Creation of Sustainable Leadership Development: Conceptual Model Validation

Judita Peterlin
Vlado Dimovski
Sandra Penger

Conceptual paper addresses the research question: How can leadership development be managed within organizations? Our proposed answer is presented in the form of conceptual model of sustainable leadership development, based on the theory of multiple intelligences by Howard Gardner and applied to leadership through appreciative inquiry, meaning that leaders possess multiple intelligences which differentiate in their individual profiles and are able to develop a wide span of intelligences during their life span. The main developmental and analytical method that enables the sustainable leadership development through multiple intelligences is action learning where as expected results of the appreciative process participants are creative seekers of positive learning opportunities in active learning environment. Sustainable leadership development model proposes a new creative way in providing for the process and content of leadership development that has sustainability as its core component.

Key Words: sustainable leadership development; multiple intelligences; action learning; managing transition
JEL *Classification:* J24; M12

Introduction

The future is not to be forecast but created. What we do today will decide the shape of things of tomorrow.

Ervin Laszlo

Global business environment is increasingly met with challenges that demand effort from a collective entity; therefore, leadership field is set

Judita Peterlin is Assistant at the Faculty of Economics, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia.

Dr Vlado Dimovski is Professor at the Faculty of Economics, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia.

Dr Sandra Penger is Professor at the Faculty of Economics, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia.

on a new endeavor of how to accommodate the rising needs of human resource experts and developing leaders. The leading international institution for developing leadership – The Center for Creative Leadership has come to the conclusion – based on their global developmental efforts – that leadership perspective is under transition from leader to leadership development, globally. This means strategic changes, not only in methodology but also in content of leadership development, therefore the first part of the paper deals with distinction between leader and leadership development as it is stated in contemporary literature and the second part is elaborating on the methods of leadership development for contemporary business environment where we develop and propose a creative sustainable leadership development model.

Leadership is the process of social influence in which a person is able to enlist support of others in the accomplishment of a common task (Chemers 2002). It is the relationship between leader and followers that is based on trustworthiness and legitimized through the competence of a leader. The leader provides the followers with supervision, extrinsic motivation and tools for effective performance that is only possible if the leader knows the followers' needs and capabilities that is as we determine in this paper the role of multiple intelligences. Leadership needs an efficient resource deployment that is achieved in two layers (Chemers 2002): (1) each organizational member must effectively use his or her personal resources (intelligence, creativity, skills, tacit and explicit knowledge); and (2) leader coordinates and deploys the resources, according to the task environment in a way that makes the most efficient usage of organizational resources.

Development involves a wider range of activities with less specific ends than training. It is focused more on the individual than the occupation and is concerned with long-term personal growth and career development (Winterton 2007). Leadership development emphasizes links with organizational strategy, innovation, creativity, individual development, organizational learning, knowledge management, adaptability and maintainance of core competence. In turbulent business environment organizations need to go beyond the existing model of learning organization which we develop and demonstrate by using the theory of multiple intelligences (Gardner 1983) in a broad spectre of sustainable leadership development. At leadership development the focus is on interpersonal intelligence – strengthening skills, such as social awareness, empathy, service orientation, social skills, building bonds, team orientation, con-

flict management and at leader development the focus is on highlighting the intrapersonal intelligence – strengthening skills, such as self-awareness, self-confidence, accurate self-image, self-regulation, adaptability, intrinsic motivation, proactivity, optimism and commitment (Day 2000). Leadership development therefore perceives a leader as one integral part of the leadership equation where other stakeholders hold equal part in the process of influencing others – the leader influences others – followers but all stakeholders are the ones who exchange leadership roles, depending on their multiple intelligences and the situation at hand.

