Leadership

Professor Tony Berry

Richard Bunning
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Leadership

Professor Tony Berry PhD
Tony Berry is an Emeritus Professor in the business school at Sheffield Hallam University.
He began his career as an aircraft designer working on the Anglo-French Concorde as well as a range of aircraft at Boeing in Seattle. He gained a PhD at Manchester Business School, where he was a researcher and teacher for over 25 years. In that time he was director of both the full-time and part-time MBA programmes, of the doctoral programme, where he founded a DBA degree, and of many executive development programmes. In addition Tony was director of the International Teachers Programme.
Tony has a wide international experience, supervising MBA dissertations with students from over 45 countries and doctorates from more than 15 countries. His current research interests include regulation, risk, medium-size enterprises, voluntary sector, networks, leadership and change. He has had a wide experience of consulting to organisations, teams and individuals, was convenor of the Consultancy interest group of the British Academy of Management and jointly convened the Senior Consultants Forum.

Richard Bunning BA, MA, PhD
Dick Bunning is a principal with Phoenix Associates (UK) Ltd, an OD consultancy with offices in the US and the UK. He was previously an HR Director and internal OD consultant with Pilkington Glass, first in the US, transferring to the UK in 1991. He qualified as a Chartered Member of the Institute of Personnel and Development. An area of specialisation is developing the leadership function throughout organisations, from front-line leadership to the executive.
Dick has worked in higher education as well as in major healthcare delivery organisations in North America. In his practice, he has consulted to a wide variety of organisations including the NHS, Barclays Bank, the Co-operative Wholesale Service, Airports Company of South Africa, Raytheon Corporate Jets, Crown Cork and Seal, P&O Ferrymasters and Wincanton Logistics. Dick served on the Board of Governors of St Helens College, is a member of the Editorial Review Boards of Management Decision and the Leadership and Organization Development Journal, and has some 40 practitioner-oriented publications to his credit. He is listed in the current edition of Who’s Who in the World and now resides in Guernsey, UK in semi-retirement.
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The Learning Design of this Course

This course is designed to enable you to

1. know and understand theories, issues and tools of leadership in order to
   1. develop yourself as a leader
   2. develop leadership in your organisation
   and
2. understand how leadership theories are developed in order that you can
   1. be critically aware as you make use of them
   2. consider how you might make a contribution to them (especially relevant to DBA candidates).

The structure of the course is set out in Module 1.

Our starting point

We the authors see ourselves as (somewhat distant) consultants or coaches to your learning. This gives two questions:

1. How do we see you as learners?
2. What kind of consultancy are we offering?

1. How do we see you as learners?

Our first assumption is that you are adult learners, experienced and capable of learning from the content of the course, and of relating the course learning to your own roles and to your own organisation, as well as being capable of constructing your own models of leadership and your own developmental processes for your leadership roles.

Our second assumption is that you, the learners, are a very diverse community of people.

The authors have supervised masters’ dissertations and doctoral dissertations with students from more than 50 countries from every continent across the world. This has taught us that you, the learners, differ very much from one another in gender, age, nationality, culture, religion, beliefs, social context, educational background, professional and managerial experience, economic sector and learning patterns.

Our third assumption is that each of you is a unique person and will therefore have your own unique way of learning and will develop your own unique way of leadership effectiveness.

2. What kind of consultancy are we offering?

Our first assumption is that you do not require us to tell you what to do. Indeed, given the fact that we do not know the unique person that you are, it would be presumptuous of us to do that. But it is the case that leadership research has not reached the point where accurate universal predictions can be made.

Second, we offer the content of this course as a vehicle where we enter a partnership with you on ideas, theories, issues and processes about leadership. We
do not know the culture, context or setting in which you work, so we invite you on a journey through the modules. It would not be surprising if you found that some were more relevant to your past, some more relevant now, and that others may only be relevant in the future.

Third, we expect that you will respond in a unique way to the content of the course and the modules. Sometimes you will find that we are challenging your deeply held beliefs, your experience and your understanding of leaders and leadership. At other times we shall reinforce what you believe. This may be confusing at first, but please remember that there are many theories and ideas about leaders and leadership. What is more, every month new research is adding to both knowledge and understanding of leaders, leading and leadership.

Fourth, we assume that you, as a leader, and your practice of leading as well as your ability to develop leadership in your context, will be undergoing some changes. In essence, we anticipate you will develop your own personal theory and practice of leadership.
Learning Processes

Each module has set learning objectives that are designed as a first-level insight into the course. We hope that they are helpful at that level.

