Sustainable Leadership of Vocational College Administrators: Documentary Research
ภาวะผู้นำอย่างยั่งยืนของผู้บริหารสถานศึกษาอาชีวศึกษา: การวิจัยเอกสาร

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Abstract

This research aims to synthesize the components of sustainable leadership in vocational education, specifically as it can be applied in institutions under the Office of the Vocational Education Commission in Thailand. The researcher collected and analyzed the secondary data by using a documentary research approach. The results indicate that sustainable leadership for vocational college administrators take into account a number of components: the importance of sustainable leadership, maintaining leadership to remain sustainable, the distribution of sustainable leadership, justice in sustainable leadership, the recognition and promotion of diversity, sustainable development of human resources, and respecting, honoring and learning from the best experiences.

Keywords: Leadership, Sustainable Leadership, Vocational College Administrators, Documentary Research.

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บทคัดย่อ

งานวิจัยนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อสังเคราะห์องค์ประกอบภาวะผู้นําอย่างยั่งยืนของผู้บริหารสถานศึกษาอาชีวศึกษาสังกัดสํานักงานคณะกรรมการการอาชีวศึกษาในประเทศไทย ผู้วิจัยใช้แนวทางการวิจัยเชิงคุณภาพในการรวบรวมและวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลที่ได้มีการรวบรวมการศึกษาพบว่า องค์ประกอบภาวะผู้นําอย่างยั่งยืนของผู้บริหารสถานศึกษาอาชีวศึกษาประกอบด้วย ความสําคัญของการผู้นําอย่างยั่งยืน การรักษาภาวะผู้นําอย่างยั่งยืน การกระจายอํานาจภาวะผู้นําอย่างยั่งยืน ความยุติธรรมของภาวะผู้นําอย่างยั่งยืน การพัฒนาทรัพยากรมนุษย์และรักษาทรัพยากรของภาวะผู้นําอย่างยั่งยืน และการผู้นําอย่างยั่งยืนต้องเคารพให้เกียรติและเรียนรู้จากการประสบการณ์ที่ดี

คำสำคัญ: ภาวะผู้นํา ภาวะผู้นําอย่างยั่งยืน ผู้บริหารสถานศึกษาอาชีวศึกษา การวิจัยเอกสาร

Introduction

Leadership is generally accepted as the skill to drive others toward the achievement of a desired goal, has various interpretations as seen through different authors. Stoner and Freeman (1989) asserted that at the heart of the manager’s role was leadership, with which the achievement of an organization’s goals was done through working with and making use of others. Kotter (1996) adds that leadership “defines what the future should look like, aligns people with that vision, and inspires them to make it happen despite the obstacles.” According to Scholtes (1998), it is the relationships between leaders and those who are led that accounts for the presence and spirit of leadership. Hellriegel, Slocum and Woodman (2001), on the other hand, defined leadership as a process which involves “developing ideas and a vision, living by values that support those ideas and vision, influencing others to embrace them in their own behaviors, and making hard decisions about people and other resources.” Concurring with the notion that leadership is a process, Northouse (2007) posits that common goals are reached through the influence an individual (the leader) has on others, while Yukl (2010) adds that leaders must instill in those they lead understanding and agreement about the shared task to be done and facilitate the execution of that task on both an individual and collective scale.

Education is a crucial tool in the development of human capital. It provides human resources with the necessary knowledge to adapt to, and ultimately anticipate, change. In this era of globalization and rapid change, it is vital that school administrators have a deep understanding and play an active role in human resource development. In order to survive and remain competitive in an increasingly borderless world, organizations must develop and maintain sustainable practices. Thus, organizations worldwide have recognized the importance of sustainability and given it priority as a key strategic goal (Siegel, 2009).

The acceptance of sustainability in general has recently become very widespread but, especially for organizations and their missions, its principles can be extremely relevant. Initiatives in sustainable development must be undertaken to facilitate continual organizational evolution, taking into account the long-term sustainability of the organization and the integration of clear and shared perspectives (Closs, Speier, & Meacham, 2011) In addition, sustainable leadership
must incorporate ethical values and take into consideration social and environmental issues. Administrators must lead and implement ideas with integrity if they are to foster the sustainability of the organization (Knowles, Twomey, Davis, & Abdul-Ali, 2009).

