

Leadership of Educational Institution Administrators under the Office of the Vocational Education Commission in the Eastern Region of Thailand

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to develop a conceptual framework for analyzing the leadership of educational administrators under the Office of the Vocational Education Commission (OVEC) in Eastern Thailand. Through documentary research and extensive literature review, the study synthesizes leadership theories including transactional, transformational, super-leadership, spiritual leadership, and agile leadership with a focus on the leadership demands of vocational education institutions situated in the Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC). The study identifies five core leadership components: visionary development, adaptability, empowerment, educational innovation, and communication for change creation. These components reflect the competencies necessary for administrators to respond effectively to the evolving labor market, technological disruptions, and socio-economic challenges. The framework serves as a theoretical foundation for future empirical research employing structural equation modeling (SEM) to examine causal relationships among leadership variables. The findings support the enhancement of leadership strategies within vocational institutions and contribute to the broader national agenda for producing high-quality, work-ready graduates aligned with Thailand's economic development.

Keywords: Vocational Education Administration, Educational Leadership, Conceptual Framework, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC)

INTRODUCTION

Thailand must adapt to prepare its industrial and service sectors to align with global changes and compete effectively on an international scale. This preparation must include infrastructure development, machinery and technology modernization, and most critically, the cultivation of a workforce equipped with relevant knowledge, skills, and capabilities that match the evolving demands of work and professional life. This transition reflects rapid changes in the economy, society, and technology, especially regarding the production of skilled labor that aligns with the increasing complexity and demand of industrial and service sectors. The global economic shift towards modern industries—driven by continuous innovation and technological advancements—has led to the emergence of numerous new industries and products, all of which require a responsive and adaptive labor market (Pandam, 2020; Khumphai, Lainjumroon & Pandam, 2021; Office of the Education Council, 2016; Ministry of Education, 2017).

According to the National Education Plan B.E. 2560–2579 (Ministry of Education, 2017; Tammasuna, 2011; Khumphai, Lainjumroon & Pandam, 2021), great importance is placed on education aimed at enhancing the potential and capabilities of Thai people at all life stages. This vision seeks to ensure that all citizens have lifelong access to education and are equipped with the skills needed to adapt to the rapid transformations of the 21st century. Emphasis is placed on the development of essential knowledge and skills to meet the dynamic and continuously evolving demands of society, while also promoting sustainable economic and social development. Currently, the production of skilled labor in Thailand's industrial and service sectors—especially within the vocational education system—fails to

meet labor market demands in both quantity and quality. The shortage of vocational graduates entering the labor market has led to a growing deficit of mid-level workers. Furthermore, the existing workforce lacks essential attributes for employment, including communication skills (in Thai and foreign languages), computer literacy, and proficiency in information technology. Other critical soft skills such as responsibility, perseverance, diligence, and discipline are also lacking (Phongphothakul & Kaewsueb, 2021; Khumphai, Lainjumroon & Pandam, 2021). Most new vocational graduates are not yet capable of performing job tasks to industry standards and often lack real-world experience. As a result, businesses incur additional costs and time (3–6 months) to retrain these workers (Phongphothakul & Kaewsueb, 2021; Tammasuna, 2011; Pandam, 2020). Vocational education is a pivotal mechanism in driving industrial development and human resource enhancement, aiming to produce highly competent professionals. It offers students practical experience both in educational institutions and real workplaces, thus bridging the gap between academic learning and professional practice. Students not only gain technical skills but also develop essential soft skills—such as teamwork, emotional regulation, resilience, problem-solving, creativity, and service orientation (Boonyen & Wechayaluck, 2021; Phakamach, Panjarattanakorn & Ratchavieng, 2023; Morklang & Wonnawed, 2023). These attributes increase graduates' work readiness and appeal to employers, who value their adaptability and reduced need for additional training (Venugoset, 2024; Phanlee, 2024). Vocational education plays a significant role in workforce development, not only by allowing learners to pursue specialized fields of interest but also by addressing skill shortages in key sectors such as industry, agriculture, commerce, tourism, and services. Students receive rigorous training to meet both professional and international standards, enabling them to enter the workforce directly (Office of the Vocational Education Commission, 2024; Office of the Vocational Education Commission, 2009; Ministry of Education, 2012; Bureau of Vocational Education Standards and Professions, 2019). Vocational education, therefore, is not just about producing labor; it also provides a pathway for continued skill and knowledge enhancement, fostering long-term career growth and increasing the country's competitiveness (Khumphai, Lainjumroon & Pandam, 2021; Pandam, 2020; Boonyen & Wechayaluck, 2021; Phakamach, Panjarattanakorn & Ratchavieng, 2023).

