

How do leaders develop

[Business](#), [Leadership](#)



How do leaders develop? Given the large amount of different facets leaders possess in order to perform effectively in their respective domains, it is hard to specifically define leadership- however, it can be merely presented as an influencing process between a leader and the people who follow.

Furthermore, leadership development is essential in carrying an individual through from the stages of emergence all the way to leadership effectiveness, and was defined by Day (2012) as " the expansion of an individual's capacity to be effective in leadership roles and processes".

According to Contracts (2010) and Murphy (2011), there are major developmental stages in leadership; starting in early childhood, those years playing a major role in the upbringing of future self-regulation and leadership identity. Studies by Viola and Possessing (2011) have also demonstrated that many skills acquired at a young age during " sensitive periods", when learning has proven to be easier and happens faster, often have an impact on leadership development in later stages; therefore an adequate early environment may reveal itself as helpful in developing future effective leaders.

Furthermore, research from Arrive et al (2006) argues that many leader personality traits are partly genetically inherited, and that parents contribute to many characteristics shown in their children; which helps demonstrate that there are a considerable amount of factors in leadership development that are, at least for the early years, beyond the control of the individual concerned and will most likely have consequences (positive or negative) on leadership development in the person's future years.

However, initiative is arguably the main driver for self-regulation and a moon trait in leaders, according to Larson (2000). In addition, Caldwell (2008) states in his findings that practice is the main method for obtaining desired leadership skills, leading us to think that anyone with enough initiative and the right set of goals could potentially become an effective leader.

Considering the impact of an individual's environment on their personal traits and attributes, most noticeably from the early years, how much control do we really have over our leadership development?

Based on a research conducted by Arrive et al (2006), at least 30% of personality heartsickness in relation to transformational leadership is attributed through genetics; which is an indication that genes play a large role in determining leadership attributes in individuals, whether it is leader emergence or leader effectiveness. However, 70% of leadership traits stem from other sources; it is therefore important to analyse all the other factors influencing the development of the individual's leadership skills.

Acting as the main role-models, parents are a vital influence in their children's developments and play a major role in their relation to adhering: "Parents contribute to their children's religious beliefs, intellectual and occupational interests, feelings of self-esteem or inadequacy, adherence to traditional or modern notions of masculinity and femininity, helpfulness to others, skills, and values" (Wade & Atavist, 2008) A research conducted by Contracts (2010) concluded that there are four different types of parenting styles; these are: authoritative, neglectful, authoritarian and indulgent.

Each one of the four is argued to have varying effects on children's leadership development. It is believed that authoritative parents are the most likely to raise children to be effective leaders, by educating them with strict discipline and monitoring; but also supportive and encouraging of them to think and act independently as they become more mature (Murphy, 2011).

On the other hand, according to Banding (1991) authoritarian parents tend to exert control and punishment based on firm rules; which is a parenting method that is not usually prone to leadership skill development in children, generally resulting in teenagers with a lack of social and communications skills.

Furthermore, neglectful parents are absent or play very minor roles in their children's lives; as a result they tend to raise teenagers with poor social skills and low self control. However, indulgent parents, who will be present without ever enforcing many household rules, tend to raise children with generally higher creativity levels; but will also lead to lower social skills and self-control due to a lack of firmness in regards to their education from their parents.

Another phenomenon instigated by parenting, which can be observed from infancy and acts as an indicator for future adhering outcomes, is the attachment or bond that infants have with their guardians; Insinators et al (1978) determined three different types of attachments a child can have: Secure, avoiding and ambivalent- these will influence the individual's future social behavior.

According to Insinuator et al's findings, individuals who benefited from secure attachment to their guardians in their formative years are generally more socially adaptable as adults and have the confidence resources to take on leadership roles; whereas individuals who suffered from insecure attachments (avoiding or ambivalent) tend to comparatively lack social confidence due to the absence of a sense of security from a guardian as a child and, in contrast, will not seek out leadership.

This goes to show that parents have a considerable impact on the outcome of their children, which ultimately will affect them in regards to their leadership development, abilities and capabilities. It is quite obvious that early influences and genetics have an impact on leadership development in adulthood, those early years being a delicate, sensitive and an important period of development.

However, as long as individuals keep on learning new skills and behaviors, development will continue (Bernstein, 1989). An individual's background, environment and early upbringing are not the only factors in successful effective leadership development; although those elements are strong enablers, with many demonstrated correlations, they are not everything needed to be a leader .

Caldwell (2008) underlined the crucial importance of training and practice through his analysis of notable leaders such as Bill Gates or the Beatles, and included that it requires 10 000 hours of work to become an expert in any field; and this can be achieved by anyone with the initiative to do so.

Although practice may yield more results in skill development and mastery if

performed at a young age during the "sensitive period" of learning, it does not however mean that it will instigate zero form of leadership development if practicing occurs later in lifetime (Viola and Possessing 2011).

Another important concept explained through a model developed by Lord and Hall (2005), which encompasses the development of leadership identity and self-exultation in relevance with the life approach to leader development, is that our notion of leadership evolves through time; for example the way leadership is demonstrated and perceived as a child in primary school will be completely different to the way in which it is viewed by adults with different motifs and sets of personal goals.

Leadership identity plays a vital part in leadership development, acting in correlation with self-regulation; as individual goals and motivations progress through time, we tend to re-develop new updated leadership identities and adapt our goal researchers accordingly, in order to eventually achieve effectiveness and have control over our own leadership development. Previous findings demonstrate a clear correlation between early influences and leadership development.

Furthermore, the presence of a sensitive period in regards to learning and developing core characteristics found in early years of childhood is an indicator of the limited amount of control we have over our own leadership development, given that most main decisions regarding young children's upbringing and social environments are made by the parents, and ultimately become defining factors for the individuals.

This emphasizes the fact that individuals placed in a favorable environment for developing leadership skills, self-efficacy and regulation at a young age have a considerable advantage over those that aren't, and consequently greater chances of becoming leaders in the long-run; this can be used as an encouragement for parents and schools to focus on those crucial character-building and defining years in order to enable individuals with the best opportunities for effective leadership from early on.

It is still however possible for individuals to hang their leadership development trajectory and develop a different leadership identity at any given time after reaching maturity, if they possess the urge to become an effective leader or differ from a current leadership position; it is only their original circumstances as a young child which they have no control over, which is a major part of leadership development.