The Guidelines of Leadership Characteristics in the Entrepreneurial Success Development of Guilin University Students in China

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Abstract

This study addresses the gap in leadership development within China's "Mass Innovation and Entrepreneurship" initiative, focusing on enhancing practical leadership skills among university students. This research focused on evaluating the leadership characteristics crucial to the entrepreneurial success of students at Guilin University in China. It also aimed to develop and implement a short-term leadership development curriculum for aspiring entrepreneurs. The study was structured into four phases: the first phase involved surveying 341 junior students from six Guilin universities using a questionnaire and analyzing the data with basic statistics. In the second phase, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 11 experts and 11 students, and the data was analyzed through content analysis. The third phase saw seven experts evaluate the curriculum's structure for appropriateness, feasibility, and utility, with statistical analysis of the data. The fourth phase involved delivering the training program to 30 volunteer students from one university.

The research findings indicated that the overall current state of leadership characteristics among the students was at a high level. It was determined that the curriculum designed to foster leadership characteristics in students aspiring to entrepreneurial success should align with the objectives and traits of the students. The developed short-term curriculum comprised a six-day training program, which included 16 hours of theoretical learning and 32 hours of practical activities, totaling 48 hours. The curriculum was divided into six modules: physiological traits, socioeconomic characteristics, intellectual traits, personality traits, task-related traits, and social characteristics. Furthermore, the trainees' average scores increased significantly from 60.33% before the training to 88.33% after the training, with an average of 79.53% in practical tasks. Additionally, trainee satisfaction was reported to be very high. The findings affirm the curriculum's success in bridging the gap between theory and practice, enhancing leadership skills essential for entrepreneurial success, and aligning with China's educational and economic strategies to foster innovation.

Keywords: Guideline; Leadership Characteristics; Entrepreneurial Success Development; Guilin University Students; China

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Introduction

Education plays a crucial role in modern society, with teachers being one of the key drivers of education. The teaching level and educational literacy of teachers directly influence students' learning outcomes and overall quality. Additionally, the rapid pace of globalization and technological advancements have placed new demands on education systems worldwide, prompting a shift towards more dynamic and innovative educational practices. Furthermore, the reform of educational model and methods has become essential to meet these new challenges effectively.

The rise of entrepreneurship has become a key driver of societal reform, ushering in a new era of innovation-focused competition on the international stage. Consequently, entrepreneurship serves as the cornerstone of regional economic development (Farrell, 2014:1). The concept of innovation and entrepreneurship was first introduced at the World Economic Forum in June 2014 by Li Keqiang who was a premier of the People's Republic of China. He proposed the policy of "Mass Innovation and Entrepreneurship" to foster more opportunities and create a favorable environment for innovation and entrepreneurship. This policy aims to transform traditional education and promote a culture of self-reliance and innovation among young entrepreneurs. In addition, this policy has ignited entrepreneurial enthusiasm among university students (The State Council The People's Republic of China, 2015:1). In 2021, there were over 9 million new entrepreneurs in China and 90.3% of those were university students. This highlights the importance of training students to be leaders in innovation and entrepreneurship for the development of social enterprises (China Youth Daily, 2022:1).

However, its education system struggles with outdated teaching methods, limited vocational integration, and a theory-practice gap. These issues hinder the development of practical skills and real-world problem-solving abilities essential for modern entrepreneurs. Additionally, unprepared faculty and insufficient training facilities hinder progress. These factors necessitate substantial improvements in pedagogical and implementation strategies. To address these challenges, universities need to adopt more flexible and interactive teaching models that encourage creativity and critical thinking.

Therefore, this study aims to investigate the current state of Leadership Characteristics in the entrepreneurial success of Guilin University students in China. This is to gather information regarding the development of students' leadership qualities, which will serve as data to inform the formulation of plans for governmental bodies, universities, and other administrative entities. This initiative aims to promote the cultivation of leadership qualities among aspiring entrepreneurs, foster and enhance the success rates of new entrepreneurs, and support the practical implementation of educational concepts related to leadership. It seeks to promote leadership education, particularly in entrepreneurship, as a vital component of academic and professional development in the rapidly changing global economy.

Research Objectives

1. To investigate the current state of Leadership Characteristics in the entrepreneurial success of Guilin University students in China.

2. To investigate the guideline of Leadership Characteristics in the entrepreneurial success of Guilin University students in China.

3. To develop a short-term leadership development curriculum for aspiring entrepreneurs among students at Guilin University.

4. To provide leadership training for students aspiring to become successful entrepreneurs at Guilin University..

Research Methodology

1. Research Design

This research was conducted qualitatively and quantitatively and can be divided into 4 phases as follows.

