There are almost as many definitions of leadership as there are persons who have attempted to define the concept. (Stogdill, 1974)

Although leadership has been studied extensively by numerous scholars and practitioners, fundamental disagreements remain about how to define effective leadership. In spite of such disagreements, there is unanimity about the need for leadership and great consternation when large numbers of relevant observers recognize its absence. Despite the lack of agreement on specifics, there is enough commonality in our understanding of leadership to enable us to conduct research for meaningful discussion and analysis.

The major thrust of academic theories and research on leadership is to focus on leadership as a process. The emphasis is less on something leadership is, than on a social psychological process whose occurrence leadership presents. The definition of leadership fall into three categories: (1) definitions of leader/s, which mainly focus on the attributes and practices of effective leaders; (2) definitions of leadership as a process and practice; and (3) definitions of leadership including a combination of the three variables – leader, follower and situation. From this perspective, leadership may be defined ‘as the process of influencing the followers in achieving the goals of the organization in a particular situation’ (Warren Bennis, 1959).

The main question in leadership relates to determining leadership effectiveness. The criteria of leadership effectiveness depends on the following:

(1) The extent to which the leader’s group or organization performs its task successfully and attain its goals
(2) The attitude of followers toward their leaders
(3) A leader’s contribution to the quality of group process, as perceived by followers or by outside observers

Research on organizational leadership has focused on three main approaches: (1) The Trait Approach; (2) The Behavioural Approach and (3) The Situational Approach. The Trait Approach focuses on the leader’s characteristics and is based on the assumption that ‘leaders are born, not made’. The main shortcomings of this approach is that it focuses on the leader only. The Behavioural Approach focuses on the roles, relations and rules of the group (followers). This approach is based on various research studies conducted to analyse the role of the leader in influencing and supervising followers and is concerned with whether the leader is interested on accomplishing the task of the organization or attending to the followers’ needs and demands. This approach fails to study leadership behaviour in a particular situation. The Situational Approach takes the three factors into consideration – that is, the leader, including his/her own characteristics; the group (followers), as to how they accept the leader; and whether the leader listens to the followers. A general model of leadership includes the three interdependent facets of leadership behaviour – that is, leader, follower and situation.

Leaders in politics and business are faced with a plethora of decisions that need to be made for the sake of society. An effective/good leader, no matter who the followers are or no matter what the level of situation, must possess the skills necessary to make sure a government or business runs as smoothly as possible toward attaining an agreed upon mission and vision. These ideas of leadership come largely from politics, management and organizational development fields. In contemporary society, a ‘feminist style of leadership’ has become popular in the corporate world, as large numbers of women are entering different companies and are demonstrating that they can produce results and profits through different means.

As more women in both developed and developing nations are entering leadership roles in society and government, they are attracting increasing attention. Women’s behaviour is under scrutiny, at least in part, because women are infrequent occupants of high-level leadership roles (Miller, Taylor & Buck, 1991). The phenomenon, known as the ‘glass ceiling’ has been described as a barrier of prejudice and discrimination that excludes women from higher level leadership positions (Morrison, White & Van Velsor, 1987). There are systemic barriers created via formal systems (such as performance evaluations, promotions,