

The New Path for Cultivating Leadership among College Students in Local Normal Universities: Practical Exploration in H University Based on Transformational Leadership Theory

Jin Li

Anshan Normal University, China

E-mail: 18341930723@163.com

Abstract

The objectives of this research were: (1) To explore the leadership development practices at H University under the guidance of transformational leadership theory.(2) To analyze the improvement in students' leadership qualities after participating in transformational leadership courses.(3)To propose a new pathway for leadership development suitable for local normal universities in China to promote future leadership education reform.

The research was mixed methodology design which were comprised of quantitative and qualitative research. The population composed of 4736 students from the teacher training program at H University, with 367 students selected as a sample using random sampling. The researcher determined sample size with Krejcie and Morgan table (1970).Firstly,the researcher will conduct a leadership competency survey aimed at evaluating the improvement in students' leadership qualities after participating in transformational leadership courses. The total population is 4,736 students, with a sample size of 367 students.Then,the researcher analyzed the questionnaire data by using various methods, including mean score analysis, standard deviation analysis, minimum and maximum scores analysis, overall trends analysis, SWOT analysis, and SPSS statistical analysis.

The research findings were: (1) In China, there is insufficient emphasis on college students' leadership education. Local normal universities have issues such as an imperfect curriculum system for leadership cultivation. (2) Under the guidance of transformational leadership theory, H University has carried out a variety of practical explorations to effectively improve students' leadership qualities. (3) H University has achieved some results in integrating the transformational leadership theory into curriculum design and practical teaching but still faces challenges like theory-practice integration, mentor resources, evaluation systems, student engagement, and cultivation model innovation.There are three suggestions: (1) Strengthen university-enterprise cooperation. (2) Refine the evaluation system. (3) Explore "Internet + leadership education" models.

Keywords: College students' leadership; Transformational leadership; Local normal universities

Introduction

In today's rapidly evolving world, with the accelerated development of globalization and informatization, the demand for highly qualified talent has become increasingly urgent. Particularly, the rapid growth in leadership needs across various fields has made it essential to focus on cultivating leadership qualities in college students. As Bass, B. M. (1999). pointed out, leadership is crucial in different sectors. The 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China emphasized revitalizing the nation through science and education, with talent serving as the foundation for modernization. This further highlights the importance of developing well-rounded individuals with leadership skills. In recent years, China's higher education reform has placed greater emphasis on cultivating leadership among university students, especially as global competition intensifies. Leadership is regarded as a key factor in enhancing students' overall quality. Zhang and Zhou (2020) also emphasized this point. Local normal universities, as the main force in training primary and secondary school teachers, have a unique responsibility. Their students not only need to possess teaching abilities but also leadership skills to meet the demands of future educational reforms and complex management tasks. As Cui and Wang (2015) noted, teachers with leadership qualities can better inspire and guide students.

Transformational leadership theory offers a new approach to cultivating leadership in normal universities. This theory emphasizes motivation and interaction to promote shared growth between leaders and followers, thereby enabling the team to achieve higher goals. Bass and Riggio (2006) explained the significance of this theory. The essence of the research problem lies in finding an effective way to cultivate leadership among college students in local normal universities. Given the specific context and mission of these universities, it is essential to explore how transformational leadership theory can be applied to enhance students' leadership skills. This includes understanding how to inspire students, promote interaction and collaboration, and develop their ability to lead in educational settings. By addressing this research problem, we can contribute to the improvement of higher education and the preparation of future educators and leaders.

In practical exploration at H University, we need to analyze the current situation of leadership cultivation, identify the challenges and opportunities, and design appropriate strategies based on transformational leadership theory. This could involve implementing leadership training programs, creating opportunities for students to take on leadership roles, and fostering a campus culture that values leadership. Through these efforts, we aim to develop college students with strong leadership qualities who can make significant contributions to society.

Research Objectives

1. To explore the leadership development practices at H University under the guidance of transformational leadership theory.
2. To analyze the improvement in students' leadership qualities after participating in transformational leadership courses.
3. To propose a new pathway for leadership development suitable for local normal universities in China to promote future leadership education reform.

Literature Review

1. The definition and evolution of leadership

1.1 The basic concept of leadership

Leadership is a multidimensional and complex concept with various definitions in both academia and practice. It is generally defined as the ability to influence others and inspire followers to engage in positive behaviors to achieve organizational goals (Northouse, 2018). Leadership is not merely a demonstration of management skills; it involves the process by which a leader guides a team to overcome challenges and achieve objectives through communication, motivation, and decision-making. Yukl (2013) proposed that leadership is the ability to achieve set goals through others, which is reflected in a leader's influence on others' behaviors, cognition, and emotional responses.