Exploring Leadership Qualities for Entrepreneurial Success by adopting Stogdill's framework that categorizes leadership attributes into six distinct domains: physiological traits, socioeconomic characteristics, intellectual traits, personality traits, task-related traits, and social characteristics (Stogdill, 1974:35-71).

Analyzing and synthesizing insights from phrase 1 for Leadership Development.

Conducting a thorough evaluation of the curriculum structure for the short-term leadership curriculum designed for aspiring student entrepreneurs.

Providing leadership training for students aspiring to become successful entrepreneurs.

2. Population and Sample

The study employed a multi-phased sampling approach:

Phase 1: a representative sample of 341 junior students from six universities in Guilin was selected using

Phase 2 & 3: Purposive sampling identified key informants: 11 successful entrepreneurs and 11 "Internet Plus" award winners for Phase 2, and 7 experts for Phase 3.

Phase 4: Convenience sampling recruited 30 volunteer students.

3. Research Instrument

The research employed various instruments to ensure data quality.

Phase 1: A 5-point Likert scale questionnaire with an Index of Content Validity (IOC) between 0.60 and 1.00 and a reliability coefficient of 0.958 was used to explore leadership qualities for entrepreneurial success.

Phase 2: Semi-structured interviews with an IOC score between 0.60 and 1.00 were conducted to gather qualitative data.

Phase 3: The short-term curriculum was evaluated for appropriateness and usefulness using assessments with an IOC score between 0.60 and 1.00.

Phase 4: A combination of tests, evaluation forms, and a satisfaction survey (IOC score between 0.80 and 1.00) assessed training effectiveness.

4. Data collection

Researchers, with help from the Graduate School Buriram Rajabhat University, contacted 6 universities in Guilin to collect data from the chosen samples.

The interview was conducted to gather data from experts.

These experts evaluated the suitability and advantage of the short-term leadership development program designed for aspiring student entrepreneurs. Lastly,

The pretests and posttests were carried out. The tests included a formative assessment during the session and a satisfaction survey after the session as well.

5. Data Analysis

The data analysis process incorporated both descriptive statistics and qualitative content analysis techniques. In the first phase, data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, including mean and standard deviation, and qualitative content analysis techniques were utilized in the second phase. In the third phase, data was analyzed by examining the curriculum structure, including content, language proficiency, training duration, media and technology, and assessment methods. The findings were presented in tabular form, along with an analysis of the curriculum's appropriateness, feasibility, and usefulness. In the final phase, again, data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, including mean and standard deviation.
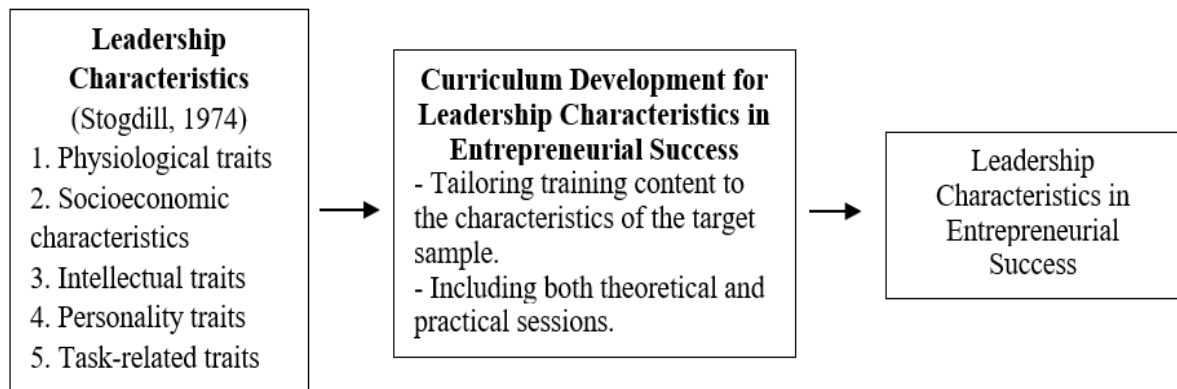
Research Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 Research Conceptual Framework
Source: Constructed by the researcher

Research Findings

1. The level of overall Leadership Characteristics was interpreted at a high level. When considering each characteristic, the personality traits showed the highest mean score followed by intellectual traits, social characteristics, and task-related traits. The socioeconomic characteristics showed the lowest.

Table 1 Analysis of Leadership Characteristics in the Entrepreneurial Success Development of Guilin University Students in China

No.	Leadership Characteristics	$\bar{\text{X}}$	S.D.	Interpretation	Ranking
1.	Physiological traits	3.87	0.683	High	5
2.	Socioeconomic characteristics	3.44	0.982	Moderate	6
3.	Intellectual traits	4.11	0.800	High	2
4.	Personality traits	4.15	0.737	High	1
5.	Task-related traits	4.01	0.729	High	4
6.	Social characteristics	4.11	0.780	High	2
	Total	3.95	0.785	High	

According to Table 1, junior students at Guilin University have a high level ($\bar{\text{X}}$ = 3.95) of overall leadership characteristics. Among the different leadership characteristics assessed, the majority were rated high except for socioeconomic characteristics. Personality traits were rated the highest by the students, followed by intellectual traits, social characteristics, and task-related skills. Socioeconomic characteristics received the lowest average score ($\bar{\text{X}}$ = 3.44).

