



Modern Leadership for Thai Vocational Education Management

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Abstract

The study of modern leadership for Thai vocational education management under new complex challenges, digital transformation, labor market changes and artificial intelligence (AI) technology that is revolutionizing all sectors of society, found that the key components of modern leadership for Thai vocational education management consist of: 1) Vision - the expression of vocational education administrators in envisioning the future that leads to changes aimed at excellence; 2) Flexibility - the expression of vocational education administrators showing the ability to think freely and find answers, not bound by rules or familiarity, adapting to various situations, and being open to new challenging ideas; 3) Communication - the ability to communicate in multiple dimensions between administrators, teachers, and students, emphasizing transparent, easily understood communication that responds to the needs of message recipients in the digital age, with proactive communication that can adapt to rapid changes; and 4) Digital Technology - the ability to effectively integrate modern technology, especially AI technology, having digital knowledge and skills to lead organizational transformation, create learning environments conducive to learning, develop curricula that meet labor market demands in the Industry 4.0 era, being an innovator who dares to experiment with new technologies, and having a lifelong learning spirit to keep pace with rapidly changing artificial intelligence technology.

Keywords: Modern Leadership, Thai Vocational Education, Management

Introduction

Technological advancement is changing the world rapidly and continuously. Education and human resource development have become critical factors determining a country's competitiveness. In Thailand, the vocational education system serves as a key mechanism for producing skilled workers and quality human resources to support economic and social development. Managing vocational education in the current era faces increasingly complex new challenges, from adapting to the digital age, labor market changes, to dealing with artificial intelligence (AI) technology that is revolutionizing all sectors of society. Leadership in vocational education management must therefore develop and transform from traditional approaches. Educational institution administrators need to understand not only management and educational policies, but also require vision and the ability to apply new technologies to improve educational quality, enhance learning processes, and prepare learners for a future world where technology is an integral part of daily life. The concept of modern leadership has received significant attention in academic work, especially in the context of educational institutions. Modern leadership must have the ability to manage complexity and uncertainty arising from social, educational, and technological changes. Developing leadership in Thai vocational education institutions is increasingly complex and conditional, as it must align with Thailand's National Strategy for Artificial Intelligence Development (2022-2027), which aims to develop



an efficient AI ecosystem, including training more than 30,000 AI experts and creating AI knowledge for over 10 million people by 2030.

The main challenge for Thai vocational education administrators today is creating a balance between maintaining the identity and strengths of the Thai vocational education system that emphasizes practice, experimentation, and advanced skills, while adapting to the digital world that requires new skills, especially information technology skills, data analysis thinking, and knowledge and understanding of artificial intelligence. This change does not mean abandoning effective traditional approaches, but rather upgrading and strengthening the Thai vocational education management system to respond to labor market demands in an era where artificial intelligence technology plays an important role in all industries. Research and development of artificial intelligence technology must therefore focus on creating conceptual frameworks and practical approaches suitable for Thailand's context, considering both opportunities and existing limitations, from resources and infrastructure to the readiness of teachers and students.

Thai Vocational Education Management

Current Thai vocational education management faces significant challenges from global changes in the 21st century characterized by VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, Ambiguity). The world situation has changes in science, information technology advancement, economy, society, and politics. Therefore, the vocational education system needs to adapt to create human resources ready to cope with changes. Academics have suggested that vocational education management should emphasize developing Centers of Excellence in Vocational Education as an important mechanism for elevating educational quality. Such operations will help vocational education produce personnel capable in science and technology to effectively support the country's innovation-based economic development policy. Current vocational education management reform requires multi-dimensional integration, including college quality improvement, developing small Stand Alone colleges, creating good colleges in four corners of cities, and classroom occupation projects that systematically connect academics with professions. Foreign academics like Ahlquist (2019) proposed the Leapfrog principle that modern education must leap from old forms to Education 4.0 and 5.0, emphasizing practical learning, experimentation, and application of digital technology and artificial intelligence. Educational management that responds to these changes will create Human Capital with high competency, capable of competing internationally and keeping pace with rapid changes in the 21st century.

