The role of self-deception in leadership ineffectiveness — a theoretical overview

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The impact of effective leadership practices on various components of organisational success is a well-researched area in the domain of leadership and management. There is, however, little research available that focuses on those aspects that constitute leadership ineffectiveness and that, in turn, contribute to organisational failure. A literature review was conducted, identifying those behaviours that are responsible for leadership ineffectiveness. A fairly large amount of the literature consulted appears to suggest that the character of a leader; the ability to manage one’s own emotions; and difficulty in effectively managing interpersonal relationships may be some of the major aspects impacting negatively on the effectiveness of a leader. In this article I raise a topic in leadership research previously neglected by researchers in that I explore and illustrate how self-deception could be regarded as one of the primary reasons contributing to leadership ineffectiveness. The implication for leaders, organisations and those responsible for the development of leaders is also discussed, while areas for future research are indicated.

Keywords: leadership; leadership development; leadership ineffectiveness; self-deception

Bass (cited in Mello, 1999) states that the study of leadership spans more than a thousand years, as deliberations relating to leadership and leadership effectiveness are intimated in various Greek and Latin classics; in the Old and the New Testaments of the Bible; and in the writings of ancient Chinese philosophers. Leadership is a focal area of research in the 21st century, as illustrated by Fulmer and Conger (2004) who claim that there are well over 15 000 published articles and books available on leadership alone. In addition, they state that the existing leadership literature and research tends to focus primarily on describing those skills, characteristics and behaviours of successful and effective leaders. Burke (2006), however, states that there are few resources identifying and describing ineffective leadership practices. According to Blakeley (2007), it is more important to investigate the blind spots of leaders and those in authority, as they normally have more power. The more power a person wields, the more lives are affected by his or her behaviour. When people in positions of leadership manifest significant blind spots, individuals, organisations and whole communities may suffer.

According to McCartney and Campbell (2006), there is still no agreement among certain researchers as to what management and leadership constitute. Some writers use the terms interchangeably, while others argue that the terms are substantially different and draw distinct comparisons. The intention in this article is not to become involved in the debate about the skills and personality differences of a leader and a manager. It is my opinion that an appropriate mix of leadership attributes, management skills and personality traits is required for success in formal organisations, with the only variation being that the optimal mix may change as a leader moves up in an organisation. Leadership and management will therefore be used interchangeably to refer to the person who is responsible for organisational success and sustainability.

WHY FOCUS ON LEADERSHIP INEFFECTIVENESS?

Hogan and Hogan (2001) believe that between 50% and 75% of leaders are not performing well — in other words, they are ineffective. The significance of this is further substantiated in a study by Longenecker, Simonetti and Sharkey (1999), who identified “failure at the top” as one of the four primary schools of thought relating to organisational failure. Finkelstein (2003) and Kaiser and
Kaplan (2006) reiterate this when they state that it is leaders and managers (and by implication the behaviour of these individuals) who are responsible for organisational failure. This coincides with an observation made by the editor of Business Horizons who states that corporate scandals across organisational types and country boundaries are the result of leadership failure (Business Horizons, 2004). In order to understand organisational failure, the focus should be expanded to include identifying those aspects and behaviours of leaders who are considered ineffective. McCartney and Campbell (2006) express concern that there is a paucity of studies exploring leadership ineffectiveness. Studying leadership ineffectiveness — referred to by Ready (2005) as derailments — creates a better understanding of why leaders fail. Crosbie (2005, p. 47) accentuates the fact that defects and weaknesses matter, as indicated in the following statement: “Success depends not only on moving steadily forward but on preventing derailment. Preventing derailment means going beyond nourishing strengths and attending to flaws”. The preceding idea is reiterated by Dotlich and Cairo (2003) who state that the most successful leaders are those who learn to manage their derailers. This theoretical overview raises a topic in leadership research previously neglected by researchers, in that it attempts to explore and illustrate how self-deception may contribute to leadership ineffectiveness. The single biggest “derailer” as suggested by Jordan (2003), may be leaders’ inability to see how they themselves contribute to the problem they blame others for.

OVERVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The electronic databases that were consulted for the purpose of the literature review include Business Source Complete, Psych Articles, and Psych Info. Only texts published in English were included in the database search. Of all the texts yielded by this search, only those that addressed leadership ineffectiveness, leadership failure, self-awareness, self-deception and leadership ineffectiveness were included for the review. The reference lists in the articles yielded were also consulted for other relevant literature, which may not have been considered otherwise. A search was also carried out on the Internet, focusing explicitly on the concept of leadership and self-deception. Only a small amount of research, studies, and information focusing on the interplay between leadership ineffectiveness and self-deception was available. The literature overview that follows intends to explore explicitly some of the available literature focusing on leadership ineffectiveness and the role that self-deception may play in this regard.

Leadership ineffectiveness

Leadership ineffectiveness in this article, as used by previous authors, refers to those observable and unobservable behaviours and by implication personal qualities and character of leaders that make them ineffective. The following literature serves as proof of the complexity of the task of trying to describe and illustrate all those aspects of ineffective leadership; in other words, compiling one acceptable definition for leadership ineffectiveness. It also provides evidence for the lack of definitions specifically focusing on leadership ineffectiveness.

According to Burke (2006), there are certain themes emerging from the literature focusing on leadership ineffectiveness. The first theme is associated with the inability of a leader to develop effective interpersonal relationships due to a lack of interpersonal skills. The leader may be arrogant, stubborn, and/or egocentric. McCartney and Campbell (2006) identify failure in maintaining satisfactory interpersonal relationships as the most frequently cited reason leading to leadership ineffectiveness within an organisation. Specific problems include abrasive behaviour towards others. Leaders with these problems have also been found to lack the ability to balance and maintain interpersonal relationships with a variety of constituencies simultaneously. Problems related to interpersonal relationships include the inability to build a team, difficulty in moulding and shaping employees into a team, and difficulty in resolving conflict among team members. The importance of interpersonal skills is further emphasised by Crosbie (2005) who refers to a study conducted by Harvard University, the Carnegie Foundation and the Stanford Research Institute. It was found that technical skills and knowledge account for about 15% of the reasons why an individual finds, keeps
and advances in a job. The remaining 85% of job success is based on a person’s people skills. Babiak and Hare (2006) indicate that more executives are dismissed for “personality problems” than for incompetence. The second theme suggested by Burke (2006) revolves around leaders who are afraid to take risks and make errors. These leaders are cautious and avoid responsibility. Third, excitable individuals (characterised as impatient, moody, negative, volatile, and emotionally unstable) are thought to contribute to ineffective leadership behaviour. Finally, skepticism and distrust as cited by Lubit (in Burke, 2006) reduce a leader’s effectiveness even more, especially when it comes to motivating others. These leaders are cynical and untrustworthy.