It is noticeably evident from recent literature that leadership should be people-centered and resource-based and much discussion exists, relevant to leadership development within organizations, of a need for a new paradigm (Casserley & Critchley, 2010; Crew, 2010; Hewision & Griffiths, 2004). Despite this, there has been a general failure on the part of organizations to accordingly modify their perspective on leadership and take advantage of the possibilities and opportunities that come from the adoption of successful leadership development (Crew, 2010). For organizations, the concept of sustainable leadership incorporates all of these considerations and advocates a shift in emphasis away from the traditional (Casserley & Critchley, 2010; Crew, 2010).

Failures in vocational education (The Office of the Education Council, 2010) have led to increased interest in the application of sustainable leadership to bolster educational management. According to Avery and Bergsteiner (2011), decision-making requires a long-term perspective while increasing customer value is done through systematic innovation, with quality being achieved through the development of skills, loyalty and attention in the workforce. Most school leadership practices create temporary, localized flurries of change but little lasting or widespread improvement. The study found some exceptions, however. From the first day of their appointment, some leaders thought hard about how they might implement deep, broad, and long-lasting reforms (Hargreaves & Fink, 2004). It is possible for sustainable leadership to be applied in many different contexts; Bezzina (2007); Davies (2007); Elmore (2005); Fink and Brayman (2006); Fullan (2005); Giles and Hargreaves (2006); Glickman (2002); Hargreaves and Fink (2004; 2006); Lambert (2011); Louis and Kruse (1995); McLaughlin and Talbert (2001); Oakes, Quartz, Ryan, and Lipton (2000); Stoll, Fink, and Earl (2003). Davies (2007); Fullan (2005); Hargreaves and Fink (2006); and Lambert (2011) all explore and adopt the concept of sustainable leadership on an organizational level in the educational sector. This research examines the emerging literature on sustainable leadership with an aim to build a conceptual framework thereof. However, as the concept of sustainable leadership is still in its infancy (Lambert, 2011), there exist few guiding frameworks or models for its implementation.

Research Objective

This research aims to synthesize data pertaining to sustainable leadership of vocational college administrators in vocational education by using documentary research to generate meanings and indicators of sustainable leadership.

Research Methods

This research used documentary research involving the use of texts and documents as source materials: books and research publications, in order to synthesize document data and determine the viability of sustainable leadership as applied to vocational college administrators of vocational education. The researchers compiled sustainable leadership data from documents such as research done by Bezzina (2007); Davies (2007); Elmore (2005); Fink and Brayman (2006); Fullan (2005); Giles and Hargreaves
Research Results

The mission of vocational education is to produce skilled manpower. Technical and technological proficiency is increased by focusing on providing learners with diverse skills and thereby enabling in developing countries a transformation into a knowledge-based society. The liberalization of vocational education must be supported and education must recognize the importance of creating quality opportunities for participation and cooperation to respond to the change in current situations.

Currently, vocational education faces problems of inconsistency in terms of both quantity and quality. In terms of quantitative inconsistency, the study found that production capacity does not meet market requirements while, in terms of qualitative inconsistency, vocational school graduates lack both core and functional competencies (Vogel, 2012). In all workers, there exists a wide gap between levels of ability, particularly in areas pertaining to computer literacy, foreign language proficiency and analytical skills. Office of the Education Council (2010)’s study also found that the quality of some vocational schools was not up to standard due to their programs failing to meet the needs of societal enterprises or being lacking in equipment, facilities, subsidies and qualified teachers as required by the mission of vocational schools. As a result, the quality of graduates was decreasing, making them unable to develop knowledge, skills and attributes necessary to perform their jobs as they join the workforce. In an effort to counter these conditions, an initiated educational reform was provided for school administrators to acquire the ability to be autonomous in their decision-making, including the appointment of those responsible for technology, budget, environment and community relations in order to achieve sustainability. Therefore, school administrators with roles as leaders and managers (Kouzer & Posner, 2007) were to lead on organization and its members towards sustainable development.

Hargreaves and Fink (2006) developed a noteworthy concept of sustainable leadership that can be applied to education, although its treatment needs to be updated for universal, in-depth education learning that would yield benefits without causing harm. The pair’s principles of sustainable leadership is comprised of seven components: (1) creativity and learning, (2) longevity, (3) delegation and succession, (4) equity and justice, (5) diversity, (6) resource development, and (7) active participation (Hargreaves & Fink, 2004). There is a consensus in the evidence examining the acquisition of these seven components of sustainability that can affect educational change and effective leadership, underlining the importance of sustainability in management.