Leadership

Leadership has been recognized as a critical factor driving organizational success and human development in the 21st century, especially in contexts with rapid technological change and complexity. Modern academics have expanded leadership studies from traditional approaches to new dimensions emphasizing flexibility and adaptation. Banks et al. (2018) analyzed complex leadership behaviors and proposed new research agendas for the future, reflecting the need to develop leadership education approaches that are modern and appropriate for current work contexts, affecting individual performance improvement through emotional engagement and creativity, showing the importance of psychological and emotional dimensions in leadership. In Thai society context, leadership studies have been developed to align with unique values and culture, especially the concept of Inclusive Leadership, which has gained increasing attention among Thailand's new generation leaders. Research on "Survey of Determinants of Inclusive Leadership among Young People in Thailand" has revealed specific characteristics and behaviors of new Thai leaders who have increasingly influential roles in various sectors of the Thai economy. There are also studies on leadership styles that Thai people prefer, emphasizing creating a culture of academic optimism that supports teacher learning.



Additionally, studies on Participative Leadership have developed reliable measurement tools to assess the effectiveness of leadership styles that promote team member participation, reflecting the trend of change from authoritarian, autocratic leadership to democratic leadership and creative collaboration.

Modern Leadership

Leadership in the current era faces challenges very different from the past, especially in VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, Ambiguity) environments with high volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity. Contemporary leadership theories focus on developing leaders who can adapt, create innovation, and have flexibility in managing rapid changes. Adaptive Leadership is one form that emphasizes the importance of flexibility and responsiveness to rapidly, continuously, and constantly changing situations, promoting organizational learning and development from various challenges. Meanwhile, Innovative Leadership plays an important role in pushing organizations to use digital technology and creativity to create competitive advantages. Modern leaders must be able to integrate technology into work processes to create innovation ecosystems that support development and presentation of new ideas and new problem-solving methods.

Another interesting leadership form is Heliotropic Leadership, which is like plant growth turning toward sunlight, focusing on creating positive organizational culture and promoting behaviors leading to prosperity. This mimics the natural adaptation of plants turning toward the sun, behavior that helps plants receive maximum light. Research by Thai academics from 2017 onwards has shown the importance of leading change in educational institutions, finding that transformational leadership of school administrators has a positive relationship with being a learning organization, consistent with modern leadership concepts that are flexible, adaptable, and continuously learning. The latest 2024 study indicates that modern leadership is very important in enhancing organizational resilience, and innovative leadership has gained more attention due to the complexity and challenges of society, politics, and education. Modern leaders must therefore have the ability to combine various skills, including thinking flexibility, adaptation, innovation creation, digital technology use, and creating positive environments for organizations to grow and survive in a rapidly changing world.

Components of Modern Leadership for Thai Vocational Education Management

Paichon Siridhammo (2021) defined characteristics and behaviors of modern educational institution leadership consisting of: 1) Vision - far-reaching and clear; 2) Communication - having excellent communication skills, understanding and accepting others' opinions; 3) Flexibility - in thinking, planning, implementation, risk management according to situations, including adaptability. This aligns with Chaiwut Worapin et al. (2024) who defined characteristics of modern leadership with professional management competency consisting of: 1) Vision - far-reaching; 2) Professional Communication; 3) Digital Technology - using modern technology, especially AI technology; and 4) Professional Networks - supporting and promoting each other. This corresponds with Piyaporn Khunthongoek (2025) who defined necessary characteristics or skills for modern leadership consisting of: 1) Vision - clear vision helps create inspiration and ignite determination, creating unity to achieve goals; 2) Flexibility - ability to adapt and be flexible according to rapidly changing and uncertain world situations; 3) Good Communication - creating clear understanding, helping leaders inspire and motivate teams effectively; 4) Trust - enabling effective team leadership. Meanwhile, Chanthama Changsalak (2025) defined characteristics of modern leadership as consisting of: 1) Vision - having broad, modern perspectives, keeping pace with changes; 2) Motivation - being enthusiastic, committed, dedicated, self-confident; 3) Teamwork - showing respect, empathy, trust, and respect for others' opinions; and 4) Digital Technology - learning to apply digital