Individuals at the workplace are not equal and the perspective of leadership development enables that different profiles are complementary in a holistic formation of entity. Leadership development is grounded in setting a shared vision, strategy and decision-making by acknowledging people's potentials in the network. Leadership development is embedded in strong narrative (Gardner and Csikszentmihalyi 2011) where established leaders build community through sharing their experiences in an engaging manner. Storytelling is well developed in indigenous communities or in contemporary working environment in organizations that have a strong informal organizational culture and that are based on strong emphasis of right-brain hemisphere development (intuition and whole picture perception). For developmental experts to establish community where leadership can develop, storytelling is embedded in daily meetings and into the system of internal communications (such as internal newspapers or e-mail weekly news). Leadership development needs intelligent and reflexive transfer of best practices, according to role modeling where individuals set their own implicit theories of ideal leadership prototype. Reflexive consideration of how individuals in the community perceive an ideal leadership type is integral for future developmental efforts in order to define in which direction to guide developmental efforts. Cooperation is the next step in evaluation of leadership development, meaning that developmental experts and developed leaders share their expectations and needs of outcomes. Results of meeting the demands of business environment are best met by connecting the expertise of didactics with the narrative of potential leaders.

Conceptualization of leadership development is based on the notion that developmental didactics derive from strong narrative that encompasses the developmental process and in this paper we propose that sustainability is the strong narrative that enables holistic leadership devel-

opment that is sustainable: (1) as an never ending cycle – developmental process and (2) as content – focused on a wide spectre of well-being of stakeholders of organization. There has been great interest in the academic arena for the sustainability from the first 1972 UN Stockholm meeting on the environment, UNCED report Our Common Future in 1986 (Brownson 2011), which introduced sustainable development and that made it essential to be able to detect the mechanisms that offer the proper incentives to incorporate sustainability into leadership development.

Leadership as management function is embedded into the broader framework of business community, society and nature. Sustainability as a term has its roots in the concept of sustainable development, associated with the final report of the World Commission for Environment and Development, the so called Brundtland report, under the auspices of the United Nations, and published under the phrase 'Our common future.' According to that document, the term sustainable development (Kras 2007) refers to the fact that humanity has the ability to make development sustainable, to ensure that it meets the needs of the present without endangering the ability of future generations to provide for their own needs. Consideration of future generations bounds the behaviour of contemporary leaders to act within the limits of nature to regenerate and provide social and business opportunities for future generations to be able to have a decent life-style (Kras 2007) and this is what distinguishes sustainable leadership.

United Nations 2002 resolution designated the period 2005–2014 as the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (Vann, Pacheco, and Motloch 2006) and highlighted that education for sustainable development needs to provide specific skills such as learning to know, to live together, to do and to be which we try to provide in the form of created conceptual model of sustainable leadership development that highlights multiple intelligences through the process of appreciative inquiry. Key sustainable principles are in the system of ecology, society and economy (Whately 2011). Sustainability is defined as humans surviving indefinitely into the future with a reasonable quality of life (Vann, Pacheco, and Motloch 2006). The three dimensions of sustainability (Steiner and Posch 2006): economic, social and ecological development are equally important to contemporary leaders and it it necessary to accommodate them with the knowledge and skills that will enable them functioning in the business environment that has sustainability as its core value.

Elements of Sustainable Leadership Development

In this paper multiple intelligences (Gardner 1983) – according to the theory of multiple intelligences – are considered as the theoretical background for sustainable leadership development. Leadership development (McCauley and Douglas 1998) is an activity of expanding the collective capacity of (organizational) members to engage successfully in leadership roles and processes. Similar to development, Gardner and Hatch (1989) view intelligence as the capacity to solve problems or to create products that are valued in one or more cultural settings. Through studying other cultural definitions of intelligence (Chen, Moran, and Gardner 2009), anthropological studies and his own experimentation, Gardner (1983) originally devised seven categories of intelligence: verbal, logical, musical, spatial, kinesthetic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal, to which latter naturalistic intelligence was added (Chen, Moran, and Gardner 2009) and existential intelligence is under consideration into theoretical framework. Future implications for implementing multiple intelligences into sustainable leadership development research field are stated in our work. Our purpose is to offer propositions for sustainable leadership development through consideration of multiple intelligences. These propositions consider contextual and individual influences in sustainable leadership development.

Action research (Checkland and Holwell 1998; Zuber-Skerritt 2002; Zuber-Skerritt 2005) states that researchers are part of the transformation process while doing the research as with asking questions we change the way participants of our research perceive their organizational reality, in our case the(ir) leadership development. The flow of thoughts is opened to new possibilities and implementation of new practices. Lewin (1946) constructed the term action as a cycle of planning, acting, observing and reflecting; therefore, it is the aim of this paper to invite scientific community in the search for sustainable leadership development. Zuber-Skerritt (2002) defines action research, action learning and process management (ALARPM) in its multifunctionality as philosophy, theory of learning and methodology, method and technique that is closely connected with action learning as an international field (Zuber-Skerritt 2002) dealing with learning as a process of gaining new insight and implementation of the gained knowledge into practice and wider community.

