

The Approaches to Enhance Principals' Leadership in Local Higher Vocational Colleges in Nanyang City, China

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Abstract

The purposes of this research were: 1) to investigate the components of principals' leadership in local higher vocational colleges in Nanyang City, China; 2) to explore the current situation and desirable condition of principals' leadership in local higher vocational colleges in Nanyang City, China; 3) to construct the approaches to enhance principals' leadership in local higher vocational colleges in Nanyang City, China; 4) to assess the approaches to enhance principals' leadership in local higher vocational colleges in Nanyang City, China. The research instruments were an existing and desirable situation questionnaire, an expert index of concordance assessment form (IOC), the structured interview form, and approaches evaluation form. Statistics used were mean, standard deviation, and the modified priority needs index.

The research results were: 1) The components of principals' leadership in local higher vocational colleges comprised of 5 dimensions and 10 sub-dimensions; 2) The existing situation and desirable situation of principals' leadership in local higher vocational colleges was both at a high level, and the needs to enhance principals' leadership in local higher vocational colleges were ranked from high to low as interpersonal leadership, academic leadership, structural leadership, educational leadership, cultural leadership; and 3) The approaches to enhance principals' leadership in local higher vocational colleges comprised of 5 main parts and 21 measures. 4) The evaluation revealed that the propriety, the feasibility, and the utilities of the approaches were at the highest level in all evaluation standards.

Keywords: Principal Leadership; Leadership; Local higher vocational college; Nanyang; ChinaIntroduction

Introduction

Higher vocational education is an important component of China's higher education system and a high-level education that shoulders the mission of cultivating talents for economic and social construction and development. With the development of the economy and society, the transformation and upgrading of industrial structure, and the people's expectations for a better life, the demand for technical and skilled talents in various industries is becoming increasingly urgent, and the important position and role of vocational education are becoming more and more prominent (State Council, 2019). After the construction process of "demonstration schools," "backbone schools," and "high-quality schools," China's vocational education has made significant progress.

At present, it has officially entered the stage of "Double High Plan" construction, marking the transformation of China's vocational education from scale based development to connotation based development.

Effective school leadership, whether in developed or developing countries, is the most important factor in the quality and effectiveness of schools. Mr. Tao Xingzhi once said, "The principal is the soul of a school. To comment on a school, one must first comment on its principal (Tao Xingzhi, 1984)." "The principal is the direct manager and leader of the entire school, influencing the functioning of all factors within the school. Therefore, the effectiveness of the principal is the most important factor in the effectiveness of the school (Zheng Yanxiang, 1995). Therefore, how to effectively enhance the leadership of university presidents and improve the management level of universities has ultimately become a key factor affecting the process of education reform in China. The leadership of university presidents has gradually become an important indicator for measuring the quality of school education.

Faced with the background of changes in the social environment and educational reform, school work is facing more challenges than ever before. Whether from the perspective of the school's own development or from the perspective of enhancing China's international competitiveness in education, principals are required to possess high leadership skills. However, there are certain difficulties in the theoretical research and practical experience of principal leadership in our country, which affects the improvement and play of principal leadership. In this context, it is particularly important for principals to take on the role of school leaders and lead the direction of school development.

In summary, China's higher vocational education is currently standing at a new historical starting point, ushering in the spring of vocational education development. However, facing opportunities and challenges, the leadership of vocational college principals is also facing enormous pressure and challenges. Their leadership level has naturally become the key to improving the quality of higher vocational education. Based on the above reasons, this study aims to propose effective ways to increase the leadership level of local vocational colleges, promote the rapid development of education in local vocational colleges in Nanyang City, and ultimately achieve the goal of promoting high-quality regional economic development through high-quality vocational education. Meanwhile, the research findings can be applied by institutions related to the development of school administrators to further enhance their leadership skills.

Research Objective

The objectives of this study are as follows:

- 1) To investigate the components of Principals' Leadership in Local Higher Vocational Colleges.
- 2) To explore the current situation and desirable condition of Principals' Leadership in local higher vocational colleges in Nanyang City, China.
- 3) To construct the approaches to enhance Principals' Leadership in Local Higher Vocational Colleges in Nanyang City, China.
- 4) To assess the approaches to enhance Principals' Leadership in Local Higher Vocational Colleges in Nanyang City, China.