1.2 Comparison of different leadership theories

The evolution of leadership theory has three major phases: traditional leadership, transactional leadership, and transformational leadership. Traditional leadership theories focus on leaders' personal traits and behavioral styles. The early Great Man Theory assumed leadership is innate, with leaders having unique qualities to guide and influence followers (Kotter, 1990). Later, it developed into Trait Theory, suggesting certain characteristics determine leadership potential.

Transactional leadership, on the other hand, introduced the concept of the interaction between leaders and followers, emphasizing leadership based on exchanges, where leaders motivate subordinates to complete tasks through a system of rewards and punishments (Bass, 1985). In this leadership model, leaders and followers agree on specific goals and contracts, with leaders providing rewards or avoiding punishment to maintain employee performance and job satisfaction.

In contrast, transformational leadership theory focuses on how leaders inspire followers with a compelling vision and stimulate their intrinsic motivation (Bass & Riggio, 2006). It emphasizes not only task completion but also followers' personal development and capacity building, encouraging innovation and change. Key aspects are the leader's ability to inspire, intellectually stimulate, and provide individualized consideration for the team to adapt and succeed in a changing environment.

In this research, the concept of transformational leadership for normal school students is defined as a leadership style that inspires followers with a compelling vision and stimulates intrinsic motivation. It includes aspects such as effective communication for vision articulation and information exchange, informed decision-making to drive progress, promoting teamwork for collective goal achievement, encouraging innovation for adaptability, and enhancing self-efficacy to instill confidence.

2. Overview of transformational leadership theory

2.1 Core characteristics of transformational leadership

The core of transformational leadership lies in shaping and guiding the team toward a shared vision. Bass (1990) identified four key characteristics of transformational leadership: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration.

Idealized Influence refers to the leader earning the trust and respect of followers through high moral standards and exemplary behavior.

Inspirational Motivation involves leaders setting clear and challenging goals, while motivating team members to strive together toward these shared objectives.

Intellectual Stimulation emphasizes encouraging innovation and critical thinking. Leaders provide an open environment where followers are inspired to propose new ideas and solve problems.

Finally, Individualized Consideration reflects the leader's attention to each team member, understanding their needs, and providing personalized support and guidance to help them achieve their personal development goals.

2.2 Application of transformational leadership in business and education

In business management, transformational leadership has been widely adopted and is considered a key factor in driving continuous organizational change and innovation. Research shows that transformational leadership not only enhances employee job satisfaction and performance but also fosters the overall innovation capacity of organizations (Brown et al., 2006). Furthermore, Bass and Riggio (2006) found that under transformational leadership, organizations are better equipped to adapt to market changes and maintain a competitive edge.

In the field of education, transformational leadership is equally significant. Heifetz and Laurie (1997) pointed out that school leaders, through an inspiring vision and intellectual stimulation, can effectively foster the growth of both students and teachers, advancing the process of educational reform. In the cultivation of teachers' leadership, transformational leadership encourages teachers to realize their potential and lead students to achieve progress in personalized learning and innovative thinking (Sun, 2019).

3. The current status of leadership development for university students

3.1 Comparison of leadership development models for university students at home and abroad

Internationally, universities have developed extensive leadership education systems, particularly in the U.S., where curriculum design is combined with practical activities such as student government, volunteer programs, and community service. These experiences help students improve leadership skills, social responsibility, and teamwork. Research indicates that participation in leadership courses significantly boosts students' self-efficacy, communication, and team management abilities.

In contrast, leadership education in China, especially in local normal universities, started later and faces resource limitations. Leadership courses are typically electives with narrow content and few practical opportunities, leading to insufficient leadership development. Local normal universities struggle with weak student foundations, limited faculty resources, and incomplete curricula, hindering progress (Wang, 2024).

3.2 Unique Challenges in Leadership Development at Local Normal Universities

As local normal colleges and universities are the main source of teachers for local primary and secondary schools, local normal universities aim to cultivate leadership qualities in students, not only to enhance their personal competencies but also to meet the demands of future educational reforms for highly qualified teachers. However, many local normal universities struggle to provide systematic leadership development programs due to resource constraints and curriculum design issues. Additionally, students have limited opportunities for practical experiences during their studies, resulting in a lack of opportunities to improve leadership skills through social practice (Wang, & J 2018). These factors have created significant bottlenecks in leadership development at local normal universities.