Action researcher is obliged in order to provide for the validity of his action research to provide information for recoverable research process,

FIGURE 1

Appreciative inquiry
process
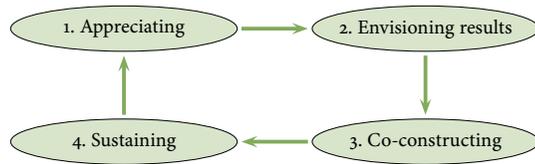
with stating the epistemology – the ideas and the process in which they were integrated, and to define what is considered as acquired knowledge as the action researcher is responsible for stating when the action research is completed and enough knowledge was gathered (Checkland and Holwell 1998).

Appreciative inquiry (figure 1) as a subset of appreciative action research is suitable for stimulating creativity in sustainable leadership development. The process derives from appreciating the past and present and builds upon appreciating successful practices that are sustained in a constant reflective process.

Appreciative inquiry (Cooperrider and Whitney 2005; Dunlop 2008) methodologically and theoretically incorporates sustainable leadership development in four stages: (1) Appreciation (Discovery phase) means investigation into the positive core of the organization, its employees and its symbiotic functioning. Stated long-term developmental endeavor: 'How can creativity of leaders be managed within organization?' stimulates the appreciative inquiry research and learning into enhancing the creativity in the sustainable leadership development in contemporary business environment; (2) Visualization of results (Dream phase) is the process of envisioning future desired vision of the organization through the participation of all the stakeholders; (3) Co-construction (Design phase) is the articulation of practices and means to achieve the desired vision. Sustainable leadership development (figure 2) connects individual leadership development with relational, collective leadership development through action learning, 360-degree leadership, job-shadowing, mentoring system, executive education, workshops, seminars, training and formal education. One of the most efficient individual leader development initiatives, based on authours' action learning and literature review (Dimovski, Penger, and Peterlin 2009) is coaching, where an individual is in constant contact with his/her coach and learns from his/her own mistakes and tasks; (4) Sustaining action (Destiny phase) means creating systematic means that empower, enable life-long learning and improvisation.

Expected return on investment from leadership development inter-

Sustainable leadership development composition

| Leader development (focus on individual) | Action Learning, 360-Degree Leadership, Job-Shadowing, Mentoring System, Coaching, Executive Education, Workshops, Seminars, Training and Formal Education | Leadership development (focus on collective entity) |

FIGURE 2   Sustainable leadership development according to developmental focus

ventions ranges from a low negative return on leadership development investment to over 200% (Avolio, Avey, and Quisenberry, 2010). Too many leadership development initiatives are partial and short-term oriented into developing technical skills that are not supported with long-term developmental efforts and reflection. Sustainable leadership development needs to be embedded into a new academic and professional culture (Juarez-Najera, Dieleman, and Turpin-Marion 2006). Day and Harrison (2007) recommend for the development of collective leadership identities, developmental activities that engage aspiring leaders across functional, hierarchical and geographical boundaries. It needs to include a holistic focus on the development of multiple intelligences, competencies, abilities, knowledge, skills, perspectives and values, related to sustainability (Vann, Pacheco, and Motloch 2006).

Specifically, competencies (Boyatzis 2009; Visagie, Linde, and Havenga 2011) are abilities to use knowledge and to implement learned concepts into practice. They are the underlying characteristics of a person that lead to an outstanding performance. There are, broadly speaking, three domains of capability (Boyatzis 2009): (1) Knowledge: What a person can do? (2) Competencies: How a person can do? (3) Motivational drivers: Why a person feels the need to do it? We distinguish among attaining two integral sustainable leadership competencies, on the one hand: intrapersonal abilities: adaptability, emotional self-control, emotional self-awareness, positive outlook and achievement orientation; and on the other hand: interpersonal abilities, such as conflict management, empathy, organizational awareness, inspirational leadership, influence, coaching and teamwork as sustainable leadership is functioning in a system of different stakeholders.

