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# Diverse Leadership Models for Promoting Sustainable Development in Hong Kong: Experiences and Insights

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(Received 26 March 2024; revised 20 April 2024; accepted 26 April 2024; first published online 30 June 2024)

## Abstract

This article examines the diverse leadership models employed by the Hong Kong government in promoting sustainable development, including administrative, collaborative, transformational, distributed, servant, and transactional leadership. The implementation of these models reflects the government's comprehensive strategies in environmental policies, technological innovation, and sustainability projects. The article also draws insights from Singapore, Denmark, and Finland, integrating their distinctive leadership approaches to provide new ideas for Hong Kong in achieving sustainable development. The conclusion suggests that adopting a hybrid leadership style can more effectively help Hong Kong achieve its sustainability goals.

**Keywords:** Sustainable development, leadership models, Hong Kong, administrative leadership, collaborative leadership

## 1. Introduction

The Hong Kong Legislative Council began to carry out sustainable development research in 1997[1], and the Hong Kong SAR government established the Sustainable Development Committee in 2003[2]. Hong Kong was one of the first cities in the world to pay attention to sustainable development. On 8 October 2021, The Hong Kong Government announced Hong Kong's Climate Action Plan 2050, outlining four major decarbonisation strategies: Net-zero electricity generation, Energy saving and green buildings, Green transport, Waste reduction. [3] To achieve sustainable development in Hong Kong, it requires the joint efforts of the government, enterprises, society and stakeholders.

## 2. Hong Kong's leadership model in sustainable development

The main Environmental Leadership Models are Transformational Leadership, Transactional leadership and Laissez-Faire Leadership. Other Environmental Leadership Styles have Administrative Leadership, Distributed Leadership, Collaborative Leadership and Servant Leadership.

The Hong Kong government's leadership model in environmental matters is not particularly clear, but its approach can be inferred based on its actions and strategies by examining its policies, initiatives, and interactions with stakeholders. Through comprehensive analysis, it can be seen that the government adopts a variety of environmental leadership models such as administrative leadership, collaborative leadership and transformational leadership.

### 2.1 Administrative leadership

This style is characterized by a top-down approach, where decisions are made at the top and implemented throughout the organization. Establishing a sustainability committee and implementing a sustainability strategy demonstrate a formal, organized approach to addressing environmental issues. Hong Kong has demonstrated an administrative leadership style through the implementation of structured and standardized approaches in laws and regulations, such as waste disposal charges and energy efficiency regulations, which demonstrate the government's administrative leadership style focusing on compliance and operational efficiency in achieving environmental goals. The comprehensive implementation of the plastic shopping bag charging plan (April 1, 2015 - December 30, 2022) is the most obvious example.

### 2.2 Collaborative leadership

The Hong Kong government recognizes the importance of stakeholder engagement in sustainable development and adopts collaborative leadership to advance its sustainability agenda by working with businesses, NGOs and communities. For example, the government released the "Hong Kong Resource Circulation Blueprint 2013-2022" in May 2013. The Government is committed to working with all sectors to reduce waste and improve resource efficiency. [4] Another example is the "Partnership for Sustainability Leadership in Business" (PSLB) jointly launched by the Center for Civil Society and Governance (CCSG) of the University of Hong Kong and HSBC. [5]

### 2.3 Transformational leadership

The Hong Kong government strives to achieve transformational leadership by setting ambitious environmental goals and policies aimed at reducing carbon emissions, promoting green energy and improving waste management. This model is characterized by motivating and encouraging citizens to jointly pursue the vision of sustainable development, emphasizing the application of innovation and technology in sustainable development projects, such as Smart City Blueprint for Hong Kong (Blueprint 2.0)[6], "Lantau Tomorrow Vision", Hong Kong 2030+ strategy, etc. [7]

### **2.4 Distributed leadership**

Distributed leadership spreads responsibility across levels and departments, recognizing that leadership doesn't just exist at the top. In the Hong Kong context, the government has encouraged distributed leadership by empowering local regions and communities to undertake sustainable development projects. This is reflected in initiatives to support local sustainability projects and environmental education projects in schools.