Research Methodology

1. Research design

This study adopts a mixed-methods research design, combining both qualitative and quantitative approaches to ensure a comprehensive analysis and deep understanding of the leadership development practices at H University. By integrating qualitative and quantitative methods, we can obtain detailed case studies while also quantifying the effectiveness of students' leadership development, providing data-driven support for the research.

1.1 Qualitative research

The qualitative research component primarily employs a case study approach to analyze the specific leadership development practices at H University. The case study method allows for in-depth exploration of the strategies, curriculum design, practical components, and their impacts on students within the leadership development process. Through interviews with faculty and students at H University, feedback on leadership courses and practical activities will be collected, providing insights into the effectiveness of the program and areas for improvement.

1.2 Quantitative research

The quantitative research component involves the design of a questionnaire to conduct a quantitative analysis of students' leadership qualities. The questionnaire includes multiple dimensions of leadership, such as communication skills, decision-making ability, teamwork, and innovation. By collecting and analyzing quantitative data, the study will evaluate changes in students' leadership qualities before and after participating in the leadership courses.

The combination of qualitative and quantitative data will not only provide a thorough evaluation of the leadership development model at H University but also offer concrete suggestions for improving future leadership development pathways.

2. Data collection

This study employs the following three methods for data collection:

2.1 In-Depth interviews

In-depth interviews are the core component of the qualitative research and are designed to obtain genuine feedback on leadership development practices from teachers and students at H University. The interviewees include educational administrators, leadership course instructors, and students participating in leadership development programs. Using semi-structured interview questions, the study focuses on the following areas:

Teachers' observations and insights on course design, teaching methods, and student feedback.

Students' personal experiences, gains, and challenges encountered during leadership courses and practical activities.

Administrators' views on the overall leadership development model of the university and potential areas for future improvement.

During the interviews, the researcher will record the data through audio recordings and note-taking. Subsequently, transcripts will be created and coded for analysis, extracting key themes from the data.

2.2 Questionnaire survey

To quantitatively assess the effectiveness of leadership development, this study designs a specialized questionnaire that covers multiple dimensions of leadership, including core elements such as communication skills, decision-making ability, teamwork, and

innovative thinking. The target population for the questionnaire consists of 4,736 students from the teacher training program at H University, with 367 students selected as a sample using random sampling. The questionnaire is divided into three sections:

1) Basic background information of the students, including age, grade, and participation in courses and practical activities.

(2) Students' self-assessment before and after participating in the leadership courses, focusing on the improvement of key leadership skills.

(3) Evaluation of the leadership development model, course design, mentorship guidance, and practical activities.

The study uses a Likert scale to gather students' ratings on various indicators, which will be subjected to subsequent statistical analysis.

2.3 Literature review

The literature review compares leadership development programs for university students domestically and internationally. By systematically analyzing relevant literature, it examines the successes and shortcomings of various models, focusing on key factors such as course design, practical opportunities, mentoring, and evaluation. The review highlights the uniqueness and areas for improvement in H University's approach, offering insights for future research.

Data analysis

This study utilizes both qualitative and quantitative data analysis methods:

Firstly, the researcher will conduct a leadership competency survey aimed at evaluating the improvement in students' leadership qualities after participating in transformational leadership courses. The total population is 4,736 students, with a sample size of 367 students.

1. The questionnaire statistics are as follows:

Table 1 Leadership Survey Statistics

Leadership Dimension	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Min Score	Max Score
Communication 1	3.997275204	0.814817146	3	5
Communication 2	3.953678474	0.810134803	3	5
Decision Making 1	3.485013624	1.130389428	2	5
Decision Making 2	3.569482289	1.145170665	2	5
Teamwork 1	4.005449591	0.806376739	3	5
Teamwork 2	3.934604905	0.840294181	3	5
Innovation 1	3.53133515	1.11054268	2	5
Innovation 2	3.493188011	1.144878081	2	5
Self-Efficacy 1	3.970027248	0.84068392	3	5
Self-Efficacy 2	3.967302452	0.825825683	3	5

The table contains assessment data for five different leadership competency dimensions: Communication, Decision Making, Teamwork, Innovation, and Self-Efficacy. Each dimension has two assessment items, showing the Mean Score, Standard Deviation, Min Score, and Max Score. Below is my analysis:

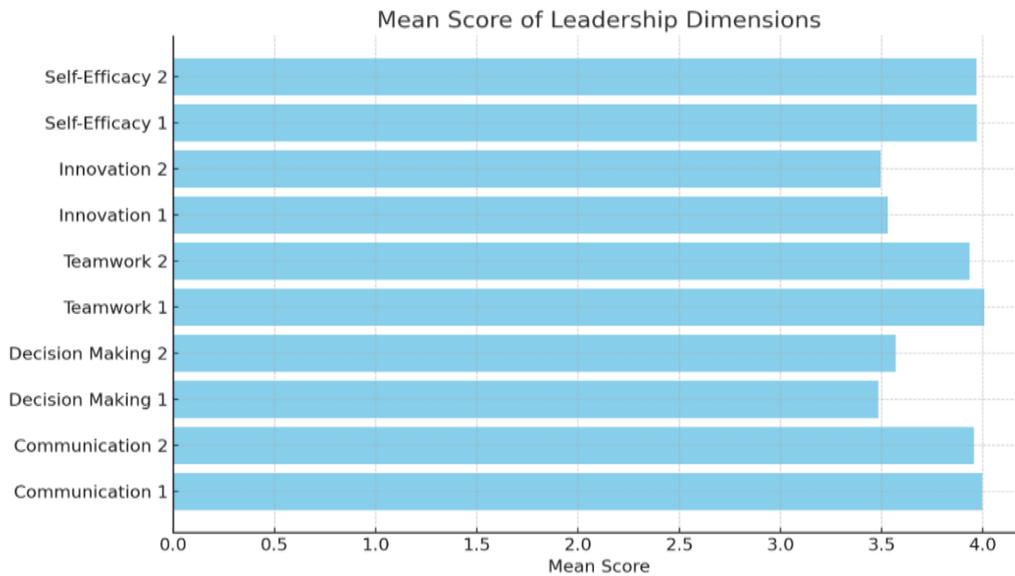


Figure 1 Mean Score of Leadership Dimensions

2. Mean Score analysis

(1) Communication

The mean scores for the two communication assessment items are 3.997 and 3.954, both close to 4, indicating that participants generally rate their communication skills highly, suggesting overall good performance in communication.

(2) Decision Making

The mean scores for the two decision-making assessment items are 3.485 and 3.569, both below 4, showing that participants rate their decision-making skills relatively lower.

(3) Teamwork

The mean scores for the two teamwork assessment items are 4.005 and 3.935, close to 4, indicating that participants have a high self-assessment of their teamwork abilities.

(4) Innovation

The mean scores for innovation are 3.531 and 3.493, both close to 3.5, suggesting that participants rate their innovation abilities as average.

(5) Self-Efficacy

The mean scores for self-efficacy are 3.970 and 3.967, both close to 4, indicating that participants are relatively confident in their self-efficacy.

(6) Innovation



Figure2 Standard Deviation of Leadership Dimensions

3. Standard deviation analysis

The standard deviation reflects the degree of data dispersion. A smaller standard deviation indicates less fluctuation in the data, suggesting more consistent assessment results. A larger standard deviation indicates wider data distribution, showing greater variation in the assessment results.

Dimensions with Smaller Standard Deviation: Communication, teamwork, and self-efficacy have relatively small standard deviations (mostly around 0.8), indicating that the assessment results are more concentrated, and participants' evaluations of these abilities are relatively consistent.

Dimensions with Larger Standard Deviation: Decision making and innovation have larger standard deviations (mostly around 1.1), with innovation 2 having a standard deviation of 1.144. This suggests that participants' self-assessments in these areas vary widely.

4. Analysis of minimum and maximum scores

For most assessment items, the minimum score is 3 and the maximum score is 5, indicating that most participants rated themselves relatively high, with scores concentrated in the middle to high range.

Decision Making and Innovation: Some dimensions have a minimum score of 2, suggesting that in these areas, some participants rated their performance as poor, particularly in decision-making and innovation, where the self-assessment scores are more widely distributed.

5. Overall trends

Communication and Teamwork: These dimensions have relatively high mean scores and smaller standard deviations, indicating that participants generally believe they perform well in these areas, with consistent self-assessments.

Decision Making and Innovation: These dimensions have lower mean scores and larger standard deviations, indicating that some participants rate themselves lower in these areas, and there is a wide range of self-assessments, suggesting a need for further improvement and attention. Self-Efficacy: The mean score is close to 4, suggesting that participants are confident in their abilities. The small standard deviation shows that self-assessments in this area are relatively consistent.