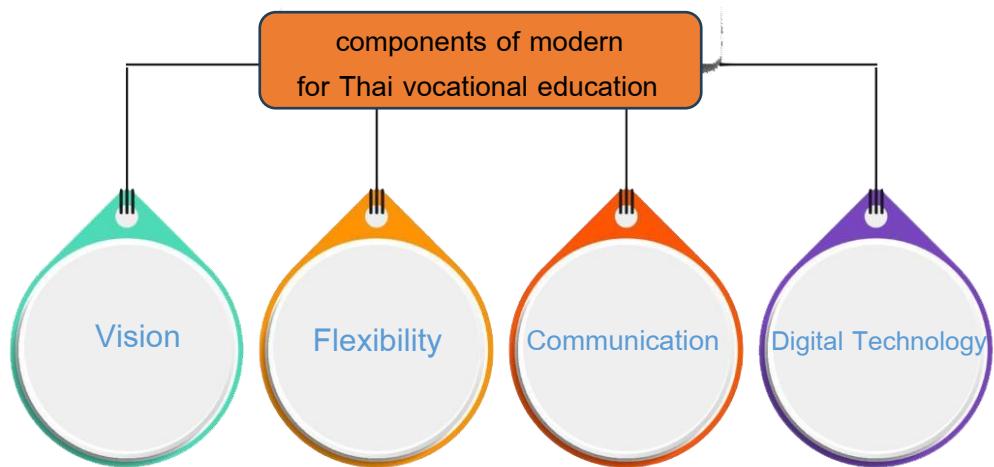


technology and AI technology efficiently in work. This aligns with Martin Roll (2025), a modern leader and top global business strategy and branding strategist, who said that leadership in the 21st century faces high challenges, consisting of: 1) Vision - clear foresight, commitment and confidence in goals; 2) Flexibility - ability to adapt, be agile, think outside the box; 3) Digital Technology - learning and applying modern technology, especially AI technology, to help in organizational management.

Components of Modern Leadership for Thai Vocational Education Management

Components of modern leadership for Thai vocational education	Paichon Siridhammo (2021)	Chaiwut Worapin et al. (2024) (2567)	Piyaporn Khunthongkoek (2025)	Chanthama Changsalak (2025)	Martin Roll (2025)	frequency
1. Vision	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	5
2. Flexibility	✓		✓		✓	3
3. Communication	✓	✓	✓			3
4. Digital Technology		✓		✓	✓	3
5. Connection		✓				1
6. Trust			✓			1
7. Motivation				✓		1
8. Teamwork				✓		1
Summarize	3	4	4	4	3	

From synthesizing components of modern leadership for Thai vocational education management by selecting those with frequency of 3 or more, it can be concluded that they consist of: **Vision, Flexibility, Communication, and Digital Technology**.



New Knowledge

Vision

Kriangkak Chareonwongsakdi (2017) defined vision in the book "Super Leadership" as mental images of the future that are clear in thought, based on understanding current conditions and future changes. Northouse (2012) defined vision in "Introduction to Leadership: concepts and practice" as envisioning the future, which is a possible image involving change and challenges aimed at excellence. Therefore, it can be concluded that modern leadership for Thai vocational education management in terms of vision is the expression of vocational education administrators in envisioning the future that leads to changes aimed at excellence.



Flexibility

Dubrin (2010) stated that leaders must have flexibility to accommodate change, such as accommodating modern technology. Leaders must have the ability to adapt to different situations. Sousa (2003) defined flexibility in "The Leadership Brain" under "Are creativity and leadership separate characteristics" as flexibility in problem-solving and adapting to various situations. Therefore, it can be concluded that modern leadership for Thai vocational education management in terms of flexibility is the expression of vocational education administrators showing the ability to think freely and find answers, not bound by rules or familiarity, adapting to various situations, and being open to new ideas freely.



Communication

Modern leadership in Thai vocational education management in terms of communication is the ability to communicate bidirectionally between administrators, teachers, and students, emphasizing transparent, easily understood communication that responds to the needs of message recipients in the digital age. Leaders must have skills in information management, creating communication networks both inside and outside institutions, and using online social media as tools for public relations and creating good image for educational institutions. Additionally, modern leadership needs to develop proactive communication systems that can adapt to rapid changes and create organizational culture open to information and opinion exchange, to elevate educational quality and strengthen society's confidence in Thai vocational education.



Digital Technology

Modern leadership for Thai vocational education management in terms of digital technology is the ability to integrate modern technology, especially AI technology, effectively. Administrators must have digital knowledge and skills to lead organizational transformation, create learning environments conducive to learning, develop curricula that meet labor market demands in the Industry 4.0 era. They must be innovators who dare to experiment with new technologies, have the ability to create cooperation networks between educational institutions and industry, and have a lifelong learning spirit to keep pace with rapid technological changes. Additionally, modern leaders must understand Thai social and cultural contexts to appropriately adapt digital technology for vocational education students and create opportunities for developing professional skills necessary for the future.



Conclusion

Modern leadership for Thai vocational education management is a combination of clear, far-reaching vision, excellent management skills, diverse communication abilities, and digital technology expertise, especially applying AI technology in management. Successful modern leadership must be lifelong learners, have flexibility in thinking, adapt concepts and various methods, and be able to inspire teams in journeying toward a quality and modern educational future. Developing modern leadership will be key to elevating Thai vocational education to compete on the world stage and meet the needs of future economy and society.

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