

## STRATEGIC PLAN FOR DEVELOPING QUALITY CULTURE IN VOCATIONAL COLLEGES IN THE EASTERN REGION OF THAILAND UNDER THE OFFICE OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION COMMISSION.

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### ABSTRACT

The purposes of this study were to analyze the factors of the quality culture in vocational colleges in the eastern region of Thailand under the Office of Vocational Education Commission, to develop the strategic plan for developing the quality culture, and to assess the strategic plan for developing the quality culture in vocational colleges in the eastern region of Thailand under the Office of Vocational Education Commission. The research methodology was divided into three stages. Firstly, the analysis of the factors of the quality culture in vocational colleges in the eastern region of Thailand under the Office of Vocational Education Commission. Secondly, the strategic plan for the quality culture development was developed. Finally, the developed strategic plan for developing the quality culture was assessed. The results revealed that the quality culture in vocational colleges in the eastern region of Thailand under the Office of Vocational Education Commission was composed of nine factors with 88 variables. The nine factors could describe the variances of quality culture at 72.413 %. The strategic plan for developing the quality culture was composed of vision, 5 missions, 8 goals and 4 categories of 31 strategies. The directors and the vice-directors of Planning Department in vocational colleges in the eastern region of Thailand under the Office of Vocational Education Commission had good comments on the strategic plan for developing the quality culture with the high accuracy ( $\alpha=4.03$ ).

**Keywords:** Quality culture, strategic plan, factor analysis.

## INTRODUCTION

Educational system has many roles in continuing the culture, responding to the society's demand and solving social problems. Therefore, the education produces the advance knowledge and the related knowledge for supporting Thailand capability (Wattanachai, 2002). Education has relationship with society (Buasri, 1999). With the advantages of education, the society needs the roles of education (Accountability) to produce the qualified learners (Suriyachat, 2007).

Since 1999 the education management has been improved continuously in order to achieve the goal, which is "quality". Among the changes, we should realize the main point that leads to the success is "culture". The organization's culture is like the energy, which is invisible. On the other hand, it has the influence to all parts of the organization. The culture is like the nourishment that all departments of the organization need in order to grow and to have a productive outcome (Maharatsakul, 2005). The culture should be preceded and be developed; on the other hand, its negative sides should be eliminated. A new one has to be created (National Education Commission, 2002). The quality culture in working, which should be preceded and be developed, is the standard and the intention as well as a positive consciousness towards the organization and the colleagues. These will be the energy driving an effective management of the organization (Maharatsakul, 2004). In addition, culture is the key factor of change in quality development (Freed et al., 1998).