6. SWOT analysis

A SWOT analysis will be used to evaluate H University's leadership development strategies:

Strengths: Identifies successful practices from interviews and literature, including innovative transformational leadership courses and teacher guidance.

Weaknesses: Highlights gaps between theory and practice and resource limitations based on interviews with faculty and students.

Opportunities: Explores potential from educational reforms, such as Ministry of Education policy support and school-enterprise partnerships.

Threats: Identifies external challenges like rising competition and technological demands through literature and interviews.

7. SPSS statistical analysis

Quantitative analysis of questionnaire data will be conducted using SPSS, applying the following methods:

Descriptive Statistics: To present sample characteristics, including student backgrounds and course participation.

Paired Sample T-test: To assess improvements in core leadership skills (e.g., communication, teamwork, innovation) before and after course participation.

Correlation Analysis: To explore relationships between leadership development aspects (e.g., course design, mentorship) and leadership skill improvement.

Regression Analysis: To identify key factors influencing leadership skill enhancement and suggest improvements.

By integrating qualitative and quantitative approaches, the study offers both theoretical insights and practical recommendations for refining H University's leadership development model.

Practical exploration of transformational leadership theory at H university

Under the guidance of transformational leadership theory, H University has conducted a variety of practical explorations to effectively enhance students' leadership qualities. By integrating course design, a mentorship system, and practical projects, H University aims to foster students' comprehensive leadership development through a combination of theory and practice. Below, we will explore H University's leadership development practices in detail across three main aspects: course design, the mentorship system, and practical projects.

1. Course design and leadership development

1.1 Leadership modules based on Transformational leadership

H University's leadership course incorporates transformational leadership theory into four modules: Idealized Influence, Inspirational Motivation, Intellectual Stimulation, and Individualized Consideration (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

Idealized Influence: Case studies of historical and modern leaders teach students to build authority and trust through strong morals.

Inspirational Motivation: Focuses on goal-setting and intrinsic motivation, with activities like speeches and project management (Bass, 1990).

Intellectual Stimulation: Encourages innovative thinking and problem-solving through problem-based learning and simulations.

Individualized Consideration: Teaches personalized team support via case discussions and group coaching (Brown et al., 2006).

1.2 Practical teaching and theoretical integration: case analysis and team projects

In the course design at H University, practical teaching is integrated with theoretical knowledge. Each module has practical case analysis and team projects. Students study theory in class and complete leadership projects through teamwork. Case studies like corporate leadership in crisis management and educational leadership decision-making help students practice leadership decision-making in simulated scenarios. Team projects offer students chances to apply theory. Each team must complete a challenging task involving strategic planning and problem-solving. Through these projects, students enhance communication, decision-making, and coordination skills while developing potential as team leaders (Heifetz & Laurie, 1997).

2. Mentor-ship system and individualized consideration

2.1 The impact of mentor-ship on students' personalized leadership development

The mentor-ship system is another key component of leadership development at H University. Every student receives personalized guidance from a mentor throughout their studies and practical experiences. Mentors not only provide academic advice but also guide students in personal development, career planning, and leadership cultivation. A mentor serves not just as a traditional knowledge provider but as a role model, helping students discover their strengths and weaknesses through individualized support and care (Cui & Wang, 2015).

Transformational leadership theory places a strong emphasis on individualized consideration, which is well reflected in H University's mentorship system. Mentors tailor leadership development plans to each student's unique characteristics and goals, helping them make progress in teamwork, decision-making, and problem-solving.

2.2 The effectiveness of the mentor-ship system in leadership practice

In practice, mentors hold regular one-on-one sessions and group discussions to help students better understand leadership concepts and apply them to real-world situations. Mentors also provide students with practical opportunities, encouraging them to take on leadership roles in student organizations, such as student government or club management.

Through personalized mentorship, students have shown significant improvement in various leadership dimensions, particularly in communication skills, team management, and innovation (Sun, 2019). The implementation of the mentorship system has made leadership development a continuous process throughout the student's academic life, rather than an isolated course activity.

3. Practical projects and leadership competitions

3.1 Leadership development through social practice and entrepreneurship projects

H University encourages students to further develop their leadership skills by participating in various social practice and entrepreneurship projects. Activities such as educational support programs, community service, and volunteer work provide opportunities for students to exercise leadership in real-world contexts. These activities not only test students' organizational and coordination abilities but also help them understand and apply the concepts of transformational leadership in practice (Wang, 2024).