However, because individuals learn in different ways, we have added some questions for reflection and consideration where your responses are those that matter. You may wish to keep these in a journal and revisit them towards the end of the course.

We have also included some examples of leaders and leadership. But we also know that your magazines, newspapers, TV and radio carry many reports and stories of leaders, their triumphs, conflicts, disasters and ordinary everyday work. We also know that some of these tales will be about the rise and indeed the fall of all types of leader. In short, we know that you are surrounded by and infused with observation and reports about leaders, leading and leadership. We encourage you to keep these with you as you work through this course. One way of doing this is to start and keep a press and magazine cuttings file as you do the course. (Don’t forget the sports pages!) Another way is to see how leadership is handled in TV, radio and especially films about various national heroes and heroines. Biography and autobiography are also good places to observe leaders. Take time in your busy day to discuss these with colleagues.

For 14 of the modules we have written case studies. (There are no cases for the first introductory module or the learning about leadership module; the case material for Module 17 is you.) These are not designed as illustrations of good leaders or of good leadership practice. They are designed so that you can examine how the ideas in each module might be applied, to recognise problems and to suggest some possible solutions. But by the time you get to the sixth or seventh module you will begin to see that you can consider most of the cases in relation to almost any of the modules. Indeed, we recommend that you take two or three of the longer cases and do that work. It would be very good preparation for the course assessment.

We also acknowledge that one of your learning goals will be to master the material to do well on the assessment. In that regard, you will find a number of learning aids. At the end of each module you will find a variety of self-test items. On the website you will find additional self-test assessments as well as previous exam papers with answers. And with specific questions, you will be able to contact us directly via the forum. We encourage the use of these additional resources.

We assume that you will be able to make connections between the materials of each module. In Module 1 we set out our rationale for the design of the course. In Module 17 we create a development process for you to build on the connections that you have made. That provides a framework for linking and sense-making. One way of getting to grips with the course is to read the summary points in each module to construct a map in your mind.

In places the text is unashamedly academic. That did not seem to the authors to be a problem in courses leading to a master’s or doctor’s degree. There is nothing as
useful as a good theory. In other parts it is unashamedly pragmatic, as befits a business degree. We very much hope you find value in this course and that you enjoy this most personal of learning experiences.
Module 1

Learning about Leadership

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Learning Objectives

By the end of this module, you will be able to:

- understand and work with the circles of leader development;
- acknowledge that leading is about change;
- understand the structure of the book and how it relates to the circles of leadership development.

1.1 Introduction to the Ideas and Structure of the Book

This module examines some of the themes of leadership studies, and sets the scene for the following modules. We have set out to cover most of the current ideas in the field. But to begin, we see that there is considerable complexity in learning about leadership and about being a leader. Consider the following questions and think a minute about how you might answer them:

1. Is a good leader born with that talent?
2. Or conversely, can nearly anyone learn to be a leader, given the opportunity?
3. If you believe leadership can be learned, how can that learning best occur?
4. Why might a leader do well in one setting, say business, but find success elusive in a different setting such as politics?
5. Why might a leader succeed at certain times in their career, but not another? (Winston Churchill is an oft-cited example.)
6. Would followers in different countries value different leadership styles or do you believe people are much the same across the globe?

7. Do you think women in leadership have a noticeably different approach from their male colleagues? If so, what are those differences?

8. When ethical issues arise, do you feel leaders should make decisions based on principles such as always telling the truth? Or would it be better to consider the likely outcomes of a course of action, even if it required violating that principle?

You will be challenged to examine these questions – and more – as you move through this course. And we trust that your learning will not only be about leadership, but also about your ability as a leader.

The two circles in Figure 1.1 show how you might learn about leadership and being a leader. The outer circle is based upon acknowledging your experience of leadership in organisations, reflecting upon that experience, examining those experiences and reflections against the theories of leadership and then planning how you might change your own leadership and leadership in your organisation.

![Figure 1.1 The leadership learning cycle](image)

The inner circle is about you: beginning with your personal experience of being a leader, reflecting upon that experience, examining those reflections against theories of persons as leaders, and then planning to change and develop yourself as a leader.