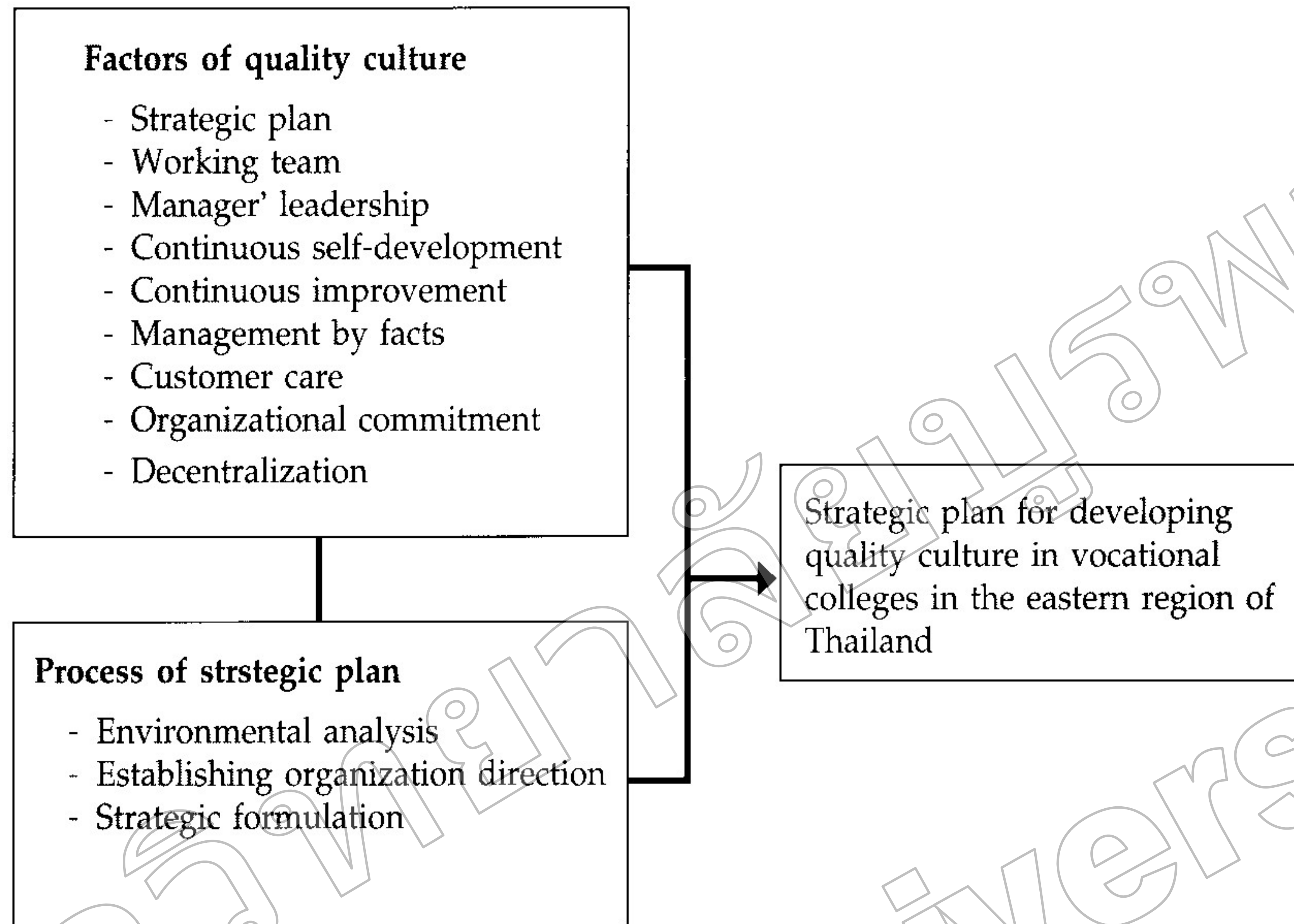
Due to the social requirement of the educational quality, the culture is one factor, which should be considered. It can be said that a school needs to form a quality culture. In order to have a quality culture at school, it should be started by the school personnel who design their own image of how their organization should be in the future, how could they manage it, and they also express their ideas of organizational management leading to the future imagination (Sripanwit, 2006). Having a quality culture, the organization needs a unity and a cooperation of all personnel (Bunill and Ledolter, 1999).

The importance of quality culture and the idea of forming the quality culture have been documented by several authors (Cameron et al., 1994; Freed et al., 1998; Office of the National Education Commission, 2000; European Universities Association, 2003; Uewong, 2004; Davison, 2006; and Koul, 2006). According to the written documents, the quality culture was categorized into nine factors, i.e., strategic plan, working team, managers' leadership, continuous self-development, continuous improvement, management by facts, customer care, organizational commitment, and decentralization. Therefore, it can be said that the quality culture is good culture, and it should be preceded and could contribute to a continuous development (National Education Commission, 2002). A good quality culture could not be formed without good management. It must be implemented (Maharatsakul, 2005). In order to have the good quality culture in the organization, we should start with the thought of what we want our organization to be in the future. What do we have to do for those expectations? Also, we should express their ideas of organizational management leading to the future prospect (Sripanwit, 2006). The quality culture could not be formed without the cooperation of the organization (Bunill and Ledolter, 1999). It is in line with the study of Sadri and Lees (2001), which claimed that the breakthrough of quality culture came when the organization had a planning as well as cooperation.

It has been proposed that the good quality culture could not be formed without a good management, and it usually comes after making a plan. Therefore, it is believed that the quality culture in any organizations could not be implemented without good management and planning. One of interesting thing is that the strategic plan of Certo and Peter (Wongkiatirat et al., 2003) should be explored in order to make a practical application in developing the quality culture in vocational colleges located in eight provinces of the eastern region of Thailand under the Office of Vocational Education Commission, Ministry of Education. It is believed that the school's quality culture is the main point

that can bring about the development in national education system resulting in the qualified learners, as the society requires.

The conceptual framework was developed following the analysis of the written documents and summarized in Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** Schematic diagram of the conceptual framework of strategic plan for developing quality culture in vocational colleges in the eastern region of Thailand.