Educational administrators under the Office of the Vocational Education Commission (OVEC) play a crucial role in aligning educational management with national workforce and industrial needs. They are responsible for strategic planning, policy formulation, and vision-setting to respond to national agendas and the evolving demands of industry (Srikhamnuan, Thongnil & Boonsong, 2017; Phongphothakul & Kaewsueb, 2021; Tammasuna, 2011). A key responsibility of these administrators is to foster industry-education partnerships to co-design curricula, provide state-of-the-art training equipment, and create internship opportunities that offer practical experience. This requires strong collaboration with the private sector and relevant organizations (Pandam, 2020; Boonyen & Wechayaluck, 2021; Phakamach, Panjarattanakorn & Ratchavieng, 2023; Morklang & Wonnawed, 2023). Moreover, these administrators are tasked with empowering teachers to master modern technology and effectively impart essential professional competencies. Emphasis is also placed on equipping students with 21st-century skills—such as creativity, problem-solving, collaboration, and responsibility—which are critical to workforce readiness and employer satisfaction (Khumphai, Lainjumroon & Pandam, 2021; Pandam, 2020; Worapongpat, Kangpheng & Fuangfooloy, 2024). Their leadership thus involves curriculum development, industry engagement, and human resource enhancement, ensuring that graduates are not only skilled but also competitive in the labor market (Venugoset, 2024; Phanlee, 2024; Khumphai, Lainjumroon & Pandam, 2021; Boonyen & Wechayaluck, 2021). Effective educational leadership requires multi-faceted competencies. Success in managing vocational institutions depends not only on academic strategies but also on collaborative efforts across various departments—resource management, student affairs, strategic planning, and external cooperation (Panyaprasertkul & Thanaphaet, 2021; Srichun & Manyanon, 2022; Worapongpat, Kangpheng & Fuangfooloy, 2024). The administrators must be capable of harmonizing these elements to drive organizational success. Competency assessment for vocational administrators is based on criteria established by the Teachers' Civil Service and Educational Personnel Commission (TEPC), under the Civil Service Act B.E. 2547, covering both technical skills and essential leadership attributes (TEPC, 2010; Phongphothakul & Kaewsueb, 2021; Tammasuna, 2011; Pandam, 2020). Administrators in vocational education are legally mandated to manage professional training that aligns with national development plans, focusing on producing skilled labor across multiple levels—from semi-skilled to technical and technological professionals. Educational management must include institutional training

and workplace-based programs to meet global standards (Srikhamnuan, Thongnil & Boonsong, 2017; Khumphai, Lainjumroon & Pandam, 2021; Phakamach, Panjarattanakorn & Ratchavieng, 2023; Srichun & Manyanon, 2022). Therefore, enhancing learners' competencies and ensuring their work readiness is the core mission, in line with the National Education Plan B.E. 2560–2579. The aim is to provide inclusive, high-quality education and a responsive workforce that meets both domestic and global labor market needs (Office of the Education Council, 2017; Office of the Vocational Education Commission, 2008; Srikhamnuan, Thongnil & Boonsong, 2017; Phongphothakul & Kaewsueb, 2021). This analysis reveals the growing demand for skilled labor and the complex challenges that OVEC administrators must confront in this era of uncertainty. Adapting education to 21st-century realities—particularly advancements in technology, language, and innovation—is essential. With effective leadership and educational management, vocational institutions can produce high-quality workers, vital to national development (Wechayaluck, 2017; Tongkeo, 2002; Phongphothakul & Kaewsueb, 2021; Pandam, 2020).