The prime responsibility of all educational leaders is to sustain learning (Glickman 2002; Stoll et al., 2003), maintain the newly established leadership structure, realize feelings of expectation, apprehension, abandonment, loss or relief...
(Hart, 1993) and regulate the rate and frequency of successions so that a staff does not suffer from the cynicism that is brought on by succession fatigue (Fink & Brayman, 2006). Other responsibilities include distributing authority, responsibility, and leadership throughout the school’s professional community - so it can carry the torch once the principal has gone, and soften the blow of principal succession (Spillane, Halverson, & Drummond, 2001), improving the condition of the environment, doing no harm to and actively improving the surrounding environment.

Hence, school leaders who are ‘burned out’ by excessive demands and diminishing resources have neither the physical energy nor the emotional capacity to develop professional learning communities (Byrne, 1994). They also experience few or no advanced diversity, and cannot enable people to adapt to and prosper in their increasingly complex environment by learning from one another’s diverse practices (Capra, 1997). They will inevitably fail to use resources responsibly, recognize and cultivate many kinds of excellence in learning, teaching and leading and provides the networks for these different kinds of excellence to be shared in cross-fertilizing processes of improvement (Giles & Hargreaves, 2006; Louis & Kruse, 1995; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001). Likewise, learning from past experience and activist leadership (Oakes, et al., 2000), as well as honoring and learning from the best of the past to create an even better future, are almost impossible.

Fullan (2005) approach offers sustainable practices grounded in not seven, but eight components. In this approach, there is an expectation for a sustainable leader to serve with moral purpose and share leadership in the pursuit of learning (Bezzina, 2007). Understanding of the rapid change, resulting from shifting contexts, that affects all institutions, be they educational, government or familial, must be cultivated in leaders. In terms of accountability in schools (Elmore, 2005), focus must shift from testing towards promoting capacity building through the establishment of institution-wide vertical relationships.

Furthermore, Davies (2007) proposes additional factors necessary for an educational leader to grasp in the promotion of sustainable practices. Leaders must measure not only outputs but outcomes as well. They must balance short-term objectives with long-term goals and be mindful of processes as a whole as opposed to simply planning (Lambert, 2011). They are to practice measures of inclusion and encourage the participation of colleagues in decision-making (Bezzina, 2007), demonstrating humility both personally and professionally to promote trust and long-term loyalty. Sustainable leaders are driven by a passion for continued improvement, adept in the practice of identifying, implementing and timing strategic measures in the pursuit of success (Crew, 2010).

Finally, Lambert (2011) outlines six similar components in his framework for sustainable leadership including the development of staff capacity and a strategy for decentralization to create a strong and stable organization. Leaders must work together and champion collaboration, meet the needs of enterprise and society through convenient learning opportunities and make clear long-term aims that are to be achieved through short-term goals (Davies, 2007). Another component analogous to other frameworks is the notion of diversity. Leaders must learn to understand and respect both cohesion and diversity in society (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006),
be inclusive and act with honor for the sake of laying the foundation for the future.

From the aforementioned that focus on education sector, the research can illustrate the following comparison of the components of various sustainable leadership frameworks (Table 1).

**Table 1 Components of Sustainable Leadership Frameworks**

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) learning and creativity</td>
<td>1) public service with a moral purpose</td>
<td>1) sustainable leadership matters</td>
<td>1) consideration of outcomes, not just outputs</td>
<td>1) building the capacity of staff</td>
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<td>2) leadership success sustainable over time</td>
<td>2) commitment to changing context at all levels</td>
<td>2) sustainable leadership lasts</td>
<td>2) balance of short and long term objectives</td>
<td>2) strategic distribution</td>
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<td>3) creation of leadership in others</td>
<td>3) lateral capability building through networks</td>
<td>3) sustainable leadership spreads</td>
<td>3) attention to process, not just plans</td>
<td>3) consolidation</td>
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<td>4) availability of social justice</td>
<td>4) intelligent accountability and vertical relationships</td>
<td>4) sustainable leadership is just, does no harm to and actively improves the surrounding environment</td>
<td>4) passion for continued improvement and development</td>
<td>4) seeing long term objectives from short term goals</td>
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<td>5) development of diverse and empowering environments</td>
<td>5) deep learning</td>
<td>5) sustainable leadership must recognize and promote cohesive diversity</td>
<td>5) personal humility and professional will</td>
<td>5) diversity</td>
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<td>6) development of existing resources</td>
<td>6) dual commitment to short-term and long-term results</td>
<td>6) the long level of leadership</td>
<td>6) strategic timing and strategic abandonment</td>
<td>6) conservation and respect</td>
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<td>7) engaging in activities</td>
<td>7) cyclical energizing</td>
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<td>7) building capacity and creating involvement</td>
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Table 1: Components of Sustainable Leadership Frameworks (continued)