The connection between these circles of development is quite complex. It can be difficult to disentangle your experience of leaders in your organisation from your experience of yourself as a leader. It is also not always clear how to take on board the theories of leadership. Part of your task in this book is to keep in mind these constraints.
two circles as you work through the modules and the questions and exercises we have provided.

It appears to be impossible to define effective leadership for all situations. There are a variety of theories and philosophies of leadership, the research on leadership is not conclusive and sometimes contradictory, the field is constantly changing, and the most important thing is for you to develop your own working or lived theory of leadership, one with which you are comfortable, but also one that is open to learning and development. So we see you as being open to continual learning and development as a leader. The book is designed to guide you through both circles and has a number of learning exercises to help you.

Warren Bennis, a noted writer on leadership, borrowed William Shakespeare’s idea of the seven stages of a man’s life to consider the parallel stages of a leader’s development. These were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The infant</th>
<th>executive in need of a mentor.</th>
<th>The young graduate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The schoolboy</td>
<td>must learn and then act in public, still in need of mentors.</td>
<td>The unit leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The lover</td>
<td>wonders anxiously about his success and his attachment to the career and organisation.</td>
<td>The group leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The bearded soldier</td>
<td>is now a leader of substance who must be willing to accept people better than himself as talented staff.</td>
<td>The divisional leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The general</td>
<td>must be open to the truth, listen and hear what people say to him.</td>
<td>The strategic leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The statesman</td>
<td>works at wisdom for the organisation, is a policy-maker.</td>
<td>The policy leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The sage</td>
<td>embraces the role of mentor.</td>
<td>The senior non-executive director</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It seemed unnecessary to change this to include women, not because we do not acknowledge equality, but because it would not make as much sense of the poet’s original intention. Indeed in most organisations the leadership role of women is without question. You, the reader, may be at any one of these stages, having travelled through all or none of them. You might think that you do not carry the history of these stages with you, but you most surely do. And as you work through this book you will have to consider why ideas of leadership that you do not appreciate so readily may be more applicable either to your past or to your future than to your present position.

How do you place yourself in these stages?
1.2 The Practice of Leadership?

Leadership is everywhere in the world of politics, organisations and our private lives. A familiar view of the great leader was the hero or heroine (see Module 2). The attraction of the hero as leader seems to be as old as human society. It appears in many stories and in most cultures. In the *Iliad*, Homer gives an account of the battles to capture Troy, where the Greek and Trojan heroes struggle in individual combat to gain ascendancy and kill their adversary. The prose becomes electric in the descriptions of the individuals and the fights. In the sequel to the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey*, Homer takes us and Odysseus on a long and terrible journey, beset with external and internal dangers, with Odysseus as the archetype of the leader who travels into the unknown with courage and fortitude and has hair-raising and delicious adventures. The arrival home of Odysseus is celebrated with great bloodshed. The journey of the defeated Trojans is described by Virgil in the *Aeneid* as a process, led by Aeneas, of re-establishing themselves in Italy to serve as a founding myth of Rome. Homer and Virgil create heroes for us both to admire and to emulate.

Leader models and images, when MBA students are asked for them, are almost always entirely male. Such persons nearly always need prodding to find an equal set of female leadership models and images. That this maleness persists in this age, an age that in the West anyway is surely the ‘age of woman’, is quite surprising. The revolution in expectations and assumptions as to personal, private and public roles of men and women has yet to be worked through, but its impact on business organisations is felt in every detail of its working, including leadership.

Leaders and leadership have preoccupied mankind for centuries. We all can recognise many people, throughout our national and international histories, who have been acknowledged as great or powerful leaders. Some of these have succeeded in their goals and some have ultimately failed. Reflecting on historical experience led Max Weber (1947), a German social theorist, to conceive of three kinds of leadership. First came traditional, by which he meant that the leader’s authority came from social, political and institutional continuity. Examples are kings, tribal leaders, religious leaders and such. Second was rational legal, where the leader’s authority came from constitutions of nations and organisations. Examples are presidents, prime ministers, trade union officers etc. Third was charismatic, where the leader’s authority came from inside the person and was accepted by those who were inspired to follow. Of course both traditional and rational legal leaders could also be charismatic. And this charismatic leadership was the uncomfortable driving force of change. Indeed, Weber and others took the view that only charismatic leadership could effect substantial change. Weber noted that charismatic leaders were often the driving force of change from traditional to rational legal forms, but he also suggested that rational legal forms also decayed towards the traditional. So, as you may have experienced, leadership forms are not automatically stable.