We propose that conventional leadership needs to be developed and advanced into sustainable leadership development direction through

multiple intelligences strengthening by applying action research methodology of appreciative inquiry in order to gain long-term prosperity and avoid the toxic elements in leadership development that hinder sustainability, therefore one approach is either to first identify the negative factors, so called problems and focus on them with the aim of not repeating them and enable the development, or another developmental approach to sustainable leadership development is through appreciative process of acknowledging and highlighting the positive past successes and building on them where problems are reframed into developmental – improvement opportunities.

Conceptual Model

Sustainable leadership development scholars and practitioners are in constant search for creative developmental approaches and have different strategies of integrating sustainability into their leadership development programs through enhancing multiple intelligences in appreciative inquiry process. According to authours experiential learning, creativity and innovation happen at the intersection of different fields and practices which was also a stand point of one of the most successful business thinkers of our time – Steve Jobs who led his company Apple with the purpose 'Think Differently' and established his philosophy of connecting humanity with technology. Adding to the holistic development we state in our conceptual model (figure 3) that appreciative inquiry enables open and safe environment, free of negative judgment that hinders opening underdeveloped areas and enables realization of ideas in the form of innovation implementation. We propose that appreciative inquiry frees people of fears from failure and possibility of admitting underdeveloped areas of their personality or professional skills through focusing on positive psychological capital and past successes that become the foundation for developmental effort of developing multiple intelligences which are necessary for challenges of sustainable leadership that represent a demanding leadership practice as it is not only focused on the well-being of the organization but strengthens through its actions also wider stakeholders (individuals, organization, society and natural environment).

Sustainable leadership development needs to integrate a partial reeducation of participants, as much of what they have previously learned does not fit into the sustainability paradigm (Juarez-Najera, Dieleman, and Turpin-Marion 2006). Interdisciplinary scholarly collaboration is a valuable source of information for participants, combined with courses,
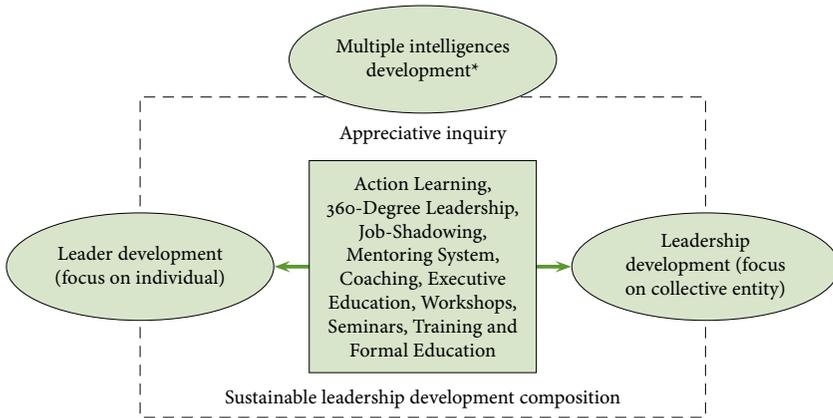
FIGURE 3   Conceptual model of sustainable leadership development
(* verbal, logical, musical, kinesthetic, intrapersonal, interpersonal,
naturalistic, existential, spatial)

such as environmental economics, environmental sociology, business
ethics that clearly demonstrate that we cannot continue to focus on
growth, without focusing on sustainability. Encouraging participants' re-
search towards sustainability broadens their awareness and establishes
grounds for future leadership behaviour. Teaching sustainability in the
higher education institution and corporate leadership development pro-
grams demands (Steiner and Posch 2006) interdisciplinary approach,
trandisciplinary problem-solving, self-responsible learning, action learn-
ing, redefinition of teachers' and student's roles, creativity, 'greening
of the curriculum' (Evangelinos, Jones, and Panoriou 2009) social and
emotional competencies, crossing borders between science and prac-
tice through connection to real-world problems and actors that can
be achieved in transdisciplinary case study approach. Four dimensions
for sustainable leadership development (Juarez-Najera, Dieleman, and
Turpin-Marion 2006) are: basic education, reorienting existing educa-
tion programs, raising public awareness of sustainability and training.