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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6) sustainable leadership is resourceful and does not deplete materials and human resources</td>
<td>8) development of strategic measures of success</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7) sustainable leadership must respect, honor and learn from the best experiences to create an even better future</td>
<td>9) building with sustainability</td>
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</table>

Table 1 compares the synthesis of the components of sustainable leadership, as expressed by scholars and educators. This research used a threshold determined by the composition of the framework devised by Hargreaves and Fink (2006), which was selected based on its seven components of sustainable leadership: sustainable leadership matters, sustainable leadership lasts, sustainable leadership spreads, sustainable leadership is just, does no harm to and actively improves the surrounding environment, sustainable leadership must recognize and promote cohesive diversity, sustainable leadership is resourceful and does not deplete materials and human resources and sustainable leadership must respect, honor and learn from the best experiences to create an even better future.

The study through documentary research can summarize the sustainable leadership applied in Hargreaves and Fink (2006), and shows the meanings and indicators of sustainable leadership. The following are details of characteristics of sustainable leadership as indicated from the components above (Table 2).
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
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<tr>
<td>1) Sustainable leadership matters</td>
<td>School administrators create and learn to maintain, protect and promote sustainable education. This includes morals, ethics, lifelong learning and the creation of opportunities for staff to develop their capabilities.</td>
<td>1) creativity and learning&lt;br&gt;2) preservation, protection and promotion of sustainable education&lt;br&gt;3) creation of ethics&lt;br&gt;4) learning and wider lifelong education&lt;br&gt;5) opportunities for staff and capacity development</td>
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<tr>
<td>2) Sustainable leadership lasts</td>
<td>School administrators ensure continuity by maintaining sustainable leadership.</td>
<td>1) transferring of leadership&lt;br&gt;2) creating a line of leadership succession&lt;br&gt;3) keeping and maintaining sustainable leadership</td>
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<td>3) Sustainable leadership spreads</td>
<td>School administrators develop the leadership structure, convey leadership strategies, invite opinions and joint decision-making, encourage the involvement of stakeholders, and share responsibility.</td>
<td>1) leadership development&lt;br&gt;2) transferring leadership strategies&lt;br&gt;3) exchange of opinions and joint decision-making&lt;br&gt;4) participation of stakeholders and delegation of responsibility</td>
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<tr>
<td>4) Sustainable leadership is just, does no harm to and actively improves the surrounding environment</td>
<td>Just administrators do no harm to others, are enthusiastic to improve the environment, and share knowledge and available resources in the best interest of society.</td>
<td>1) having justice&lt;br&gt;2) no harm to others&lt;br&gt;3) enthusiasm to improve the environment&lt;br&gt;4) sharing of knowledge and available resources&lt;br&gt;5) uphold the interests of the public and society</td>
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Table 2 Component, Meanings and Indicators of Sustainable Leadership (continued)

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<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
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<td>5) Sustainable leadership must recognize and</td>
<td>School administrators understand and promote diversity and create</td>
<td>1) understanding and promoting diversity</td>
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<td>promote cohesive diversity</td>
<td>standard criteria for all. They learn to adapt and be flexible to</td>
<td>2) creating a standardized basis</td>
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<td>changing threats and promote awareness and learn from variety.</td>
<td>3) learning and adapting to changes and threats</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4) promoting awareness and learning from diversity</td>
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<td>6) Sustainable leadership is resourceful</td>
<td>School administrators create and promote a favorable environment. They</td>
<td>1) creating, maintaining and promoting a favorable environment within the</td>
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<td></td>
<td>encourage the organization to be constantly evolving and support their</td>
<td>organization</td>
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<td></td>
<td>subordinates through the development of skills and abilities.</td>
<td>2) encouraging the organization to constantly evolve</td>
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<td>3) developing the skills and abilities of the members of the organization</td>
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<td>4) making returns</td>
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<td>5) having support for the process of leading subordinates</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6) having intelligence</td>
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<td>7) Sustainable leadership values conservation</td>
<td>School administrators are to respect others, learn lessons from</td>
<td>1) respecting others</td>
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<td></td>
<td>experience, and maintain and repurpose goals to respect and honor all</td>
<td>2) learning from experience</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>members in the organization.</td>
<td>3) maintaining and repurposing corporate goals</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>4) respecting and honoring the wisdom of people in the organization</td>
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(Source: Applied in Hargreaves & Fink, 2006)

