

Sustainability, Leadership and Higher Education Institutional Sustainability

Author: Charmain Subero-Salandy
The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine

This paper is supported by qualitative data collected through an exploratory case study involving a purposive sample of participants from staff and student leaders at a higher education institution (HEI) in Trinidad and Tobago. Qualitative content analysis was used to code and analyse the data. The study examined the leaders' perceptions and experiences of the factors influencing the embedding of sustainability practices that would engender institutional sustainability at the university. The leaders defined sustainable practices primarily in financial terms, with institutional survival being a dominant theme. The findings revealed that key challenges experienced by the leaders included cultural issues, governance, and policy-related barriers, such as ineffective bureaucratic processes, inadequate funding, and deficient human resource policies. Potential solutions for overcoming these challenges included revenue generation, improved budgeting, process improvement, stakeholder engagement, and implementing organisational change management and accountability frameworks. The research highlights how well-designed governance policies and procedures, supported by sustainable leadership, can facilitate the adoption of sustainable practices that enhance institutional efficiency. The study's findings offer practical insights for higher education practitioners, guiding them towards adopting a sustainable leadership approach to drive organisational change and improve sustainability performance. By emphasising sustainable governance, it highlights how leadership at all levels can play a pivotal role in developing sound policy frameworks that advance institutional sustainability initiatives. Given the study's exploratory nature and purposive sampling, its findings are not intended to be universally generalisable; however, meaningful implications can be drawn, contributing to the broader literature on sustainability leadership by examining how governance, cultural factors, and leadership dynamics influence institutional sustainability efforts in higher education, particularly in a developing nation context. Finally, the paper offers recommendations that could help Caribbean HEIs optimise their sustainability strategies. These strategies are fundamental to the successful administration of the institution, particularly in fostering stakeholder engagement through collaboration and communication.