McCall and Lombardo (cited in Burke, 2006) identified an insensitive, abrasive, or bullying style; aloofness or arrogance; betrayal of personal trust; self-centred ambition; failure to constructively address an obvious problem; micromanagement; an inability to select good subordinates; inability to take a long-term perspective; inability to adapt to a leader with a different style; and over-dependence on a mentor as the ten most common causes of leadership ineffectiveness. Finkelstein (2003) found that leaders who presided over major business failures viewed themselves and their companies as the major role-player in their environments; they had an over-optimistic and over-estimated view of how much control they had over events (they thought that they and their organisations were successful because of themselves); they thought they had all the answers (they were often fixated on being right and in control); they were not good listeners and would not accept advice or suggestions (any disagreement/opposition would be pushed aside); they would eliminate any critics; they were obsessed with the company’s image in the public eye; they felt an enormous need to be right; and it was difficult for them to integrate change, as they would normally adhere to what had worked for them in the past. In addition, Gunn (2006) suggests that a leader’s self-interest, where a leader seems to engage in activities that merely serve personal interests without considering the well-being of others, impact negatively on a leader’s effectiveness. This ties in with the view of Hogan (1994) who states that people in general are prone to selfishness and genetically programmed towards egocentrism, which, if not attended to, will by default result in selfish behaviour (overtly and covertly). According to Ruderman, Hannum, Leslie and Steed (2001), leadership ineffectiveness is coupled with struggles to build relationships with others based on trust. They identify the belittlement and humiliation of co-workers; the exhibition of arrogance, abusiveness, and abrasiveness; difficulty managing emotions; angry outbursts; verbally abusing co-workers; lack of compassion and empathy; and difficulty understanding oneself and others. Dotlich and Cairo (2003) identify 11 derailers which they consistently found in CEOs and senior leaders who were deemed ineffective. The following derailers are characteristic of unsuccessful leaders: arrogance (when the leader holds the opinion that he or she is right and everybody else is wrong); melodrama (when leaders strive to be the centre of attention); volatility (the mood swings of a leader, which drive business swings); excessive caution (the inability of a leader to take action when necessary); habitual distrust (a tendency to focus on negatives); aloofness (disengagement and disconnection from people); mischievousness (a tendency to break rules); eccentricity (portraying an image that is extremely different just for the sake of it); passive resistance (when silence is misinterpreted as agreement); perfectionism (focusing on perfecting the little things even when big things go wrong); and eagerness to please (where the focal point is to win the popularity contest).

The literature cited above suggests that the character of leaders, difficulty managing their own emotions, and difficulty managing interpersonal relationships are some of the major aspects impacting negatively on their effectiveness. According to Burke (2006), a leader’s character determines how such an individual will ultimately lead an organisation, though business knowledge and managerial skill also seem to impact on effectiveness. This coincides with Goleman’s IQ and EQ argument, which suggests that awareness of others and one’s own emotions and behaviour may be as important as (cognitive) intelligence (Goleman, 1995; Ruderman, Hannum, Leslie, & Steed, 2001). Blakeley (2007), Donlon (2006) and Dotlich and Cairo (2003) reiterate this by stating that to be an effective leader one requires more than an understanding of pricing in global markets or knowledge of one’s competitors. According to these authors, the complete leader is not merely a technocrat with
deep skills in operations, finance or sales and marketing. The key to leadership success lies in the ability to work through teams and to develop a culture of trust with others — i.e. to build relationships. At its root, the primary job of leadership according to Goleman, Boyatzis and McKee (2002) is emotional. Though often invisible or ignored entirely, emotions determine whether everything else a leader does will work as well as it could. Success therefore depends more on how you do it, than on what you do. Dotlich and Cairo (2003) are of the opinion that many leaders sabotage themselves, albeit unconsciously. They have the intellect, skills and experience to lead their companies through whatever challenges may arise, yet for some reason they are unable to do so. Something derails their best efforts — something integral to who they are, both as people and as leaders — and that operates beneath their awareness.

The role of self-deception in leadership ineffectiveness
The single biggest “derailer” suggested by Jordan (2003), and investigated in this article, is leaders’ inability to see how they themselves contribute to the problems they blame others for, namely, self-deception. Goleman (1985) is of the opinion that self-deception may be one of the biggest paradoxes of our time, since those with power (leaders in this instance) are too comfortable to notice the pain of those who suffer, while those who suffer, have no power.

Kaplan (2003) suggests that self-deception may in extreme instances even directly or indirectly be responsible for the death of people. Kaplan refers to the case of Dr Radovan Karadzic who stands indicted as a suspected war criminal for crimes against humanity and genocide. Karadzic is accused of a multitude of war crimes, including the indiscriminate murder of civilians and the murder of up to 7 500 people at the “safe haven” of Srebrenica. According to Kaplan (2003), Karadzic’s personality remains a mystery. His most obvious characteristics are, however, his impressive self-image, being reckless, irresponsible, and opportunistic, and suffering from complete self-deception (which is argued to be negatively associated with leadership effectiveness).