The purposes of this study were aimed to develop and assess the strategic plan for developing the quality culture and to assess the strategic plan based on the results of factor analysis obtained from vocational colleges in the eastern region of Thailand under the Office of Vocational Education Commission.

## DEFINITION OF TERMS

**Quality Culture** means the personnel 's consciousness, values, and beliefs to work in every activity and every processes of the organization with nine factors, i.e., 'strategic plan, working team, managers' leadership, continuous self-development, continuous improvement, management by facts, customer care, organizational commitment, and decentralization for the best performance.

**Strategic plan for developing the quality culture** means the plan to form the quality culture, which composes of vision, missions, goals, and strategies. The strategic plan for developing the quality culture is considered to be the best way and the best propriety to form the quality culture in vocational colleges in the eastern region of Thailand.

**Thai vocational colleges in the eastern region of Thailand under the Office of Vocational Education Commission** are classified into five categories of college, i.e., technical college, vocational college, college of agriculture and technology, polytechnic college, and community college. It only consists of those colleges that located in the eastern region of Thailand. The eastern region of Thailand consists of eight provinces, i.e., Chanthaburi, Chachoengsao, Chon Buri, Rayong, Trat, Nakhon Nayok, Prachin Buri, and Sa Kaeo.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### SAMPLE

The population of executive members and teachers participated in the factor analysis of quality culture consisted of 150 executives and 2,189 teachers from 37 Thai vocational colleges under the Office of Vocational Education Commission, Ministry of Education that located in the eastern region. The study was done during the academic year 2007, and the sampling group was selected by means of stratified random sampling according to Krejcie and Morgan' table (Krejcie and Morgan, 1970). It consisted of 108 executives and 327 teachers from 37 Thai vocational colleges.

The population of executive members participated in drawing an outline of the strategic plan for developing the quality culture consisted of 37 executives from 37 Thai vocational colleges under the Office of Vocational Education Commission, Ministry of Education that located in the eastern region. The panel of experts who reviewed the strategic plan for developing the quality culture was recruited from experts in the field of the vocational education management and quality management. The sampling group was selected by means of purposive random sampling and consisted of nine experts.

The population of executive members participated in the assessment of the constructed strategic plan for developing the quality culture consisted of 37 directors and 37 vice-directors of Planning Corporation Department from 37 Thai vocational colleges under the Office of Vocational Education Commission, Ministry of Education that located in the eastern region. The sampling group was selected by means of simple random sampling. It consisted of 63 directors and vice-directors of Planning Corporation Department from 37 Thai vocational colleges.

### INSTRUMENTS

The instrument of the factor analysis of quality culture was developed based on the results

of analysis of information obtained from well-written documents. The questionnaire was consisted of nine factors with 88 variables. The first part was the checklist of the personal data and consisted of four items. The second part was the rating scale questionnaire concerning the factors of quality culture and consisted of 88 items. These 88 items were consisting of 10 items of strategic plan, 8 items of working team, 16 items of managing leadership, 9 items of continuous self-development, 7 items of continuous improvement, 9 items of management based on the fact, 8 items of customer care, 9 items of organizational commitment, and 12 items of decentralization. The constructed questionnaire was reviewed by five experts with IOC value which felled between IOC value of 0.60-1.00.

The questionnaire was first tried out with a sample size of 40 that consisted of 35 teachers and five administrators of the Samut Songkram technical college following the revision according to the comments of the five experts. An analysis was carried out with those returned questionnaires, and the values of discrimination and alpha coefficient were at 0.50 - 0.89 and 0.992, respectively. The questionnaire was subsequently modified based on all information obtained from the analysis. The modified questionnaire was then sent to the selected sample from 37 technical colleges that consisted of 108 administrators and 327 teachers. Only 92.87 % of the questionnaires were returned. All returned questionnaires were used in the analysis of frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, and Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) values. Results obtained from the aforementioned data were used as a part of information for the development of the strategic plan.

In the mean time, open-end questionnaires were sent to 37 administrators of technical colleges. Only 91.89 % of the questionnaires were returned. All information obtained from the returned questionnaire was used in content analysis, SWOT environmental analysis, and direction for the development of the organization. The details of SWOT environmental analysis are summarized in

Figure 2. The instrument was subsequently developed by combining all information derived from factor analysis with information obtained from questionnaires that had been carefully analyzed, resulting in outline of the strategic plan. Nine experts through the Multi-Attribute Consensus Reaching (MACR) meeting subsequently reviewed this outline of the strategic plan. The strategic plan was then revised according

to the comments of the nine experts which resulting in the final strategic plan. This strategic plan and close-end questionnaires were sent to 63 administrators of 37 technical colleges for the assessment of the final strategic plan. Only 90.47 % of the assessment were returned and used in the analysis of percentage, mean, and standard deviation.