2. The study's findings regarding leadership development guidelines for new entrepreneurship success among undergraduates revealed a convergence and divergence of perspectives between experts and award-winning students concerning their understanding and needs in leadership. The design of the leadership development curriculum should be tailored to meet specific objectives while considering the characteristics of the target audience. For aspiring entrepreneurs, it should emphasize self-motivation, self-management, and the cultivation of social skills and interpersonal relationship management abilities. For undergraduate students, the curriculum should focus on fostering personality traits, cultural exchange, and social etiquette. By adopting a design approach that caters to the unique characteristics of these learner groups, leadership development programs can effectively enhance leadership skills, thereby preparing individuals for future professional endeavors.

3. The short-term leadership training curriculum for students was designed to align with the development of the trend and market needs, integrating theoretical knowledge with practical activities in teaching. The training lasted for 6 days, with the training package consisting of 16 hours of theoretical instruction and 32 hours of practical activities, totaling 48 hours of learning. The entire content comprised six aspects of leadership characteristics, namely physiological traits, socioeconomic characteristics, intellectual traits, personality traits, task-related traits, and social characteristics.

The content encompasses the fundamental factors of leadership training. Theoretical knowledge and case study analysis will help students understand the importance of leadership characteristics more clearly. As society evolves, the need for well-trained student leaders has become increasingly pressing. It enhances students' competitive abilities, instills a sense of teamwork, expands personal networks, and fosters innovative thinking. Therefore, universities

and society should increasingly provide leadership training and promote leadership qualities in students to establish a solid foundation for career development and future success. At the same time, students should be enthusiastic about participating in leadership training and developing their knowledge and skills to better adapt to societal development and needs.

4. Before the training, participants' average score was 60.33%. After the training, the average score increased to 88.33%. The average score for practical exercises was 79.53%. Furthermore, participants reported a high level of satisfaction with the training.

Discussion
1. Leadership Characteristics Level

While student entrepreneurs in Guilin exhibited strong leadership characteristics overall, challenges remain. The disconnect between leadership training and practical application, a lack of real-world experience, and limitations in the curriculum were identified. Despite enthusiasm for training, some interviewees felt it overemphasized theory with limited guidance on practical application. Additionally, the current curriculum design has limitations in fostering certain leadership qualities among students. For instance, the training content may lack up-to-date information and fail to address the needs of modern entrepreneurs.

The mentioned challenges align with Wang and Gao's perspective (2022: 34-36) that students are facing increasingly severe employment issues after graduation. Consequently, a significant number of students are turning to start their businesses. However, some students encounter problems such as unclear business objectives, lack of initiative in considering various factors, lack of discipline and patience, and a tendency to be self-centered. These issues can become obstacles to adapting to societal pressures. Therefore, it is necessary to foster awareness of entrepreneurship, train entrepreneurial thinking, revolutionize business operations, establish a system for developing entrepreneurial capabilities, and emphasize the creation of an entrepreneurial atmosphere and practical business operations, to enhance the ability to initiate businesses and promote student success in entrepreneurship.

Furthermore, the findings corroborate the work of Liu and Xu (2014: 24-27), who identified two distinct categories of student leadership characteristics: external engagement and self-development. External engagement encompasses the positive qualities that individuals exhibit in their interactions with the external world, including ideas, relationships, communication skills, cultural competence, interpersonal skills, and competitiveness. Self-development, in contrast, refers to an individual's capacity for introspection and self-reflection, encompassing aspects such as learning ability, information literacy, planning skills, execution skills, emotional intelligence, and self-evaluation.

2. The Guideline of Leadership Characteristics in the Entrepreneurial Success Development

The guideline of leadership characteristics in the entrepreneurial success development of students found that designing a curriculum to develop leadership characteristics should align with objectives, considering the characteristics of the students. This finding could potentially be attributed to the top three average scores for each dimension of student leadership characteristics for new entrepreneurship success at Guilin University, which serve as influential factors on student leadership characteristics. Similar to the six leadership dimensions proposed by Stogdill (1974), this study emphasizes the significance of various factors including physiological traits, socioeconomic characteristics, intellectual traits, personality traits, task-related traits, and social characteristics.

