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Skills Approach to Leadership Dr. Neal

- A Leader centered perspective (as with trait approach)
- Learned abilities. Not innate. Emphasis on skills which can be taught/developed. Leadership available to everyone.
- Two versions of this approach
- *Three-skill approach* (Katz, 1955) – older. Three skills necessary for leadership. Technical (how to), human (how to work with and motivate people, conceptual (looking at big picture). Technical skills needed at lower levels of leadership. Conceptual skills needed at highest levels of leadership. According to Katz, Human skills needed at every level. Relative importance of skills
- *Skills Model* (Mumford et al 2000) – more complex. Goal to identify factors which maximize leader’s performance, especially in problem solving. Focuses on capabilities rather than specific behaviours. Increases the number of people who are potentially capable of leadership. Focus on developing the skills and competencies. Five elements:
  - *Individual attributes* (influence competencies)
    - General Cognitive Ability
    - Crystallized Cognitive Ability (facts/skills/knowledge)
    - Motivation
    - Personality
  - *Competencies* (influences outcomes)
    - Problem solving skills
    - Social judgements skills
    - Knowledge
  - *Leadership Outcomes*
    - Effective problem solving
    - Performance
  - *Career experiences*: past work experiences affect motivation, behavioural tendencies, which influence individual attributes and competencies
  - *Environmental experiences*: colleagues, economic factors, cultural trends, employees - influence everything
- Emphasizes role of experience and environment
- Provides a framework for leadership education programs (classes in specific skills like conflict resolution)
- Criticisms
  - Theory too broad, not precise
  - Difference/relationship between attributes and traits and skills not always clear
  - Do you hire someone with high IQ (potential) or those demonstrating the skills? (hot topic in organizational leadership)