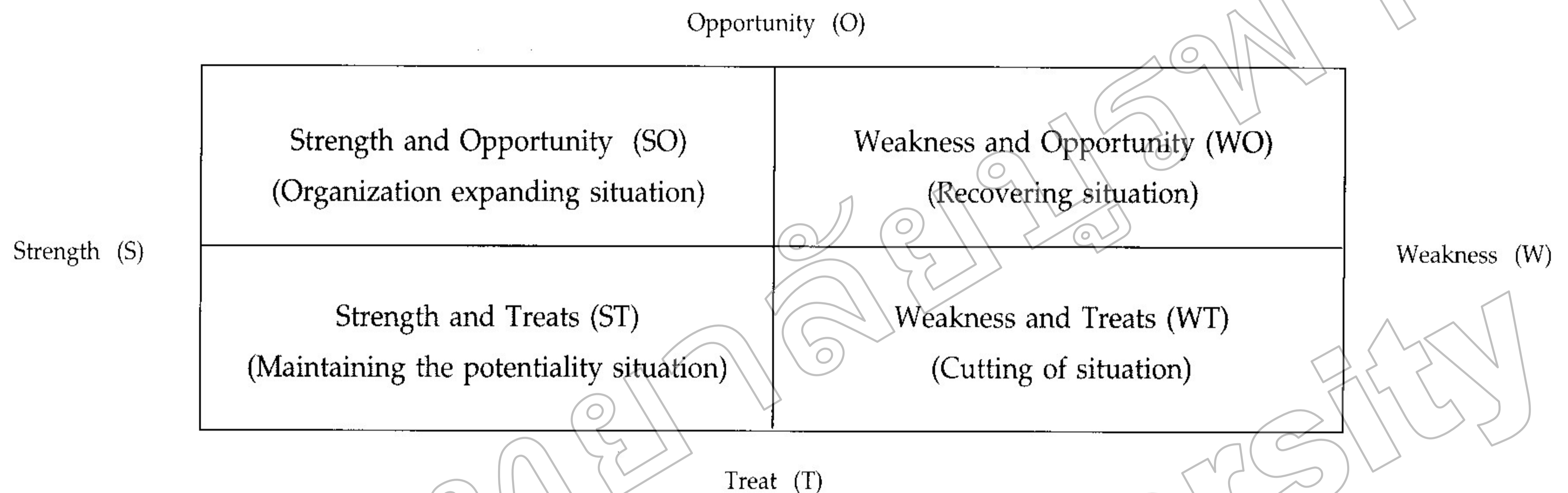


Figure 2. The relationship among the four-category strategy and four situations.

## RESULTS

### Factors analysis on quality culture

The quality culture in vocational colleges in the eastern region of Thailand under the Office of Vocational Education Commission was categorized into nine factors with 88 variables, i.e., manager leadership, management by fact, strategic plan, decentralization,

continuous self-development, organizational commitment, working team, customer care, and continuous improvement. These factors could describe the variances of quality culture at 72.413 %. Results of analysis of those given factors are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. The factors, the variables, the Eigen-values and the factor loading of quality culture at Eastern School of Office of Vocational Education Commission in Thailand.

| Factors                        | Variables | Eigen-values | Factor loading |
|--------------------------------|-----------|--------------|----------------|
| 1. Managers' leadership        | 16        | 48.560       | 0.908 - 0.635  |
| 2. Management by facts         | 11        | 3.280        | 0.871 - 0.354  |
| 3. Strategic plan              | 10        | 2.892        | 0.836 - 0.564  |
| 4. Decentralization            | 12        | 2.160        | 0.815 - 0.381  |
| 5. Continuous self-development | 8         | 1.876        | 0.802 - 0.565  |
| 6. Organizational commitment   | 8         | 1.428        | 0.804 - 0.516  |
| 7. Working team                | 8         | 1.246        | 0.741 - 0.466  |
| 8. Customer care               | 8         | 1.235        | 0.570 - 0.387  |
| 9. Continuous improvement      | 7         | 1.047        | 0.663 - 0.357  |

### **Development of the strategic plan for developing the quality culture.**

#### **Vision of the strategic plan for developing quality culture.**

The vision of the vocational colleges was synthesized according to their roles as the community's learning center providing all levels of vocational educational services. The roles are focused on life-long learning, and for the benefit of learners. They have a perfect system and transparent management, including a clear objective and a clear policy. Decentralization, teamwork, sharing idea, information technology system, and networking are emphasized as important roles for their services. The stakeholders have a chance to manage in vocational education. Thus, the educational places were used as a place to explore and gain knowledge from the enterprises, the community, and the society within the next five years.