The results align with the discoveries made by Zhang, Zhang, and Xi (2015: 144-149), who concluded common personality traits among successful leaders, include cognitive skills, emotional awareness, and physiological traits. While diverse studies yield varying conclusions, a substantial body of research has consistently identified six distinguishing characteristics between leaders and non-leaders: assertiveness, leadership inclination, integrity, self-confidence, intelligence, and job-related knowledge and experience. Although having specific characteristics might increase the chances of a leader succeeding, none ensure it.

3. Short-Term Curriculum for Leadership Characteristics

The development of a short-term course designed to enhance student leadership characteristics for new entrepreneurial success involved a six-day training program with a total duration of 48 hours. It included both theoretical and practical components, with 16 hours of theory sessions and 32 hours of practical activities. It was divided into six learning modules: physiological traits, socioeconomic characteristics, intellectual traits, personality traits, task-related traits, and social characteristics. The overall course structure encompassed course objectives, learning outcomes, course descriptions, detailed content outlines, learning objectives, teaching and learning methodologies, and evaluation procedures.

The curriculum's development likely arises from a holistic design that integrates key elements for instilling leadership qualities, aligned with training goals. Theoretical knowledge exposition and case study analysis sharpen learners' recognition of leadership's significance, resonating with China's 13th Five-Year Plan's vocational training curriculum concept. This curriculum is a collection of objectives and standards for specific professions, fostering standard-compliant professional training management, merging with new economies, industries, and jobs, and adhering to national occupational standards and business job technical requirements. It consolidates training aims, needs, content, curriculum stipulations, evaluation frameworks, and educational resources, setting the criteria and directions for vocational training institutes to offer professional training to workers.

Additionally, this research aligns with the findings of China's 13th Five-Year Plan, which highlights the advantages of short-term training curricula. These include being modular learning units, offering flexible learning choices, and being continually developed and updated. This indicates that modern training curricula significantly differ from past training methods and are vitally important for further practical application.

4. Leadership Training for Students

Evaluation of the short-term leadership training program for new entrepreneurs revealed its significant efficacy in enhancing knowledge, understanding, and practical skills. This resulted in high participant satisfaction corroborated by expert evaluations. The program's strengths lie in its measurable objectives, comprehensive leadership development content, practical problem-solving focus, real-world application, innovative pedagogy, and effective use of case studies. Overall, the program demonstrates a high level of effectiveness as evidenced by consistent evaluation results.

The findings align with two key concepts. First, Wen (2022: 37-39) emphasizes the role of higher education in fostering innovation and entrepreneurship through collaborative policies, academic innovation, and national service, ultimately cultivating knowledgeable and capable individuals. This focus on student growth aims to instill an awareness of innovation and creativity, leading to entrepreneurial proficiency and an innovative spirit with strong social observation skills. Second, Fu et al. (2023: 106-110) highlight the importance of fostering

entrepreneurial abilities by creating an entrepreneurial environment, developing a dedicated guidance team and assessment system, maximizing academic and innovation resources, and establishing a platform for practical application.

This study at Guilin University reveals that students exhibit strong leadership traits, particularly in personality and intellectual areas, with socioeconomic traits scoring lower. A focused leadership curriculum that combines theory with practical exercises significantly enhances these traits, preparing students effectively for entrepreneurial success.

Recommendations

1. Academic Recommendations

1.1 Exploring Leadership Traits

The research suggestions emphasize the need for an in-depth exploration of leadership characteristics among successful new entrepreneurs to further analyze data on relevant leadership traits.

1.2 Innovating Leadership Training Models

Additionally, there is a proposal to investigate various leadership training models for new entrepreneurs to enhance the quality of education. These models should comprehensively include training content, training methodologies, and evaluation criteria to foster the development of effective leadership qualities in new entrepreneurs..

2. Policy Recommendations

2.1 Integrating Leadership Training in Academia

Firstly, there is an emphasis on integrating leadership training activities into the university education system as a mandatory subject for students.

2.2 Enhancing Teaching Staff and Learning Management

Secondly, the recommendations include increasing the production of teaching staff to ensure the efficacy and quality of learning management.

2.3 Establishing Business Mentorship Policies

Lastly, the establishment of policies to provide business mentorship is advocated, inviting successful entrepreneurs to guide students, thereby enhancing their learning opportunities through real-world experiences and the application of leadership characteristics.

3. Practical Recommendations

3.1 Bridging Theory and Practice

Curriculum design should prioritize bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and real-world application. By integrating elements like realistic competition simulations and in-depth case studies, students can effectively transform their theoretical understanding into practical skills.

3.2 Evolving Curriculum Content

Moreover, it is imperative to continuously enhance and develop the curriculum content, factoring in the market trends and students' needs.

3.3 Adopting Modern Technologies

Furthermore, the application of modern digital technologies should be adopted to augment the efficiency of the learning process..

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