Additionally, H University has set up innovation and entrepreneurship projects to encourage students to start or join entrepreneurial teams. In these projects, students are in charge of all stages from planning to team formation and execution. Through these practical experiences, students enhance their leadership abilities, especially when facing uncertainty and pressure, and they show strong leadership qualities (Zhang & Zhou, 2020).

3.2 Leadership competitions and outcomes in team collaboration

To further improve students' teamwork and leadership skills in practice, H University holds a series of leadership competitions annually, such as the "Campus Leadership Challenge" and "Model United Nations." These competitions provide a platform for students to showcase and hone their leadership skills. By participating in high-intensity team projects, students learn how to communicate effectively, divide tasks, and make decisions under pressure. In these competitions, students must work closely with team members to solve complex real-world problems and complete challenging tasks. Team leaders, using motivational and individualized care strategies from transformational leadership, guide team members to overcome obstacles and achieve outstanding results.

Practice has shown that these competitions not only enhance students' teamwork abilities but also boost their confidence in leadership in a real competitive environment .

Research Results

1. Result of exploring the leadership development practices at H University under the guidance analysis: Self-Assessment, peer evaluation, and mentor evaluation

This study found that H University students significantly improved their leadership competencies after participating in transformational leadership courses and practical projects. Questionnaire and interview data revealed positive changes in communication, decision-making, and teamwork.

Self-assessments: Students reported enhanced leadership abilities, particularly in communication and teamwork, aligning with research on transformational leadership's role in fostering collaboration and inspiring shared goals (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

Peer and mentor evaluations: Showed improved communication, decision-making, and problem-solving skills, with students demonstrating greater independence and confidence in managing complex tasks (Heifetz & Laurie, 1997). These results confirm the effectiveness of transformational leadership in developing core leadership skills.

1.2 Improvement in Students across different leadership dimensions

Data from questionnaires and interviews revealed significant improvements in several leadership dimensions:

Communication Skills: Students improved their ability to articulate views and communicate effectively through speeches and group discussions, enhancing their logical and persuasive abilities (Bass, 1990).

Decision-Making Ability: Situational simulations and case studies boosted students' decision-making skills, enabling them to analyze tasks more effectively and identify optimal solutions (Cui & Wang, 2015).

Teamwork: Team projects fostered proactive collaboration, with students demonstrating better leadership and coordination to achieve group goals efficiently (Sun, 2019).

2. Result of analyzing the improvement in students' leadership qualities after they participate in transformational leadership courses.(Result of Research Objective 2)

2.1 Students' outstanding performance in practical projects

H University provides numerous practical opportunities for leadership development through leadership projects such as innovation and entrepreneurship competitions, community service, and Model United Nations. Students' performance in these projects has been particularly noteworthy. Through social practice, students not only applied leadership theories in real environments but also demonstrated strong leadership and organizational abilities.

In innovation and entrepreneurship projects, students formed teams and completed a series of innovative tasks under the guidance of mentors. These tasks included market research, business plan development, and actual product or service creation. Through these projects, students not only developed their innovative thinking but also learned how to effectively lead teams in interdisciplinary collaboration .

2.2 Comparison of transformational leadership courses with traditional courses

Compared to traditional leadership courses, the transformational leadership courses had a more significant impact. Traditional courses tend to focus heavily on theoretical instruction, with students lacking practical leadership experience. In contrast, transformational leadership courses emphasize both theoretical learning and practical application, enhancing students' skills through case analysis, role-playing, and team projects (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

Data analysis results showed that students who participated in transformational leadership courses experienced significantly greater improvement in self-efficacy, teamwork, and innovation than those who only took traditional courses (Zhang & Zhou, 2020). This difference can be attributed to the motivational and intellectually stimulating elements of transformational leadership, which encourage students to think and act in real situations, thereby enhancing their practical leadership abilities (Brown et al., 2006).

3.Result of proposing a new pathway for leadership development suitable for local normal universities in China to promote future leadership education reform.(Result of Research Objective 3)

3.1 Strengthening university-business collaboration to deepen leadership practice

This study found that practical opportunities in leadership courses play an essential role in enhancing students' leadership qualities. Therefore, universities are encouraged to strengthen collaborations with businesses by offering more internships and practical projects, allowing students to apply and test leadership theories in real-world work

environments (Weng, 2017). University-business collaborations not only provide more practical opportunities but also allow students to gain insights into leadership needs in modern workplaces through the guidance of business mentors, helping students better prepare for their future careers.