Creating Sustainable Developmental Environment

First step to creating sustainable leadership development demands the es-
tablishment of the development expectations, needs and priorities, there-
fore we have carried out a preliminary qualitative research through open
questions survey at the Workshop 'Future Organization' at the Manage-
ment International Conference (MIC 2011), 24 November 2011 in order to

TABLE 1   Conceptual model of sustainable leadership development

Multiple intelligences (adapted from Gardner 1983):

Linguistic: proficiency of language.

Logical: ability to notice numerical or logical patterns and make abstract
assumptions.

Spatial: ability to create mental images as well as remember facts most appropriately
by visualizing.

Kinesthetic: ability of physical expression.

Musical: ability of recognizing non-verbal sounds in the environment, sensitivity
to pitch, melody, tone, and rhythm.

Interpersonal: ability to understand and relate well to other people.

Intrapersonal: ability to identify, understand and demonstrate one's own emotions.

Naturalistic: ability to relate to the natural environment.

Existential: ability to locate oneself with respect to the furthest reaches of the cosmos

Apreciative inquiry (Dunlop 2008):

Initiate, inquire, imagine, and innovate.

Sustainable leadership development:

Self-development (Day 2000), development of others (Schyns et al. 2011; Bolden and
Gosling 2006), awareness of implicit leadership theories (Doh 2003), improvisation,
and positive psychological capital.

advance and validate originally presented developed conceptual model.
Ten international experts on management and sustainability returned the
in-depth questionnaires. The results are presented in table 2.

The first phase of external validation of our conceptual model was
based on open questions regarding sustainable leadership development.
The experts highlighted and confirmed the need for interpersonal de-
velopment through experiential learning, learning teams, mentorship,
coaching in the organizational environment that is dedicated to life-long
learning.

The second phase of the external validation of the conceptual model
was carried out at Roskilde University (Denmark) at the international
conference Humanities Perspective 2012: Empowerment in a Globalized
Society, where the model was presented at the Section Education – Teach-
ing Competencies for Empowerment on 6 October 2012. The participants
of the conference were given closed questionnaires, based on literature re-
view and previous qualitative work and stated their expertize on sustain-
able leadership development, intelligence that is most vital for sustainable
leadership development and methods that enable its developmental suc-
cess. The results show that according to the experts' validation the most

TABLE 2   Qualitative research findings on sustainable leadership development

Expert	What are the key competencies an aspiring leader needs to develop?	Through what kind of initiatives and activities can sustainable leadership skills be developed in an organizational context?	How can developed competencies of a leader be sustained?
Nr. 1	Fitness of leader's personality to the organizational culture.	Experience learning (show people how sustainable actions can have a real impact).	Show the leader the benefits of his/her competencies (recognition from the top management that current leader competencies are valued and then rewarded).
Nr. 2	Emotional intelligence; expertize.	Teambuilding; personal and business coach; workshops of emotional intelligence; learning through reading literature.	Formal education (msc, phd); role-modeling; workshops/seminars on emotional intelligence.
Nr. 3	Functionalist company perspective: to influence the employees; individual perspective: abilities to lead people.	Individualistic approach.	Life-long learning.
Nr. 4	Ethical and moral responsibilities for the world, not only for the organization or own interests.	Coaching/mentoring.	Ongoing developing activities; activate stakeholders of the organization; open organizational borders to exchange ideas and activities; everyone involved in the activities that serve each other's needs.

suitable definition of sustainable leadership is: 'Leadership that is directed towards future generations, taking into account well-being of society and nature.' From all the multiple intelligences offered (verbal, logical, spatial, bodily, musical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, naturalistic or any other intelligence that the respondent wished to state) the interpersonal intelligence was chosen by experts to be the most important one to be devel-

TABLE 2 *Continued from the previous page*

Nr. 5	Individual's actions in construction of the reality.	Develop the mind set – attitude of the employees; team development.	Executive education/training program; Workshops; performance review; coaching sessions; learning by doing – action learning.
Nr. 6	Networking; emotional intelligence.	Innovativeness; entrepreneurship.	Authentic leadership development.
Nr. 7	Teamwork.	Training program.	Knowledge management; corporate social responsibility.
Nr. 8	Mental skills; leadership skills; team organization skills; good evaluation of his/her emotions.	Workshops/organized educational sessions; recommended readings; learn from other people mistakes; case studies.	Everyday usage; constant education and learning.
Nr. 9	Authentic leadership skills.	Acknowledging that organizations are people and that organizations are not only in the search for profits but serving all the stakeholders.	Constant improvement of oneself and one's surroundings – the bases of authentic leadership.
Nr. 10	Self-sacrifice for the collective good; goes against alpha male characteristics of leaders.	Affective, social and cognitive development activities; integrating short-term project goals and processes.	Constant personal and professional improvement.