According to the Ministry of Labour (2024), a national labor market survey showed a high demand for skilled labor, especially in the manufacturing sector, which requires over 46,900 workers. Employers most urgently seek vocational-specific expertise, a need that vocational education can directly address. The Eastern region—particularly the Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC), which includes Chonburi, Rayong, and Chachoengsao—has become an industrial hub, attracting investment in key sectors such as next-generation automotive, smart electronics, aviation, and logistics. Demand for skilled labor in this region is projected to continue increasing (Office of the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Labour, 2019).

Given this context, vocational education plays a pivotal role in producing professional workers that meet Thailand's labor market needs. Vocational school administrators under OVEC must demonstrate effective leadership in addressing these challenges. Therefore, this study aims to examine the leadership of vocational education administrators in Eastern Thailand to provide a foundation for future improvements. The researcher is particularly interested in developing a conceptual framework that will guide the construction of a structural equation model (SEM) for further quantitative research.

OBJECTIVE

- (1) To review the literature from related research in order to analyze the factors or variables that reflect and constitute the components of leadership among school administrators under the Office of the Vocational Education Commission in the Eastern Region of Thailand
- (2) To develop a conceptual framework for studying variables that are likely to influence the leadership of vocational education administrators in Eastern Thailand in the form of relational or causal relationships

METHODOLOGY

This study utilizes a documentary research methodology with a focus on examining literature that pertains to innovative and sustainable tourism strategies designed for the elderly population in Thailand. The investigation encompasses both historical perspectives and contemporary practices to provide a well-rounded understanding of the topic. Data was obtained through an extensive review of a wide array of textual sources, such as governmental publications, scholarly books, peer-reviewed journals, academic theses and dissertations, and other relevant documents. These materials were selected based on their reliability and relevance to the research aims. To access these resources, the researcher explored multiple platforms including online academic databases, university libraries, and specialized archival institutions. The selection process was guided by the study's research objectives and core questions. Once the data was gathered, it was organized into thematic categories to facilitate structured analysis. The subsequent analytical phase involved descriptive evaluation to interpret the relevance and

impact of the findings. To maintain analytical rigor, content analysis was employed as a key tool for synthesizing the material. The results were then compiled and articulated in essay form, enabling a coherent narrative and well-supported conclusions.

RESULTS

A review of the conceptual framework regarding educational institutions under the Office of the Vocational Education Commission (OVEC) indicates that these institutions play a vital role as core organizations responsible for producing and developing a highly skilled workforce in vocational education. Their mission is aligned with the current and future needs of both the economy and society. These institutions significantly contribute to enhancing the country's competitiveness by delivering high-quality vocational education and training, while also ensuring equitable access across diverse population groups.

Additionally, OVEC-affiliated institutions prioritize research, innovation, and the creation of new knowledge to foster sustainable career development across various vocational disciplines. These schools adopt a systematic approach to development, grounded in the principles of high-quality education, equipping learners with up-to-date knowledge and skills that are responsive to the rapidly evolving labor market at both national and international levels (Office of the Vocational Education Commission, 2024; Ministry of Education, 2012; Office of Vocational Education and Training Standards, 2019). A synthesis of studies related to the characteristics of school administrators within OVEC reveals that such administrators should demonstrate creative thinking abilities and the capacity to formulate modern strategies. This ensures that their institutions evolve in line with technological advancements and labor market demands. Administrators must possess outstanding skills in resource allocation, budget management, and effective personnel administration to achieve institutional goals and meet predefined standards. Moreover, it is essential for administrators to foster the continuous development of knowledge and skills among teachers, staff, and students to effectively respond to evolving professional challenges. Another critical competency is the ability to build collaborative networks with government agencies, the private sector, and local communities to provide opportunities for internships, research, and innovation development. Effective communication of ideas and vision is equally important to inspire both personnel and students and to drive institutional progress toward its strategic objectives. Furthermore, administrators must understand current labor market trends, both domestically and internationally, to revise teaching methodologies and curricula in ways that meet labor demands effectively (Boonyen & Wechayaluck, 2021; Phakamach, Panjarattanakorn & Ratchavieng, 2023; Panyaprasertkul & Thanaphaet, 2021; Srichun & Manyanon, 2022; Morklang & Wonnawed, 2023; Worapongpat, Kangpheng & Fuangfooloy, 2024).

