she has personal power to make
decisions that affects his or herself. This insight enables the individual to avoid the pitfalls associated with letting others make the decisions or when the individual makes a poor decision by assuming that there is only one choice.

A personal value system is also useful because the individual learns through the application of his or her values that personal self-efficacy increases through setting clear goals and believing that these goals are achievable. Goals provide the individual with a focus and help the individual evolve through goal achievement. Achieving personal goals helps the individual learn more about personal change and his or her ability to influence personal change. This insight becomes incorporated into the individual’s value system because the individual learns that achieving a goal is beneficial in strengthening self-esteem and self-concept. The value of “I can” begins to evolve and become more influential (Ashforth and Mael, 1989; Bandura, 1977a; Shamir et al., 1993; Yukl, 2010).

Conclusions
The preceding sections described the overall self-leadership development model, the important dimensions (internal mediators or influencers) of the model, and the way the dimensions interrelate as part of a dynamic process that can lead to personal growth. In this section, the focus is on the broader implications of self-leadership development. Self-leadership development represents a dynamic process that the self-leader demonstrates through varying degrees of self-efficacy. In striving to exercise greater self-control, self-leaders shape their own personal development over and drive and shape personal growth.

Self-leaders also show self-confidence and positive attitudes through their actions. The implication is obvious. A self-leader must possess the values, self-esteem and self-concept that help the individual be self-confident. One of the important benefits of having a positive attitude is that a leader identifies opportunities to pursue (Ryan and Deci, 2000). This means that a leader is able to avoid the pitfall of thinking “can’t” that associate with a negative attitude. The leader with a positive attitude identifies several choices of possible actions to pursue in dealing with a situation or, in achieving a goal, to satisfy the needs for competence and self-autonomy (Ryan and Deci, 2000). The non-leader type looks for reasons to justify inaction or minimal action. For a non-leader, inaction or minimal action are the only available options because these individuals do not see the available choices and none of the choices represent viable options because the non-leader individual fears failure (Rosenberg, 1989).

Leaders make decisions that lead to action. Leaders assess the viability of different actions and select the action to pursue that offers the greatest potential gain. Correspondingly, leaders fail. But leaders act decisively after determining a course of action to follow characterize such leaders as decisive leaders. The non-leader type actively looks for reasons to not take action and thereby entirely avoids the risk of failure (Yoe, 2011).

Leaders take risks. Risk has the connotation of either success or failure because associate risk with the concept probability (Yoe, 2011). Leaders make decisions which represent the output of a decision-making process that includes assessing the probabilities of a particular outcome occurring and the risks that the desired outcome will not occur. Non-leaders’ pre-occupation with the risks associated with failure often leads to inaction. Leaders do not focus on failure. Leaders think in terms of success (through an assessment of the probability of success referred to as risk analysis) knowing that failure is entirely possible. Leaders identify available alternative
decisions, collect information about these alternatives and then select the optimal choice of action to pursue at lower risk levels and maximum benefits. This is part of the process of risk assessment within the broader context of risk management which in turn is a component of the decision-making process (Yoe, 2011). The goal of the information gathering process is to increase the probability of selecting an action that results in success. Time constraints limit a leader’s ability to collect enough information because of the urgency of the decision-making situation. Circumstances frequently force quick decisions. Leaders often realize that the need for action hastens the decision-making process (Simon, 1997). Leaders attempt to limit the risks associated with having incomplete information by initiating risk-reducing actions that generate feedback to help influence future decisions. Leaders recognize that maintaining the status quo is an unacceptable choice whereas the non-leader attempts to maintain the status quo in order to avoid risky actions. The leader pursues actions that increase the likelihood of making good decisions (leads to a higher probability of a successful outcome). The non-leader’s resistance leads to forced decisions that often lead to self-fulfilling results (i.e. failure) because the non-leader resisted making a decision until the last moment when risk became too great to not make a decision.

Leaders strive to grow professionally and personally know this intuitively because only individuals who acquire the knowledge, skills and self-leadership abilities gain leadership positions (Neck and Houghton, 2006). The individual must apply for the position or say “yes” when nominated to fill a leadership role. At every leadership level within an organization, the individual prepares for moving to the next leadership level and this involves adapting to the demands of the new position. No individual is ever totally “ready” to assume a new leadership position. This is because wearing the leadership mantle is not the same as being ready to wear the leadership mantle. Preparation is important, but preparation never can replace on-the-job experience. Either the individual learns how to succeed in the position or fails. Agreeing to lead assumes the self-assessment of a positive self-esteem, positive self-concept and self-confidence because no individual accepts a leadership position without these types of assessments. A management position yes, but not a management position that requires a leader to lead (Yukl, 2010).