Additionally, universities can invite entrepreneurs and leaders as guest lecturers to share their real-life experiences and challenges in leading teams, providing students with valuable case studies and learning opportunities.

3.2 Developing cross-cultural leadership training to enhance students' global perspective

In the context of globalization, cross-cultural leadership is essential in modern education. Universities should conduct cross-cultural leadership training programs to develop leaders with a global perspective. By partnering with international universities and offering exchange programs, students can learn to lead in multicultural environments, enhancing cross-cultural communication and collaboration skills.

Moreover, the development of internet technologies provides new avenues for cross-cultural leadership training. Universities can use online courses and virtual team collaboration projects to help students from different cultural backgrounds work together on tasks, thus developing their global leadership competencies (Zhang & Zhou, 2020).

3.3 Enhancing decision-making and innovation training

Given that the mean scores for these dimensions are lower and the standard deviations are higher, organizations could consider providing more training or support in these areas to help improve decision-making and innovation skills.

3.4 Maintaining strengths in communication and teamwork

Since these areas received higher scores, it would be beneficial to further reinforce related training and practices to ensure that these skills remain at a high level.

3.5 Addressing individual differences

Dimensions with larger standard deviations may indicate that some participants face significant challenges in these areas. Providing tailored support or guidance for these individuals may help improve overall performance.

Discussion

This chapter, based on the findings in Chapter 5, will explore the advantages and limitations of applying transformational leadership theory in local normal universities. Additionally, it will propose innovative approaches to leadership development in these universities, incorporating internet technologies and cross-cultural exchanges to enhance leadership education. Finally, the chapter will discuss the implications for educational policies, suggesting how policy support can promote the establishment of leadership development systems.

1. Advantages and limitations of transformational leadership

1.1 Advantages of transformational leadership in training teacher students

Transformational leadership's focus on motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration offers key advantages in developing university students' leadership skills.

Inspirational Motivation: This leadership style fosters a sense of purpose and mission, enabling students to identify their roles and inspire teamwork, crucial for future teachers who must both guide and motivate learners (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Heifetz & Laurie, 1997).

Intellectual Stimulation: Transformational leadership enhances creativity and critical thinking, preparing students to be innovative educators who can inspire students to think independently in complex teaching environments (Sun, 2019).

1.2 Overcoming the limitations of transformational leadership in practice

While transformational leadership effectively enhances students' leadership skills, it faces practical challenges.

Theory-Practice Integration: Students at H University struggled to apply theoretical knowledge in complex situations, particularly when resources were limited (Cui & Wang, 2015). Universities should improve course design by incorporating more simulated scenarios and practical guidance.

Individualized Consideration: Personalized mentorship requires significant time and resources, and with large student numbers, some may not receive adequate support (Bircham-Connolly, H., Corner, J., & Bowden, S. (2005). Solutions include mentor training, expanding the mentor team, and utilizing online platforms for virtual mentorship and personalized learning plans.

2. Innovations in leadership development models for local normal universities

2.1 Proposing a new leadership development framework

Local normal universities should innovate leadership development models by building on transformational leadership theory to meet modern educational needs.

Flexible, Personalized Course Design: Universities can offer modular leadership courses tailored to students' backgrounds and needs, with different levels covering basic leadership, advanced skills, and cross-cultural communication, allowing students to progressively enhance their competencies (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

Practical Opportunities: Collaborations with businesses and external organizations can provide students with real-world leadership experiences. For example, H University's social practice and entrepreneurship projects effectively enhanced students' leadership skills, a model local universities can adopt (Bircham-Connolly, H., Corner, J., & Bowden, S. (2005).

2.2 Enhancing leadership development with internet technology and cross-cultural exchanges

The internet and globalization offer new avenues for leadership development in local normal universities.

Leveraging Internet Technology: Universities can use online courses, virtual team collaborations, and remote projects to broaden access to leadership education. Personalized online platforms enable students to select courses and projects that align with their needs and interests (Zhang & Zhou, 2020).

Cross-Cultural Exchanges: Globalization demands cross-cultural leadership skills. By partnering with international institutions, universities can offer exchange programs, enabling students to apply leadership theories in multicultural contexts and develop global perspectives and communication skills.