Conclusions and Discussion

In regards to management of vocational education in vocational schools under the Office of the Vocational Education Commission (VEC), administrators need to implement and practice sustainable leadership, with provisions for quality training in skills development for both staff and administrators. Leaders also need to make a shift towards decentralization and take steps to ensure leadership succession in order to achieve sustainability. Responsibilities need to be shared and delegated and care must be taken in the maintenance of both human and environmental resources. Key stakeholders as well as the community at large should also be
invited to have a high degree of participation (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006).

From the research, the following conclusions can be reached about sustainable leadership components:

1) The importance of sustainable leadership: Vocational school administrators must develop themselves continuously and bring forth sustainability in education and educational management. Adopting stronger codes of ethics and learning from recently occurring changes will beget more meaningful lifelong learning. Sustainable leadership creates and preserves sustainable learning, since the prime responsibility of all educational readers is to sustain learning (Glickman, 2002; Stoll et al., 2003). Vocational education plays an important role in producing a workforce to meet the needs of entrepreneurs. In an era of globalization and rapid change in not only technology used but also skills required, it is vitally important to create opportunities for workers to develop their own capabilities and marketability (Vogel, 2012).

2) Maintaining leadership to remain sustainable: Vocational school administrators have the ability to transfer leadership to provide for continuity and as such, vocational education administrators should encourage continuing leadership as well and put in place systems for succession. Vacuums in executive positions can be caused by either retirement or turnover, so sustainable leadership requires planning and readiness for change. Educational administrators need to focus on the eventuality of these occurrences and be prepared in earnest. Incorporating succession plans and processes into the school plan will push all administrators and those around them to take the long-term challenges of succession and sustainability more seriously (Fink & Brayman, 2006).

3) The distribution of sustainable leadership: In order to retain leaders, vocational school administrators must be allowed to inherit authority and responsibility, which should be distributed and shared among those in the organization and community (Bezzina, 2007). Spreading leadership out in this way is referred to by some as distributed or distributive leadership (Harris, 2001), though in its more robust forms, this distribution extends beyond teachers to students (Levin, 2000).

4) Justice in sustainable leadership: Vocational school administrators need to consider the myriad needs of all stakeholders and manage with fairness. They are to be environmentally conscious and inclusive, open to sharing knowledge and available resources with those who need it. Sustainable leadership benefits all students and schools—not just a few at the expense of the rest. Sustainable leadership is sensitive to how lighthouse, magnet or charter schools and their leaders can leave others in the shadows, and how privileged communities can be tempted to skim the cream off the local leadership pool. Sustainable leadership is an interconnected process. It recognizes and takes responsibility for the fact that schools affect one another in webs of mutual influence (Baker & Foote, 2006). Vocational school administrators who practice sustainable leadership must not be selfish and should put the greater interests of the public and society above their own.

5) The recognition and promotion of diversity: Vocational school administrators must understand that diversity is a primary consideration in the modern world. Adaptability and flexibility in the
face of changing threats can be strengthened with lessons learned through diversity, although standard criteria need to be applied equitably to ensure fairness. Sustainable leadership recognizes and cultivates many kinds of excellence in learning, teaching, and leading, and it provides the networks for sharing these different kinds of excellence in cross-fertilizing processes of improvement (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001).

6) Sustainable development: Vocational school administrators are responsible for resource management and conservation; they must establish and nurture a favorable environment within the organization and encourage constant evolution through the development of the skills and abilities of the members of the organization, their cleverness and wit supporting their process of leading subordinates. Building capacity and creating involvement and development of strategic measures of success (Davies, 2007).

7) Respecting, honoring and learning from the best experiences: Vocational school administrators should respect and honor others, be able to harness lessons learned from past experience into feasible ways to move forward and be adept at maintaining or repurposing organizational goals as needed. Conservation and respect (Lambert, 2011).

Recommendations

1. As the findings of this research paper indicated the seven key components needed for sustainable leadership detailed above, further research should be done into each individual component and the knowledge gained should be implemented to improve educational institutions.

2. Quantitative research needs to be conducted to identify factors affecting sustainable leadership as it applies specifically to school administrators, in order to establish indicators for sustainable leadership in educational institutions.

References