#### **Missions of the strategic plan for developing quality culture in vocational colleges in the eastern region of Thailand.**

The mission of the strategic plan for developing culture in vocational colleges in the eastern region of Thailand is to provide all levels of vocational education services in various fields, nationwide, and life-long for all to access for knowledge, vocational skills, moral and ethics, and to respond to the requirements of enterprises, employment market and society. Personnel, curriculum, and teaching method should be improved up to date with flexibility and appropriateness to make the colleges to serve as learning centers and vocational training centers of community. All practical application of quality management at the educational place should be provided with the modification of the previous organization's culture to become the quality culture. Networking and encouraging the personnel, learners, guardians, and community should be established to continuously participate in the vocational management in various aspects. Services to the community in technical matter and vocation should be emphasized, and collaborate with the community to preserve arts, culture, tradition, environment and local wisdom.

### **Goals of the strategic plan for developing quality culture in vocational colleges in the eastern region of Thailand.**

The goal of the strategic plan for developing quality culture is to let the learners have good health, mentality, and good vision with know-how to think. They are able to solve problems, have knowledge, ability and basic skills at work. They should develop morality and ethical behaviors that will correspond to the needs of the educational institution, employment market, and society. The graduates should have high rate of employment, and have high tendency to pursue their study at higher education level. As a result, they are able to live happily in the society and are the citizens who make a merit to the nation. The graduates should have the qualification that relevant to support the stability of the establishment, as they need. The colleges should provide the continuous services of the vocational education and technical service to the community, resulting in employment, a good income, and a better quality of life. The educational institutes should have more quality development, which leads to the sustainability of quality. The technical colleges should try to establish the cooperation with community and educational institutes concerning the vocational management, and to preserve the arts, culture, tradition, environment and local wisdom. The colleges should try to contribute to people in the community to gain knowledge, better understanding and self-awareness. These will make the nation and society achieve the potentiality, quality and continuous peace.

#### **Strategies of the strategic plan for developing quality culture in vocational colleges in the eastern region of Thailand.**

The developed strategic plan was proposed that it consisted of nine strategies concerning the expansion of organization, seven strategies concerning the maintenance of the potentiality, five strategies concerning the recovering of organization, and ten strategies of cutting of.

### The assessment of the strategic plan for developing quality culture.

It was found that the directors and vice-directors of planning departments of vocational colleges in the eastern region of Thailand towards

the strategic plan for developing the quality culture were considered that the strategic plan was appropriate for the implementation at the high utility, high feasibility, high propriety, and high accuracy ( $\bar{x} = 4.03$ ), as shown in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Means, S.D., level and order of the opinions of the directors and vice-directors of planning departments of vocational colleges in the eastern region of Thailand towards the strategic plan for developing the quality culture.

| Assessment of standard  | N = 57    |      |   |       |
|-------------------------|-----------|------|---|-------|
|                         | $\bar{x}$ | S.D. | Level   | Order |
| 1. Utility standard     | 4.22      | 0.67 | high utility  | 1     |
| 2. Feasibility standard | 3.86      | 0.67 | high feasibility  | 4     |
| 3. Propriety standard   | 4.05      | 0.58 | high propriety  | 2     |
| 4. Accuracy standard    | 4.01      | 0.57 | high accuracy   | 3     |
| Total                   | 4.03      | 0.54 | high utility, high feasibility, high propriety, and high accuracy |       |

## DISCUSSION

According to the factor analysis of quality culture of vocational colleges in the eastern region of Thailand under the Office of Vocational Education Commission, Ministry of Education, it can be summarized that management has been affected by nine factors of quality culture, i.e., manager leadership, management by fact, strategic plan, decentralization, continuous self-development, organizational commitment, working team, customer care, and continuous improvement. These factors are relevant to the ideas of European Universities Association (2003), Cameron et al. (1994), Freed et al. (1998), Louise Davison (2006), Koul (2006), Office of the National Education Commission (2000), and Uewong (2004). Each of the factor analyzed yielded various aspects as summarized in the following statements.