The researcher also synthesized various leadership concepts applicable to OVEC school administrators, including:

Transactional Leadership, which emphasizes the exchange relationship between leaders and followers. Leaders assign tasks and establish goals, offering rewards for meeting expectations. This leadership style focuses on clear roles, task monitoring, and performance-based rewards and punishments, ensuring compliance with organizational rules and stability (Pratt, 2024; Yasar, 2024; Pratt, Roy & Coravin, 2024; Cherry, 2022; Cherry, 2023; Sultana, Darun & Yao, 2015; Xenikou, 2017; Avolio, Bass & Jung, 1999; Bass & Avolio, 1993; Mekonnen & Bayissa, 2023).

Transformational Leadership, characterized by the ability to inspire deep personal and organizational change. Transformational leaders motivate followers beyond expectations, foster strong commitment, and support self-development. They use compelling vision, build trust, and encourage innovation and inclusive dialogue to help the organization advance (Ugwu & Okore, 2020; Nielsen et al., 2019; Tomlinson, 2012; Thaklowa & Amatariyakul, 2021; Pisailerd et al., 2021; Shields, 2010; Brown, 2004; Antonakis, 2012; Bass et al., 2003; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Ma & Jiang, 2018; Paarlberg & Lavigna, 2010).

Super-Leadership, which focuses on empowering followers to become self-leaders. This concept shifts the leader's role from direct control to coaching and facilitating independent decision-making. Super-Leaders promote responsibility, initiative, and continuous learning, fostering a culture of trust and shared participation in decision-making processes (Maneephanwong et al., 2021; Noisang et al., 2023; Marc, 2016; Orasak & Bubpha, 2021; Eseryel et al., 2021; Hambleton et al., 2022; Müller et al., 2013).

Spiritual Leadership, which aims to instill meaning and purpose in work. This leadership style links individual spiritual well-being with organizational goals by emphasizing core values such as integrity, compassion, fairness, and spiritual development. Spiritual leaders foster a work culture based on unity, respect, and emotional well-being, encouraging team cohesion and purpose-driven engagement (Devi, 2015; Kaya, 2015; Farmanesh et al., 2021; Chi Vu & Gill, 2019; Maffesoli & Strohl, 2019; Lahmar et al., 2023; Fairholm & Gronau, 2015; Chen & Yang, 2012; Chulawongs & Niranthawee, 2020; Olson, 2015; International Institute for Spiritual Leadership, 2024).

Agile Leadership, which underscores adaptability and responsiveness in volatile and complex environments. Agile leaders adjust strategies continuously, encourage innovation, make data-informed decisions, and promote collaboration. They are open to diverse perspectives and view failures as learning opportunities, fostering team agility and creative problem-solving (Thepsaeng et al., 2024; Bligh et al., 2018; Breakspear, 2017; Eilers et al., 2020; Hayward, 2021; Huning et al., 2020; Olmo-Extremera et al., 2022; Wetvitayanuwat & Silanookit, 2023; Parker et al., 2015; Angga & Tri, 2019).