oped in sustainable leadership development which is, according to the literature review and since the second most important intelligence is verbal intelligence this confirms the notion that sustainable leadership development derives from a strong narrative that the leader establishes and that is sustained through developmental didactics. Project work was chosen to represent the initiative and activities that enable the optimal sustainable leadership outcome in an organizational context. Project work is best oriented towards promoting sustainability in teamwork that stimulates multiple intelligences in the working environment through action learning where business challenges are being met and transformed into learning opportunity that can create an original product or service.

The third phase of external validation was carried out at the Manage-

ment International Conference – MIC 2012 in Budapest that was taking place on 22-24 November 2012. The definition of sustainable leadership was confirmed as focused on future generations with taking into account the well-being of society and nature. The most important intelligence for sustainable leadership was recognized as interpersonal intelligence, followed by verbal intelligence, whereas the mentorship was exposed as the most suitable sustainable leadership development framework, which can be interpreted that mentorship as interpersonal relationship is a well-established part of educational and organizational culture and coaching is slowly being implemented into organizational environment of multi-nationals and larger organizations.

Based on all three phases of external validation of the model we can summarize that sustainable leadership is developed in interpersonal relationship – in interdependency, be that in coaching, mentorship, learning teams, project work or any other developmental method that enables the development of interpersonal intelligence, according to Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences which experts validated as the integral component of sustainable leadership development which motivates one to develop multiple intelligences in order to create products or services that will benefit others and are desired by wider environment.

Conclusion

Sustainable leadership development is unique in its conscious decision to take into consideration in its decision-making the well-being of future generations. Multiple intelligences are integrated in sustainable leadership development in a way that they produce by applying appreciative inquiry extended synergies for which the top management's commitment is essential. The paper first establishes the link between the content, process and practices of multiple intelligences and sustainable leadership development through appreciative inquiry and theoretical action learning approach and then defines sustainable leadership development model. The sustainable leadership development is focused on actual needs of the stakeholders and is proactively recognizing and implementing business practices that enable their well-being.

From the expert validation of the proposed conceptual sustainable leadership development model it is seen that intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligence skills development is essential to sustainable leadership development, meaning that leaders need to be developed to nurture their own personality and others. Our western society is dualistic. Older gen-

erations since scientific/industrial revolution have not been educated in the curriculum that is designed to develop a broad awareness of high interdependence of humans upon the natural environment (Kras 2007). Sustainable leadership development however needs re-structuring of its educational framework towards sustainable approach to knowledge and skills development through multiple intelligences development. Business environment is embedded in society that is a part of wider natural system, therefore future business leaders need to be developed, according to the principles of sustainability and in order to do that educationalists need to question longstanding assumptions about human-nature relationship (Kras 2007) and promote inter-relatedness in sustainable leadership development. Sustainability in leadership development is a way of directing leadership development according to the long-term perspective and focusing on integrating individual and relational component of leadership development.

Sustainable leadership development over time is only possible if leadership development is considered as a complex process, combined of leader, relationships with followers, organizational culture and wider environment. Individuals and teams need to perform leadership tasks together in a way that integrates different perspectives and acknowledges areas of interdependence in order for organizations to demonstrate sustainable leadership (Day and Harrison 2007). Constant changes in the contemporary turbulent business environment demand much of the leaders' attention and may take away their long-term focus. If the world is to be sustained in all its diversity sustainability needs to be incorporated in leadership development and implemented into action. Sustainable leadership development that we propose has its developmental core based in sustainability, meaning that it is focused on well-being of wide stakeholders and at the same time puts emphasis on sustaining the learning outcome of developmental experiences, therefore sustainable leadership development is both content and process oriented which distinguishes it from all other leadership development model conceptualizations.

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