This leads to the question of how self-deception may affect a leader’s effectiveness. In order to ensure leadership effectiveness, it is important to investigate, theoretically illustrate, and explain how self-deception may be one of the root causes contributing to leadership ineffectiveness. This will be explored in the following sections.

What is self-deception?
Self-deception refers to a process of denying or rationalising away the relevance, significance, or importance of opposing evidence and logical arguments (Wikipedia, 2006). Goleman (1985, p. 13) sees self-deception as the most elusive of all mental facts. The author states it as follows in his own words: “We do not see what it is that we do not see.” The Arbinger Institute (2002) defines self-deception as the state of not knowing and resisting the possibility that there is a problem, while one may be the problem oneself. The following narrative, taken from the book Leadership and Self-deception (The Arbinger Institute, 2002), illustrates the concept of self-deception:

Semmelweis, an obstetrician working at Vienna’s General Hospital during the 1800s, tried to get to the bottom of the high mortality rate among women in the maternity ward. In the section where Semmelweis practised, the mortality rate was one in ten. Conventional medical science at that time called for separate treatment procedures for each symptom. Inflammation meant excess blood was causing swelling — so they bled the patient or applied leeches. They treated fever the same way. Trouble breathing meant the air was bad — so they improved ventilation. But nothing worked. Patients begged Semmelweis to move them to another ward where the mortality rate was 1 in 50. Semmelweis became obsessed with the problem: ‘Why was the mortality rate different in the other ward?’ The only obvious difference between the sections was that Semmelweis’s section was attended by doctors, while the other section was attended by midwives. Then something happened — Semmelweis took a four-month leave to visit another hospital. On return he discovered that the death rate dropped significantly in the ward where he practised during his absence. Why? Remember, Vienna Hospital was a teaching and
research hospital. Many of the doctors split their time between research on cadavers and treatment of live patients. They hadn’t seen any problem with that practice, because there was as yet no understanding of germs. All the doctors knew about at that stage were symptoms. After further researching this phenomenon he concluded that ‘particles’ from cadavers and other diseased patients were being transmitted to healthy patients on the hands of their physicians. So he immediately instituted a policy requiring physicians to wash their hands thoroughly in a chlorine and lime solution before examining any patient. The results were astonishing; the mortality rate immediately fell to 1 in 100. The doctors were unsuspectingly the carriers of the disease that led to the death of their patients (p. 17-19).

The preceding narrative serves as a good analogy for some of the leadership problems currently experienced within organisations. It parallels leadership in organisations, where leadership is sometimes the carrier of the problem (germs) without even realising or knowing it. Although “germs” are invisible, this does not mean that they do not exist. Their very invisibility makes them so dangerous. Similarly, self-deception might well be the biggest “germ” causing leadership ineffectiveness, without the leader even realising its contribution to the problem.

The different components of self-deception
Blakeley (2007), De Vries (2006) and Goleman (1985) are of the opinion that the interrelated psychological processes of mental schemas, favoured defence mechanisms and cognitive dissonance may well be components of self-deception, as they set bounds on the range of an individual’s thoughts and feelings, which may limit their freedom of perception and action in order to feel at peace.

In contrast to this, The Arbinger Institute (2002) sees self-deception both as the product of a person’s “self-betrayal” and such a person’s “way of being”. Self-betrayal is an act contrary to what individuals (leaders in this instance) feel they should do for others. When leaders have a sense of what another person may need and they go against it, they ultimately betray themselves. According to The Arbinger Institute (2002), people who betray themselves are also more likely to superimpose the faults of others, blame others for situations or circumstances, feel like victims, exaggerate the values that are important to them, be concerned about right and wrong, and be consumed with themselves in order to justify their behaviour, actions and thoughts. These behaviours associated with self-betrayal show similarities with those behaviours that are associated with ineffective leadership and which have been highlighted elsewhere in this article. It therefore seems that self-betrayal may be one of the underlining causes of ineffective leadership behaviours. The Arbinger Institute (2002) illustrates how leaders during self-betrayal may invite the very same thing that they complain about, sustaining and compounding the very same behaviour they complain about in their followers.