Business leaders may be any of these three kinds. Family firms are usually founded by a charismatic figure and then continued in a traditional way, often to their detriment. In Lancashire there was an old saying about family firms: from clogs to clogs in three generations. The founder grew out of the poverty (wearing the clogs),
the inheritor took the fruits of the business, and the next generation failed the business as other competitors and technological change made their products and processes redundant. So in business and commerce there have been many people recognised for innovation, for development, for adventuring and venturing and for economic, social and political contribution. In the last century Henri Fayol (1949), when considering the task of business management, wrote of five functions of managing. These were planning, leading, organising, controlling and motivating. Note that leading was central to these, but later leadership theorists were keen to establish the connections between leading and planning as an approach to strategy formulation, leading and controlling as a means of protecting the business, and leading and motivating as a means of engendering support and change, as we shall see in Module 4. Some theorists have made links between the functional stance of Fayol and the institutional stance of Weber to write of transformational leadership as a combination of charismatic leading and motivating.

In a workshop on leadership the following matrix, Table 1.1, was sketched by one of the authors. It connected modes of working to the change orientation of the ‘leadership group’, producing four ‘characteristic’ outcomes: accidental, preservative, enabling and strategic.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership Group</th>
<th>Modes of working</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Change orientation is</td>
<td>Low interventionist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Towards no change</td>
<td>Accidental: Que sera sera</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Towards change</td>
<td>Enabling: encouraging</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most managerial literature is written on the assumption that leadership, in a world of competition and markets, is actively seeking strategic change. But as soon as the matrix was made it became clear that leaders across a range of organisations can consciously and/or unconsciously seek any or all of these four outcomes, but in relation to different issues. Any corporate leader will recognise that the needs of some parts of the organisation will respond to enabling (especially where high levels of knowledge and individual contribution are required), some parts will require preservation and continuity, while other parts will be in need of strategic change.
And of course it can be difficult to work in an organisation that needs all three of those in the same time period. (You might know of organisations that work on accidental leadership. We have experienced some where accidental was the best description of leadership!) Of course any given organisation may centre itself on any one of these and, in the election of leaders, proceed to provide appropriate leadership for one issue, but perhaps at the expense of the other issues and to the possible detriment of the organisation as a whole.

But leadership is often as embedded in the culture of the organisation as the organisation is embedded in its cultural contexts. So leadership is not only about deciding upon change and making it happen but also, in its embeddedness, about enacting aspects of the societal or cultural context in which it occurs. The question arises whether any leaders can stand outside the organisations that they are expected to lead. It is a tradition in the Church of England always to appoint a person as bishop who has no experience of (and presumably no ties within) the diocese to which they are sent. And some commercial organisations do the same by always appointing divisional leaders from another part of the organisation. Military units nearly always have new leaders from outside them. In one dramatic case the UK government appointed a foreign manager to a nationalised industry with a remit to reshape it drastically. After much public ferment, and a long and bitter strike, the organisation was substantially different, with large parts closed down and new managerial style everywhere. To signal to the new world that the new leader did not occupy the office in the existing HQ building, he set up his own chairman’s office in a nearby office block. Of course Machiavelli, some 500 years ago, advised the Prince to do the same.

1.3 Design of the Book and the Module

This module is designed to enable you to understand where leadership studies have been, where they are now, where they are going, how you can build your own leadership capability, and how you can build the leadership capability of your organisation. We outline below the structure and focus of the following modules. Of course all of these themes and issues are intertwined in practice, and we ask you to hold on to that idea as we explore leadership theories and issues.

In Module 2, Module 3 and Module 4 we present three of the most significant understandings of leadership via an exploration of what they are and how they have developed. What will become clear is how enduring these theories are. The older ones are not so much superseded as complemented or extended. These three theories are the theories of physical and personality traits (Module 2), leader behaviour (Module 3) and the contrasts of transactional and transformational leadership (Module 4). We also look at the emerging theories of servant leadership and distributed leaders, work which builds on prior theories.