Research Methodology

Population and Sample

In order to obtain the sample for this study, the researchers adopted a random sampling method. In Nanyang City, there are three public vocational colleges under local jurisdiction, namely Nanyang Vocational College of Agriculture, Nanyang Vocational College of Science and Technology, Nanyang Medical College.

The number of students in the three vocational colleges exceeds 10000, and the number of faculty and staff is about 1000. Nanyang Agricultural Vocational College has 10 deans (including vice deans), Nanyang Vocational College of Science and Technology has 9 presidents (including vice presidents), and Nanyang Medical College has 8 presidents (including vice presidents).

Research tools

The research instruments were an existing and desirable situation questionnaire, an expert index of concordance assessment form (IOC), the structured interview form, and approaches evaluation form. Statistics used were mean, standard deviation, and the modified priority needs index.

Data collection

In order to collect the data for the study, the researcher needs a request letter from the Faculty of Udon Thani Rajabhat University, requesting the expert's permission to access the assessment form. This letter will be used to introduce the experts and the evidence of the institution before the experts in order to make the data collection process smooth, accurate and effective. Then, the letter and content of the elements of Principals' Leadership in Local Higher Vocational Colleges will be discussed by email to 5 experts in order to validate and check the validity of the content, and then relevant adjustments will be made to construct the questionnaire form. The researchers obtained all the questionnaires within 2 weeks.