Jordan (2003) illustrates the process previously mentioned by describing a leader who is very demanding with regard to employees. The harsher the leader is towards the people working for him or her, the harsher their feelings will be towards the leader. If the leader continuously points out their flaws, becomes upset when they make mistakes and generally wonders why they cannot do a better job, they will be watching for any mistakes the leader makes. This, in turn, will allow them to justify their own faults, because they are not perfect either.

This leads to the next aspect of self-deception, namely, “way of being” whereby a leader has an option to see his employees as people or as objects. The easiest way to explain “way of being” is to consider the differences in how the following two types of leaders behave. Some leaders, have the capacity to inspire devotion and commitment in others, even when they are interpersonally clumsy. The fact that they have not attended many seminars or learned the latest techniques on effective leadership hardly matters. They have the ability to inspire those around them to be all they can. They do not always say or do the “right” things, but people love working with them and they always achieve results through people. The other type of leader seemingly does all the “right” things interpersonally, but people do not trust them — even if they apply all the latest skills and techniques to communicate effectively. People ultimately resent them and their tactics. They fail as leaders
because they provoke people to resist them. Despite what leaders do on the outside, people (employees) respond primarily to how leaders “feel” about them (The Arbinger Institute, 2002). Dotlich and Cairo (2003) support the idea that people have a notion of how leaders feel towards them and react to this.

Employees can usually sense when leaders treat them primarily as objects. Given a little time and experience, people can tell when there is no real feeling behind a leader’s behaviour or words, when they are being manipulated or outsmarted, or when their interests are not really at stake; in other words, when they are being treated as objects to serve a particular purpose. It would not matter if a leader tried to manage by walking around, sitting on the edge of a chair to practise active listening, inquiring about family members in order to show interest, or by using any other skill learned in order to be more effective. It would not matter if such a leader did all the “right” things interpersonally, even applying all the latest leadership skills and techniques to their communications and tasks. People ultimately resent them and their tactics. They fail as leaders because they provoke resistance in people. Employees respond primarily to the ways in which leaders behave towards them, and not necessarily to the words that leaders sometimes use in order to try to impress followers. One of a leader’s biggest blind spots is their inability to see what happens when they view and behave towards followers as if they were objects (The Arbinger Institute, 2002).

Some leaders miss personal dynamics in the workplace because they always focus on business. For example, they only notice employees facing distress when it is brought to their attention by someone else. This is another simple example of employees being treated as objects by leaders. In these situations, leaders do not see things that may be important to maintaining close personal relationships with their employees. It is partly a lack of attention and alertness, and partly the trap of self-deception.

SELF-AWARENESS: THE KEY TO COMBATING THE SELF-DECEPTION TRAP

Burke (2006) shows that the higher a person progresses in an organisation, the more self-awareness is required. Bennis and Nanus (as quoted by Morden, 1997) confirm this when they identify self-awareness, self-knowledge, awareness of limitations in self and others, and the ability to recognise, learn and profit from failures and mistakes as some of the key leadership qualities which contribute to leadership effectiveness. Burke (2006) asserts that the higher a person rises in an organisation, the more self-awareness is at the centre of leadership development. The author therefore constitutes and argues that self-awareness is an important personal ingredient affecting whether leaders would be able to recognise or willing to look at their own self-deception practices and behaviour and that self-awareness is necessary to function at higher levels in an organisation. It is therefore important that leaders focus on becoming more self-aware.