Traits. We shall begin with one of the oldest theories based upon personal characteristics. The key question here was: Can we identify the traits of the great leader? This is based upon an assumption that we can identify and then distil the characteristics of great leaders into a model of traits. Then we can select leaders by applying
Module 1 / Learning about Leadership

Leadership

Edinburgh Business School

1.4 Culture, Values and Leadership

While we can think of leaders as holding and giving expression to values and beliefs, inspiring, providing and articulating visions, such people are enacting values and beliefs in a social field. Hence they are rarely as ‘independent’ as they might wish to think. Organisational culture is a hotly contested field of study. Some argue that managers and leaders can shape, indeed choose, organisational culture; others take the opposite view, that cultures shape organisations and leaders. One scholar, Amatai Etzioni (1961), took a more prosaic view and classified cultures into three types: the normative, the instrumental and the coercive. The normative culture is where all thought and action is infused with attention to and debates about values, and people belong because they subscribe to the values. The instrumental cultures are those where people belong because they can get something they want and are prepared to compromise in order to get it; business organisations have much of this characteristic. Coercive organisations require and force people to belong: prisons and armies are
such. Surprisingly, schools are often experienced as coercive to their pupils, as the state requires them to attend. Leadership required in each of these three settings is very different. Using value-centred leadership in a coercive organisation or coercive or instrumental leadership in a normative organisation is the stuff of cartoons, comedy and organisational nightmares.

Institutional and organisational structures impose their own constraints upon what kinds of leadership may be exercised. Small businesses may operate with highly personal relationships; larger organisations require a mix of the personal relationships and more formal procedures of structures and communication; very large organisations require chains of relationships, sophisticated communication and change management processes. The context of a business can also shape the space for leadership, for people have freedom to move jobs, customers have freedom to choose, and suppliers can make choices too. Hence the system of organisation in its context imposes considerable constraints upon leaders. You could contrast your image of leaders in entrepreneurial organisations with government administrators, leaders of banks with those of construction firms, and, in the context of the differences within an organisation, leaders of research and development departments with leaders of production departments.

There is also a tameness or taming of leadership in the literature; there is little of the wildness of creativity, of unpleasantness, of human destructiveness or incompetence. But this does appear in theatre: see Shakespeare’s Richard III, and in politics, for example, Stalin and Mao. Norman Dixon in On the Psychology of Military Incompetence (1976) and its sequel on managerial incompetence explored how an organisation’s culture and processes sustain leaders who are incapable of leading at the very moments when leadership must be demonstrated. Many organisations breed go-getting leaders at middle levels and then expect them to cope well and be successful at top levels without any further training, education or development.

And lest we think that leadership has always been a male-dominated world, let us remember Boudicca, a fourth-century woman in England who fought the Romans; Joan of Arc in France, who fought the English; Catherine the Great of Russia; Mary Wollstonecraft, who began the literature of women’s liberation; and Simone de Beauvoir, a great French philosopher and novelist of politics and identity. These are just a few of the women who have blazed incandescent trails. We hope that you can think of many examples of such male and female leaders in your own country and in your own organisations. This tradition has continued throughout the ensuing centuries, in literature, in painting, in music, in films and in drama, as well as in sport and business.

In Module 6 we consider the issue of leadership and culture, and complement this with an examination of gender and leadership in Module 7.

Culture. Is leadership shaped by culture or can leaders shape cultures? What does research tell us about either pathway? Or are both pathways required? How does leadership differ in sectors? What explains these differences? What kinds of leadership should you develop in order to work effectively in sectors? Is it possible to adjust from one sector to another?
Gender. Are women leaders different in their behaviour compared with men leaders? Does this lead to different outcomes? What is the experience of ‘leadership’ in female organisations? Do feminists consider the term leadership to be acceptable?

For leaders of organisations there was and is an imperative to work at the systemic and inter-systemic levels, and there is much current effort in theorising from the familiar intra-organisational focus to both inter- and extra-organisational foci. This requires an engagement with contextual culture and its patterns and changes. We have little information on how leaders work at understanding these difficult issues but we will spend time on this issue later in this book.

1.5 The Good Leader

The question arises as to the goodness of the good leader. For effective leaders may be both liberators and oppressors of others. Tacit assumptions of the good leader as the good person pervade almost all of the leadership literature. This idealisation serves us badly, it seems, by turning us away from imperfections such as corruption and leading us away from the real behaviour towards an ideal. This might be a reaction to the advice to the Prince, offered by Machiavelli, that leaders should either be feared or loved. (Machiavelli has a bad name these days but in his book The Prince he offered a lot of good advice for a leader.) We may prefer to be loved, but much leadership behaviour is based upon power and the fear that it engenders. And in a crisis the likelihood is that the leader will revert to type. You may wish to reflect upon your experience of crisis and ask what kind of leadership was mobilised. In our experience it is a mix of the fear of the consequences of the crisis and love for the leader as deliverer from the predicament.