Leaders know that their success represents the success of others (Hamel and Prahalad, 1994; Miner, 2005; Shamir et al., 1998; Yukl, 2010; Zaleznik, 2004). The knowledge enables leaders to create a quid pro quo arrangement by selecting individuals who can enhance the leader’s chance to succeed and, in turn, assist these individuals in achieving their personal goals. Forming a mutually beneficial social relationship represents the leader’s efforts to create a pact to achieve organizational success along with achieving personal goals. The leader needs to be cognizant of the reciprocity of the relationship to ensure that the leader is mindful of the need to assist subordinates in achieving their personal goals too. This is what Ryan and Deci (2000) refer to as the psychological need for relatedness.

Leaders create a learning process to facilitate personal growth and the personal growth of subordinates. Personal growth, by its very nature, involves pushing through comfort zone boundaries (Ryan and Deci, 2000). The learning process represents an organized, systematic approach to extend the individual beyond comfort zone boundaries. A systematic learning process increases the likelihood of successful personal change and reduces the risk of failure because the leader aims to identify actions that facilitate learning. There are many methods to facilitate learning.
These include formal training programs, mentoring relationships, goal-setting actions, performance reviews, incentive programs along with a myriad of other useful approaches. The fundamental premise underlying the creation of a systematic learning process is to shape behavior, enhance values, develop self-esteem and self-concept, build self-confidence and a positive attitude, and build a team that creates a win-win situation for all.

Leadership development represents a process in which an individual moves through a series of developmental stages similar to the developmental stages every individual follows during the course of a lifetime (Cunnington, 1985; Cunnington and Trevor-Roberts, 1986; Knowles, 1984). What is different from the overall human development process is that the leadership development process can be a subset of the human development process. The primary focus is on becoming a leader and moving through the different leadership levels an individual can attain. Everyone is capable of being a leader because the starting point in the leadership development process is learning how to lead oneself. There are those who seek to lead others and for these individuals the process is the same because personal leadership and organizational leadership are intertwined. The focus of personal leadership is to become a self-leader by enhancing the individual’s ability to lead his or her self. Organizational leadership entails learning how to lead others while exercising greater levels of authority over organizational activities. A leadership development process is a necessary pre-condition to facilitate leadership development. The creation of a process by an individual is in itself an exercise in demonstrating leadership capabilities.

Developing into an effective leader is challenging because the individual needs to participate in creating the leadership development process. The challenge occurs because the individual and organization must continuously modify the leadership development process because of the need to raise the standards that define the expectations of the position held and as the circumstances change. The challenges loom large because the individual either moves forward successfully or the momentum associated with moving forward stops.

The individual must work diligently to push through his or her comfort zone boundaries or barriers during each move through position after position. At each level, the individual must adapt because the challenges of the position change as do the performance expectations. Performing well is not the only possible driving force for self-learning. Another motivator that drives self-learning is self-improvement (Ryan and Deci, 2000). Self-improvement emphasizes self-motivation to change the individual’s self-esteem, self-concept and self-confidence. While the focus is self-esteem and self-concept the motivating reason can change (see Figure 3). As the individual succeeds at developing the self (self-esteem, self-concept and self-confidence) the basis for making further self-improvements changes. The individual’s self-accomplishments lead to a more ambitious agenda to promote self-improvement.

Personal setbacks and personal crises occur because a trouble-free life is unrealistic. Individuals do not seek setbacks or crises, but they occur regardless and ambitious people who focus on self-improvement will experience more than most (Bennis, 2007). Personal values aid the individual in understanding that setbacks and crises arise because of decisions associated with self-improvement goals. A positive attitude enables the individual to view these situations as opportunities instead of assuming negative self-predations. The goal of leading requires the individual to make decisions with risks because self-improvement is not a risk free endeavor. associate no risk decisions with controlled, routine-driven non-threatening situations. Sometimes the
results of the individual’s efforts do not lead to achieving a goal. The self-improvement process will continue because the individual’s personal values, self-esteem and self-concept are sufficiently advanced that the individual learns from the experience and continues to focus on developing his or her leadership abilities.

A resume highlights an individual’s record of professional, educational and community accomplishments. Creating a leadership development resume represents a wonderful opportunity to highlight the successes of the individual’s leadership development process. The goal is to use the resume (i.e. that is a self-reflection exercise) to enhance the individual’s self-perception of the effectiveness of the leadership development process to that point in time. The personal resume documents the individual’s accomplishments and enables the individual to assess progress in moving through the various stages of the leadership development process. Furthermore, the leadership development resume provides the individual with the opportunity to link past accomplishments with future plans that continue developing personal leadership abilities (i.e. personal values, self-esteem, self-concept and self-confidence).

Finally, self-leadership requires actions that move the individual progressively forward. Thus, self-leadership is all about self-improvement which requires doing something constructive. Leaders act decisively and focus on achieving results. Becoming a leader involves being proactive (by achieving goals) and creating the momentum needed to evolve through the leadership development process.

Note
1. ETVBAMA refers to “emotional, think, values, believe, attitude, motivation, action.”

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Process of self-leadership development


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