In many leadership programmes, the focus is likely to be on skills and how to become an effective leader, while the next leadership development programme might concentrate on brushing up interpersonal skills, such as effective communication where leaders practice effective listening. A third programme might deal with situations where they need to become more directive leaders, and so forth. This may explain the reason why so many leaders return to their organisations still not transformed into the sort of leaders that people would want to follow. After a few weeks, or even a few days, some leaders tend to fall back into their comfort zones and the old patterns of ineffective leadership behaviour that they exhibited before attending the programme.

Kaiser and Devries (as quoted by Kaiser & Kaplan, 2006) and Dotlich and Cairo (2003) argue that there should be a stronger focus on the development of processes that will assist leaders to understand the underlying drivers of their behaviour and to become more self-aware. Goleman (1985) refers to this as a better understanding of the individual’s schemas. Self-awareness is one of the cornerstones of emotional intelligence, and the importance of emotional intelligence in leadership effectiveness has been highlighted elsewhere in this article (Goleman et al., 2002). In the words of Orwell (cited in Goleman, 1985 p. 96), “Those who control the past, control the future”. According to Goleman et al. (2002), self-aware leaders are more likely to be honest with themselves and about
The above factors coincide with Hogan and Warrenfeltz’s model (cited in Kaiser & Kaplan, 2006), which implies that intrapersonal and interpersonal development deserve more attention, as they impact on the application of leadership and business skills. For example, self-control (level 1 — intrapersonal skills) is needed to maintain effective relationships (level 2 — interpersonal skills), which is a prerequisite for effective leadership (level 3 — building a team and guiding it). Hogan and Warrenfeltz (cited in Kaiser & Kaplan, 2006) suggest in their work that intrapersonal skills should be the foundation on which leadership careers should be built, because the manner in which one manages the “self” has implications for all other aspects of managerial and leadership performance. If a leader does not have the necessary skills to regulate emotions and impulses, this may pose problems in interpersonal relationships, in fulfilling important leadership roles, and in applying basic business skills (Kaiser & Kaplan, 2006).

If training does not drastically change and improve to include raising self-awareness in how leaders might contribute to problems in their organisations, training and development may not deliver on the results they promise. Weiss and Molinaro (2006) demonstrate this in their research when they indicate that organisations spend considerable time, money and energy building their leadership capacity to gain a competitive advantage, but that various approaches to building leadership capacity are failing to hit the mark. This is illustrated by the estimate of Fulmer and Conger (2004) that organisations in the USA spend over $50 billion a year on the development of leaders. De Vries (2006) provides a narrative to illustrate this. “There once was a person who noticed a disturbing bump under a rug. This person tried to smooth out the rug, but every time he did the bump reappeared. In utter frustration, he finally lifted up the rug, and to his great surprise, out slid an angry snake” (pp.1-2). This metaphor resembles those occasions when organisations agree to leadership development interventions and training that only deal with the behaviour and symptoms of ineffective leadership. These programmes attempt to smooth things over, while the snake beneath — the underlying cause — keeps working its mischief. Unless training starts to pull out the “snake” and deal with it, it will confound efforts to improve leadership efficiency and, ultimately, organisational growth. Locander and Luechauer (2006) and Kaiser and Kaplan (2006) share the same opinion in this regard, and state that the first step of any leadership development programme requires leaders to examine their greatest asset and liability, namely, themselves. They also suggest that the majority of people do not want to engage in a process that includes in-depth self-reflection, and they often ignore or deny what they need to see when they do become aware of it. These authors also point out that leaders are rarely trained how to explore their strengths and assets, let alone their flaws, weaknesses, or shadow sides. According to Blakeley (2007), leaders may be reluctant to listen and learn about themselves because it could be both painful and time-consuming. It may seem better to put up with “known” pain and to avoid future, “unknown” pain. De Vries (2006) supports this notion when he points out that people in positions of power are much more likely than their subordinates to find excuses not to engage in personal work that is emotionally painful. The reluctance of leaders to take a hard look at themselves is supported by the societal myth that leadership is a rational endeavour.