**Managers' leadership.** The leaders have to express a clear vision, a clear mission and clear management aims that motivate their staff to have

the operation with quality culture. They have to encourage the staff to have an innovation in quality management. They should also set up a feedback system for improving quality culture.

**Management by facts.** A good management should be based on facts, so we can make decision effectively (Suwansirikul, 2004). All decisions should be made academically (Scientific approach) and logically (Phoethisorn, 2006). Avoiding a bias of each person can minimize the argument.

**Strategic plan.** It has the advantages in terms of two dimensions, organization and members. A key instrument, which helps the organization and the members to face the future changes with well preparedness, is to make a strategic plan. The members should have clear aims of the organization and take part in planning in order to achieve the aims.

**Decentralization.** The management system of the organization should be based on the decentralization, which is the principle of democracy, resulting in encouraging the staff to participate in

making decision. Therefore, the organization will have flexibility in working, which is related to the economy, the society, and the culture. It can also enhance the staff's capacity building to rely on oneself and to have a stable self-development (UNESCO, 1985).

**Continuous self-development.** Teachers should have life-long learning habit and search for knowledge which can help them to solve problems, and maintaining the continuous teaching improvement by learning in the library, the society, and make use of local wisdom, and information technology for self-development. They should seek to attend a training course by experts, and undergo different training courses. They should look for the possibility to further their education.

**Organizational commitment.** The organization should ask staff to commit themselves to express the unity and the participation in different activities that force the members having a difficulty to leave the organization. The commitment is the core of organization in terms of making understanding between the organization and the members. The members who have high commitment can achieve the aims and the value of the organization (Decotis and Timothy, 1987).

**Teamwork.** When members of the organization develop a good teamwork by help each other, share their knowledge, and have a freedom in communication, they can make use of the resources together effectively. With the cooperation in making decisions as well as solving problems, the members will have a strong commitment in team, and they can accept the failure in operation. Consequently, they will work with quality. That is why the teamwork is important to the members and their organization (Quick, 1992).

**Customer care.** The improvement of services will not be achieved if a customer is not satisfied with it. The demand does not occur at the time they buy the product, but it is the satisfaction to the product usage until its expiring date. The quotation mentioned above is the main idea of quality theory. Thus, the organization should perceive the customer's demand not only at present but also in

the future, in order to have an effective management system of the organization based on the customer's standard or beyond their expectation (Jantharamat, 2001). It can be said that the child-centered teaching method is focused on the learners' benefits.

**Continuous improvement.** The continuous improvement of the organization is aimed to enhance the learners' ability, which is satisfied the members of society. The personnel of organization should work according to an action plan, an investigation plan as well as an assessment plan. The assessment result of all processes should serve as a guideline to improve the organization continuously. Then, the management system of the organization with quality culture will be effectively implemented (Saun Dusit Rajabhat University, 2005).

All of the nine factors are proposed to be the key factors of the quality culture. These will be the important factors in changing of quality development and the driving force of an effective management of vocational colleges in the eastern region of Thailand under the Office of Vocational Education Commission.

Thai vocational colleges in the eastern region under the Office of Vocational Education Commission should adopt the strategic plan and make use of the utility of vision, mission, goal and strategy for developing quality culture as the guideline for making a strategic plan for a sustainable development of quality culture. In addition, the nine factors of quality culture of Thai vocational colleges in the eastern region can be used as the index for investigating the quality culture of the college. The importance of quality culture should be publicized in order to inspire one's mind at an educational institute for the awareness of the importance of the quality that can make life sustainable in the educational place. If the administrators of Thai vocational colleges in the eastern region under the Office of Vocational Education Commission require the quality culture in their educational place, they should have a power of leadership and have management system based on the information, strategic planning, and decentralization. They should encourage their personnel to have a good relationship with the educational place,

continuous self-development. They must set up a teamwork and thinking of the benefits gained by the learners. They should also have a continuous improvement in operation in order to enhance the quality and sustainability in the educational place.

Further study related to the qualitative research method for in-depth information concerning other factors of quality culture, and the index of quality culture in other educational institutes affiliated with the Office of Vocational Education Commission should be explored. It should be very useful to design the formulation of quality culture development or the manual for the application of the quality culture. The administrators' leadership styles that may affect the quality culture development are also worthwhile to be investigated.

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