3. Implications for educational policies

3.1 Enhancing leadership development for faculty in local normal universities

Leadership education in local normal universities should not only focus on students, but enhancing leadership competencies among faculty is also crucial. Educational policymakers should pay attention to the development of leadership skills among teachers, providing more opportunities for leadership training to ensure that teachers not only possess professional teaching skills but also play leadership roles in classrooms and school management. Policymakers can establish special funding to support teachers' participation in domestic and international leadership training programs or promote the establishment of internal leadership training systems within universities (Cui & Wang, 2015).

3.2 Building leadership development systems in educational policy-making

At the policy level, education authorities should consider making leadership development a key focus in the educational reforms of local normal universities. Through policy guidance, leadership courses can be integrated into the core curriculum of universities, and schools can be encouraged to design leadership development pathways tailored to their unique characteristics. Moreover, educational policies should support partnerships between universities, businesses, and international organizations to align leadership development with societal needs, ensuring the effectiveness and sustainability of leadership development systems (Wang, 2024)

Conclusion

Through an empirical analysis of H University's transformational leadership development model, the study reveals the positive role of transformational leadership theory in enhancing students' leadership competencies. Students show improvements in communication, decision-making, and teamwork. They apply learned theories in practical projects, strengthening problem-solving and innovative thinking. The theory's emphasis on individualized consideration and intellectual stimulation enables students to display stronger leadership and self-efficacy through mentorship and social practice. After participating in courses, students are more proactive in development and lead teams more effectively. The study recommends enhancing partnerships, improving evaluation systems, exploring "Internet + leadership education," and strengthening international collaboration. Future research should expand sample sizes and optimize training with modern technology. Overall, it offers insights for advancing leadership education and improving teacher quality.

Recommendations

To enhance leadership education in local normal universities, the following suggestions can be considered. Firstly, strengthen university-enterprise cooperation. By collaborating with enterprises, universities can provide students with more practical leadership opportunities and experiences, enabling them to better understand the demands of the real world and improve their leadership skills. Secondly, refine the evaluation system. A comprehensive and scientific evaluation system can accurately assess students' leadership qualities and progress, providing targeted feedback and guidance for their further development. Thirdly, explore "Internet + leadership education" models. Leveraging the power of the internet

can expand the reach and effectiveness of leadership education, offering more diverse learning resources and methods to meet the needs of different students.

Reference

- Bass, B. M., & Steidlmeier, P. (1999). Ethics, character, and authentic transformational leadership behavior. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 10 (2), 181-217.
- Bass, B. M. (1990). From transactional to transformational leadership: *Learning to share the vision*. *Organizational Dynamics*, 19 (3), 19–31.
- Bass, B. M., & Riggio, R. E. (2006). Transformational leadership (2nd ed.). *Lawrence Erlbaum Associates*.
- Bircham-Connolly, H., Corner, J., & Bowden, S. (2005). An empirical study of the impact of question structure on recipient attitude during knowledge sharing. *Journal of Knowledge Management*, 32 (1), 1–10.
- Brown, F. W., Bryant, S. E., & Reilly, M. D. (2006). Does emotional intelligence—as measured by the EQI—influence transformational leadership and/or desirable outcomes? *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, 27 (5), 330–351.
- Cui, Y. J., & Wang, B. X. (2015). College students' leadership: The treasure in the ivory tower. *Heilongjiang Higher Education Research*, 11, 35–40.
- Heifetz, R. A., & Laurie, D. L. (1997). The work of leadership. *Harvard Business Review*, 75 (1), 124–134.
- Kotter, J. P. (1990). A force for change: *How leadership differs from management*. Free Press.
- Northouse, P. G. (2018). *Leadership: Theory and practice* (8th ed.). Sage Publications.
- Senge, P. M. (1990). *The fifth discipline: The art and practice of the learning organization*. Doubleday.
- Sun, H. (2019). Exploring the relationship between personality traits and leadership styles among Chinese college students. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 33 (4), 799–813.
- Wang, J. (2014). The influence mechanism of college students' leadership on creativity: An empirical study based on structural equation model. *China Higher Education Research*, (4), 60–65.
- Wang, R. (2024). College students' leadership: Exploration of the era connotation, generation mechanism, and cultivation path. *Journal of Heilongjiang Vocational Institute of Ecological Engineering*, 37 (1), 92–96.
- Yukl, G. (2013). *Leadership in organizations* (8th ed.). Pearson Education.
- Zhang, L., & Zhou, X. (2020). Leadership development programs in Chinese higher education: A review and implications. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 39 (5), 879–894.