### **2.5 Servant leadership**

Servant leaders prioritize the needs of their team and help people develop and perform as effectively as possible. Governments can focus on meeting the needs of their communities by prioritizing environmental justice, ensuring equitable access to green spaces, and addressing the needs of disadvantaged communities in environmental policy development.

### **2.6 Transactional leadership**

This model focuses on exchanges between leaders and followers, providing rewards for achieving specific goals or imposing penalties when they fail. In the context of sustainable development, this could involve implementing stronger incentive schemes that reward businesses and individuals for adopting sustainable practices, similar to the EU's carbon trading scheme that rewards companies for reducing carbon emissions.

## **3. Experience in enhancing sustainable development through different leadership styles: Lessons from Singapore and other countries**

Experience from Singapore and other countries shows that employing a variety of leadership styles can enhance sustainability.

### **3.1 Singapore**

Singapore's success in sustainable development is due to a combination of executive leadership, collaborative leadership and transformational leadership. The strategic use of public-private partnership (PPP) models, the Smart Nation initiative, the National Artificial Intelligence Strategy, the NEWater project and other visionary initiatives demonstrates how the integration of these leadership models can promote innovation, efficiency and innovation in sustainability efforts. Hong Kong can further enhance its sustainable development by adopting Singapore's holistic and long-term planning perspective by integrating sustainability in all aspects of urban development.

### **3.2 Denmark**

Denmark embodies a transformational and decentralized leadership model. The country's commitment to becoming carbon neutral by 2050 through wind energy is driven by a vision that inspires society. Furthermore, Denmark's success in renewable energy is partly due to decentralized leadership. Hong Kong could adopt a similar model to encourage community-based sustainable development projects and greater public participation in renewable energy initiatives.

### 3.3 Finland

Finland's approach to sustainability emphasizes collaborative and servant leadership, with government action to promote and support initiatives from businesses, educational institutions and communities. This approach is highly effective in promoting innovation and sustainability in education and circular economy practices. Hong Kong could use more servant leadership.

## 4. Conclusion

When it comes to promoting sustainable development, each environmental leadership model has unique characteristics that can influence the implementation of sustainability plans. For Hong Kong, adopting a hybrid leadership style may be more effective in promoting sustainable development. Emphasis on transformational leadership that can inspire and drive collective action to achieve the SDGs. Executive leadership is critical in setting standards and ensuring compliance. Collaborative and distributed leadership can engage multiple stakeholders and promote innovation and shared responsibility in sustainability efforts. While Hong Kong's current leadership model already supports its sustainable development goals, integrating elements of adaptive, inclusive, visionary and collaborative leadership from overseas experiences can provide new pathways for enhanced sustainability. By learning from the experiences of Singapore, Denmark and Finland, Hong Kong can integrate these leadership styles to address its unique challenges and sustainability opportunities, improving its effectiveness in promoting a green and sustainable future.

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## Cite This Article

Changkui LI, Sophia LI, Emily SONG.(2024).Integrated Environmental Management: Achieving Sustainable Development through the Lens of Water, Air and Waste. *Integration of Industry and Education Journal*, 3(2):25-29, DOI:<https://doi.org/10.6914/iej.030205>

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*Integration of Industry and Education Journal*, ISSN 2791-2671 (print), ISSN 2791-268X (online), DOI 10.6914/iiej, Volume 3 Issue 2, was published by Creative Publishing Co., Limited on 30 June 2024, ISBN 978-988-79866, <http://www.iiej.cc>, <http://ssci.cc/>, <https://cpcl.cc/>, Email: [wtoecom@gmail.com](mailto:wtoecom@gmail.com), [kycbshk@gmail.com](mailto:kycbshk@gmail.com).