In Module 8 we present some of the debates about leadership and ethics. What have truth, justice, love and compassion to do with business leadership? If we require ethical organisations, how do we ensure ethical behaviours? Does a focus on profitability sometimes argue against ethical behaviour? Do leaders have to be more ethical than their organisation members? Do leaders have to model ethical behaviour or is this a negotiated issue?

1.6 Leadership in Today’s Organisations

The idea of organisation can seem simple, and subject to leader control. But organisations are characterised by such complexity that leaders cannot succeed simply by their own will, which is why leadership teams and collaborative working have been given so much attention. This attention included varieties of consultative leadership and participation. This is not only because organisations, following long periods of hierarchy and managerialism, have turned to assumptions of egalitarianism as more suited to the age of individuality. It is also because the knowledge explosion has exposed the limitations and capabilities of leaders and underlined the need for many contributors and contributions to organisational leadership. Modern business organisations are discovering anew what the military have always known, that success depends on the quality, range and extent of leadership at all levels.
In Module 9 there is an examination of the role of leadership in work groups and teams. This is followed by an exploration of the role of leadership across the wider organisation, the subject of Module 10.

1.7 Developing Leadership

Here we come back to the two circles of learning about leadership set out at the start of this module. We have considered theories of leadership and issues critical to leadership and its understanding and the context within which it is exercised. Now we turn to consideration of leadership development.

In Module 11 we examine the problem of leadership and its development in a fast-changing world. You should be able to answer the questions of what has been learned about effective development and how these processes can be used to develop your own leadership and the leadership capability of your organisation. These are extended in Module 12, where consideration is given to a series of tools and practices for you to use as you work on your own development as a leader. But these are equally useful as you work on the development of leadership within your organisation.

In addition you will have to be concerned with the development of leadership capability outside your organisation in supply systems and distribution systems, and in actual and potential partners, because their weaknesses will damage your capability of reaching your potential.

1.8 Are Policy-Makers and Strategists Also Leaders?

One of the myths about leaders is that they are all change-oriented, active and fast decision-makers. But research has, surprisingly, suggested that while this may be true of middle managers, it is not necessarily true of top leaders. Top leaders, it appears, tend to be very careful to listen to a range of views and relatively slow to come to a view. It seems that judgement is more important for them, as it forms the context within which decisions can be made. Here we get a glimpse of the difference between policy and strategy. Policy is of the whole society, of the whole community, and shapes the values, beliefs and assumptions of the organisation. Here a policy statement is one that absorbs uncertainty to create a space of temporary quasi-certainty for the organisation to function without all issues and events being triggers for more confusion. In this stance strategy is the process of achieving goals via innovation and change.

If strategy requires analysis and action then policy requires judgement. Geoffrey Vickers (a distinguished UK manager and author), celebrated author of The Art of Judgement (1965), wrote that judgement is an art that requires leaders to form a multi-faceted appreciation of ambiguous and uncertain situations with discernment, a search for personal wisdom, the significance of systemic wisdom and a need for flexibility. This is a nice way of seeing the distinction between policy and strategy, between policy-makers and strategic actors. For these reasons some have argued that a strategist should never be allowed to be the chairman of the board, but should
always be the chief executive officer. Should the chief executive officer be promoted to the role of chairman there will be confusion unless the person concerned understands the new demands he or she has to meet. This particular distinction between policy-makers and strategists is not made in many business texts, but it can provide a useful distinction between the leadership required in policy-making and that required in strategy and its delivery. Of course one person or a group such as a board of directors might encapsulate both with clarity and subtlety.

So in Module 13 we consider the task and role of the strategic leader. This is complemented by an exploration of leadership and risk (Module 14).

What is strategy? (You may have already completed the *Strategic Planning* course.) What are the unique requirements of strategic leadership? How are these developed? How universally applicable are these in business and other organisations? Is risk merely a matter of probability, or can organisations and leaders take a cultural perspective on managing risks?