Training in self-awareness and the underlying drivers of behaviour, Blakeley (2007) argues, should receive necessary attention. In this regard, a study by Sala (2003) shows that higher level employees are more likely to have an inflated view of their emotional competencies that is less congruent with the perception of others who work with them often and know them well; they probably do not see themselves the way others view them. Kaiser and Kaplan (2006) are of the opinion that MBA programmes — supposed to develop the leaders of tomorrow — tend to focus exclusively on such curricula as functional business knowledge, to the neglect of deeper, harder to develop competencies such as intra- and interpersonal skills.

The inability of leaders to recognise how they contribute to problems in their organisations (self-deception) may be a primary reason contributing to ineffective leadership and may explain why
leadership development and training programmes and initiatives are not always successful. The Arbinger Institute (2002) is of the opinion that all leaders are vulnerable to self-deception, a deeply ingrained human trait that influences their leadership styles and behaviours. Self-deception can be managed or minimised only if detected; if leaders become aware of it. There is an urgent need to change the focus in leadership training and development to include identifying a leader’s own self-deceptions. Leadership training and development is a billion-dollar industry worldwide, but it should be asked whether it is effective in its current form. Organisations and those responsible for leadership and management development should consider the effectiveness of change programmes and training initiatives that merely focus on skills transfer on a behavioural level (Kaiser & Kaplan, 2006).

The first challenge for a leader is to become aware of how he or she contributes to the problem(s) he or she blames others for. The second challenge is to create work environments where people are treated as people and not merely as objects. A third challenge, as indicated by Hogan (1994), is to facilitate a more intensive development of leaders than is currently found in most leadership training programmes. This author believes that some of the “darkside characteristics” that contribute to leadership ineffectiveness can be changed, but only with a more intensive approach. The paradox is to be found in the literature of Goleman (1985) who points to a particularly human malady: to avoid anxiety, we close off crucial portions of awareness, creating blind spots. According to Blakeley (2007), it is the responsibility of leaders to overcome their blind spots. Blind spots contribute towards inferior decision-making, and a leader’s flawed decisions can lead to detrimental consequences for many people.

Many of the traits that have been discussed in this article have a positive side that helps leaders to achieve success. It is only when leaders are unaware of the trait, deny its existence, or fail to see its downside that they encounter problems. Awareness of derailers does not mean leaders have to dwell on how “bad” they are. Instead, it frees their strengths. When leaders learn how to manage their own self-destructive traits, they allow their strengths to emerge (Dotlich & Cairo, 2003).

FUTURE DIRECTIONS
The literature therefore suggests that researchers are not necessarily in agreement on those aspects responsible for leadership ineffectiveness and how leadership ineffectiveness may be influenced by factors “outside” the leader. It is suggested that researchers should consider expanding leadership research to include identifying factors that may contribute to leadership ineffectiveness and simultaneously develop a comprehensive model explaining leadership ineffectiveness. It would be valuable if researchers could determine whether lack of skills, the personality profile of a person (character) or other aspects (not being considered yet), are better predictors for leadership ineffectiveness.

Another area of research may be to develop an instrument to measure whether self-deception occurs or not. No instrument measures this apparently important construct. Such an instrument should also consider identifying reasons why leaders do deceive themselves even though they realise that it may be detrimental to their future success.

Various authors believe that self-awareness is critical to leadership effectiveness and the development of leaders. Researchers and practitioners should therefore strive to develop instruments, programmes and processes to measure, increase and facilitate self-awareness among leaders. Measuring the impact of self-awareness on leadership effectiveness may be considered a valuable research area for the future, should a measuring tool be developed to measure the entire scope of self-awareness as a construct. It would also be helpful to determine whether people have the same capacity for self-awareness.

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