Based on the contextual study of OVEC administrators in Eastern Thailand and the aforementioned theoretical frameworks, the leadership of vocational school administrators under OVEC refers to the ability to formulate a development-oriented vision aligned with socio-economic demands. These leaders must effectively adapt their management approach in response to rapid and complex changes affecting vocational education, empower staff to achieve academic excellence, and drive innovation in teaching and learning. Effective leadership includes motivating and developing teachers and personnel to handle complex tasks and adapt to change efficiently. Administrators are expected to be educational innovators, integrating new concepts and methods to elevate instructional quality in response to learner and labor market needs. Additionally, they must demonstrate excellent communication skills to facilitate strategic change and foster collaboration toward achieving institutional goals (Phakamach et al., 2023; Panyaprasertkul & Thanaphaet, 2021; Srichun & Manyanon, 2022; Morklang & Wonnawed, 2023; Pratt et al., 2024; Cherry, 2022; Sultana et al., 2015; Nielsen et al., 2019; Maneephanwong et al., 2021; Farmanesh et al., 2021; Eilers et al., 2020).

Through this comprehensive synthesis, the researcher identifies the following key components of leadership among OVEC school administrators in Eastern Thailand:

1. Visionary Development
2. Adaptability
3. Empowerment
4. Educational Innovation
5. Communication for Change Creation

Based on the Literature review, the researcher can develop the following conceptual framework for the study.

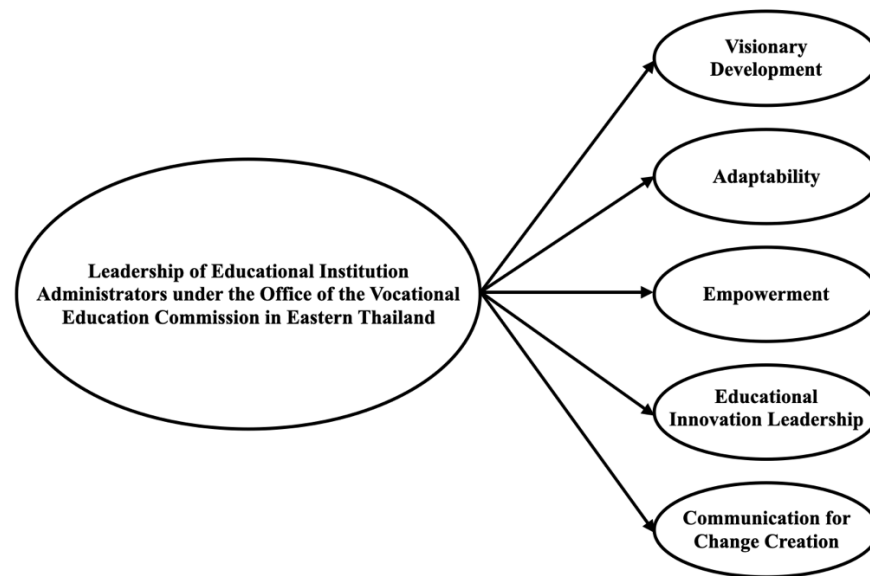


Figure 1: The Research Framework

CONCLUSION

The study successfully developed a conceptual framework for analyzing the leadership of educational administrators under the Office of the Vocational Education Commission (OVEC) in Eastern Thailand. The synthesis of literature revealed that effective leadership in vocational institutions must encompass five key components: visionary development, adaptability, empowerment, educational innovation, and communication for change creation. These components are critical for addressing the challenges posed by rapid socio-economic and technological transformations, particularly in the Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC), which demands a skilled and adaptable workforce.

By integrating theories of transactional, transformational, super, spiritual, and agile leadership, the study provides a multidimensional perspective on leadership competencies required for modern vocational education management. The proposed framework serves as a foundation for future empirical studies utilizing structural equation modeling (SEM) to validate causal relationships among these leadership factors. Furthermore, it supports institutional efforts to improve educational outcomes and workforce readiness, thereby contributing to national development goals in the era of Industry 4.0 and beyond.

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