### 1.9 Studying Leadership

Much business leadership research is strongly rooted in philosophical assumptions, and mostly from a traditional scientific positivist and functionalist stance. This has been the basis of much leadership study and research, before and since Henri Fayol’s formulation of the functions of managers. But it does appear to be the case that much leadership discourse and practice is embedded in processes of social construction and reconstruction. This means that claims to know what leadership is actually about are very contested. For example, if you were one of the subjects of a scientific positivist study of leadership you would find the research outcomes interesting, but they would not reach the complex truth of you as a leader. You construct, in your social context, a person as leader and not a statistic.

In Module 15 we give a view of the way in which leadership has been studied by researchers. In this module you will be able to see why leadership research has been conducted the way it has, and be encouraged to consider some different approaches.

How have practice and theory contributed to the study of leadership? How can we assess the validity of the research and its recommendations? How has leadership been studied? What has been the value of these different approaches? What has been ignored or left out of these studies? How could you go about conducting a study of leadership for a dissertation or a thesis?

### 1.10 And a Critical Response?

In Module 16 we present a more critical account of leadership to offer you a means of beginning to challenge some of the assumptions about leaders and leadership that are rarely made explicit. Critical theorists argue strongly that much leadership research and writing is a product of the underlying power relations in society and organisations, within which constructions and practices of leadership merely serve to legitimise and maintain the structure of power relationships. This provides quite a good explanation of both the glass ceiling for women in relation to leader positions
and the glacial pace at which it is changing. There is a disturbing question about what we are currently seeking in leadership practice. Are we really seeking or should we search for an ‘art of leadership in post-modernity’, rooted in an emerging social order, no longer seeking public, institutional or egalitarian outcomes, and with little regard or care for the stable hierarchies of modernist forms, the kaleidoscopic leader perhaps taking shapes from the reflective social mirrors?

If you can accept that the social field within which organisations are embedded is undergoing radical change, then leadership studies face some very critical challenges. First, how can we enter a dialogue about these matters? This is not merely an academic exercise, for the business community needs to understand where leaders are travelling. Second, we need wider and deeper studies addressing individual, group and organisational stories and how leadership is being (re)constructed. There is a need to be attentive to a critical reading of the experience of persons in roles and in systems and of working with them on making multiple senses. Is the whole enterprise mistaken and malformed? What can we learn from a critical theory approach to leadership?

Planning For Your Future in a World of Flux: Chaos?

Where has the literature located the ferment of the interfaces, of the edges, of the presences and absences, the places of creativity, of experiment, failure, survival and success, the insecurity of experience? There is writing about risk and entrepreneurial leadership, but is this making safe and understood that which really is risky, uncertain, ambiguous or downright dangerous? The birth of what some are calling the ‘chaordic age’ addresses the paradox of intertwined chaos (random patterns of behaviour within bounds) and order (hence the word chaordic). Leaders do not control very much, because they cannot. This gives new life to the themes of emergence – not so much controlled but arising out of interactions. In this notion of change there is intent and design, but there is no dominance of one actor; rather there is pluralism of persons, organisations, contexts that shape events. In this sense institutions and organisations have designed and emergent properties: so how does any organisation in a field choose to run, let alone lead, itself? And are there systems of survival in the emerging, shifting field? Or is the task of leadership here to reformulate, deconstruct and reconstruct, to negotiate meanings and actions with others?

Do all significant changes come from the ‘edge’ rather than the middle? What is it that attracts, sustains and retains membership or adherence? And who and what can be given voice, and where lies voice in relation to the boundaries of entry or exit?

How can critical reflexiveness (a critically well-informed understanding of leading, leaders and leadership) assist you to develop yourself as a leader as you go through your life processes from youth, through middle age, to maturity and to wisdom? We seek to increase your understanding of just what does contribute to and shape your leadership effectiveness; whether this can be universal for all your future or how it must be subject to culture, history and context. Are there choices
for you and, if there are, how can you make them in the context of organisational development and institutional and societal change?

What is it that you admire about the leaders you admire? What do you not admire in them?

What has contributed to their effectiveness?

How did they develop their leadership? Were they born to it or with it?

In your experience, which of the following sources have you used to understand leadership?

- Classical literature
- Poetry
- Biography and autobiography
- Novels
- Journals and newspapers
- Theatre; films; TV
- Personal contact
- Research studies.

What is your own rationale for that experience? What have been your main learnings from each source? What do you expect to learn from this course?

Learning Summary

You should now understand the circles of development (Figure 1.1) and how these are used for the design of the book. Check that you can make a preliminary mapping of each module onto the circles.

You should now be able to consider in what sequence you prefer to study each module.

References