Data analysis

Conceptual Framework

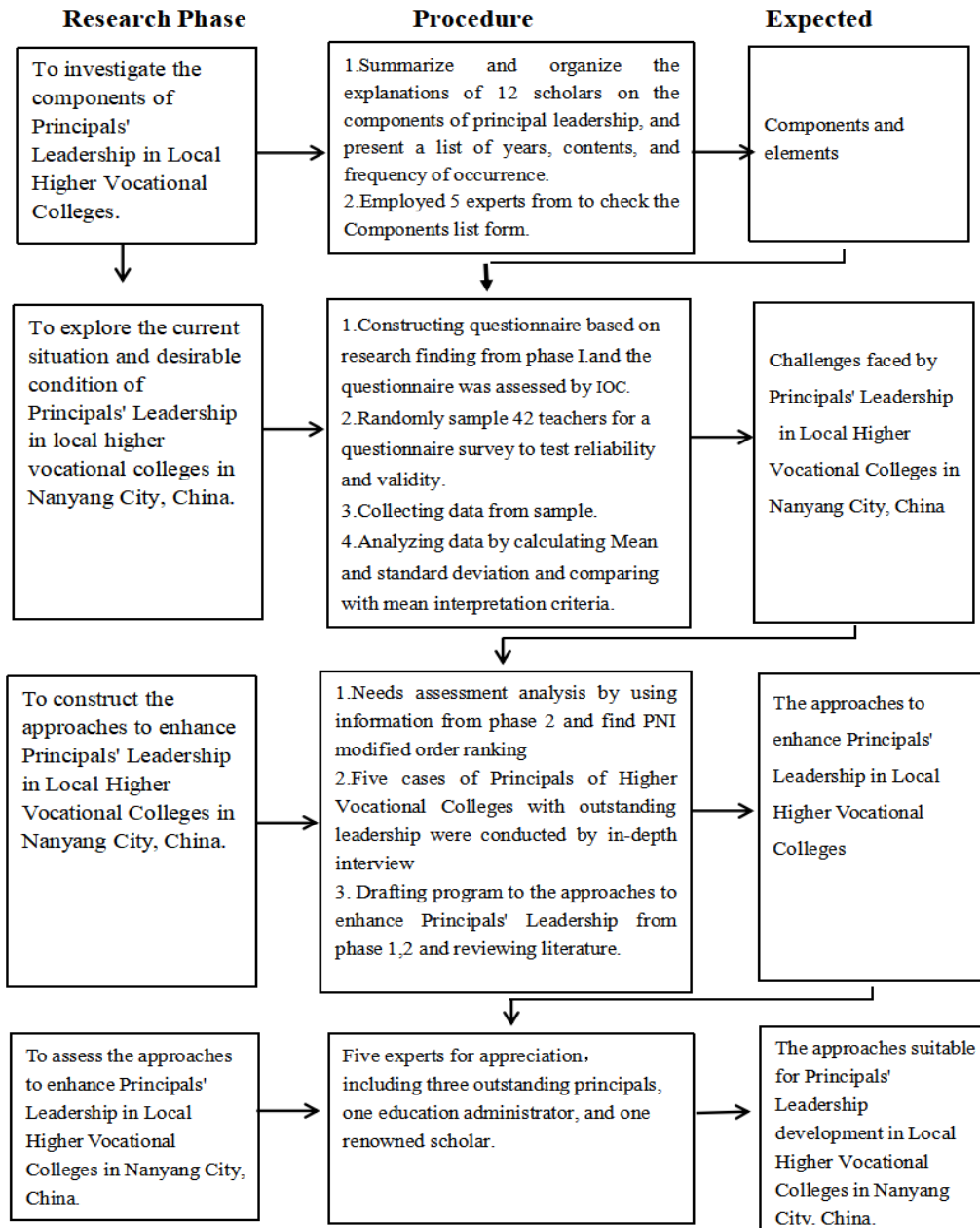


Figure 1. Research Scope

The research design was mixed methods research which divided into four phases, each phase consists of procedures, informants or population and samples, research instrument, and data analysis as follows:

Phase 1: The investigation of components and indicators of Principals' Leadership in Local Higher Vocational Colleges.

1) Procedure

An analysis and synthesis of components of Principals' Leadership in Local Higher Vocational Colleges.

2) The informants

The informants were 12 scholars who were experienced and keen on principals' Leadership.

3) Research instrument

The research instrument mainly include literature materials such as papers, journals, and works related to principal leadership.

4) Data analysis

Summarize and organize the explanations of 12 scholars on the dimensions of principal leadership, and present a list of years, contents, and frequency of occurrence.

Phase 2: The exploration of current situation and desirable condition of Principals' Leadership in local higher vocational colleges in Nanyang City, China.

1) Procedure

1.1) The results from the evaluation of components and indicators of Principals' Leadership in local higher vocational colleges in Phase 1 were applied to constructing an existing and desirable situation questionnaire.

1.2) 42 teachers from Nanyang Agricultural Vocational College were randomly selected for reliability and validity testing.

1.3) The data were collected from 351 teachers and administrators to find an existing desirable situation of Principals' Leadership in local higher vocational colleges. Also, the needs to develop Principals' Leadership in local higher vocational colleges were analyzed through the Modified Priority Needs Index (PNI_{modified}).

2) Population and samples

2.1) There are three public higher vocational colleges in Nanyang City, Henan Province, with a total of 2850 faculty members.

2.2) The samples included 351 local higher vocational colleges administrators and teachers who worked at three public higher vocational colleges affiliated with Nanyang City, Henan Province. The sample was obtained through random sampling. The sample size was determined by Formula Yamane (1973),

3) Research instrument

The research instrument was an existing situation and desirable situation questionnaire in the form of a 5 rating scales with the reliability of 0.96 of existing situation part, and 0.98 for the desirable situation part, and the validity of 0.83 of existing situation part, and 0.86 for the desirable situation part.

4) Data analysis

4.1) The existing situation and the desirable situation of Principals' Leadership in local higher vocational colleges were analyzed through mean, standard deviation.

4.2) The needs assessment to enhance Principals' Leadership in local higher vocational colleges was analyzed through the Modified Priority Needs Index (Wongwanich, 2015).

Phase 3: Construct the approaches to enhance Principals' Leadership in Local Higher Vocational Colleges.

1) Procedures

1.1) Five cases of Principals of Higher Vocational Colleges with outstanding leadership were conducted by in-depth interview.

1.2) The approaches to enhance Principals' Leadership in Local Higher Vocational Colleges was drafted using the data gained from the in-depth interview of outstanding Principals and from the review of related literature on academic leadership development.

2) The research instrument

The research instrument was a structured interview form.

3) Data analysis

The data collected from the five cases of school administrators with outstanding academic leadership were analyzed by drawing a conclusion from the in-depth interview and then presented in narrative form.

Phase 4: Assess the approaches to enhance Principals' Leadership in Local Higher Vocational Colleges in Nanyang City, China.

1) Procedures

The approaches to enhance Principals' Leadership in Local Higher Vocational Colleges was then evaluated through connoisseurship.

2) The informants

Five outstanding experts with rich knowledge in vocational education management.

3) The research instruments

The research instruments were a connoisseurship take-note form, and a program evaluation form which evaluated the propriety, the feasibility, and the utility of the approaches to enhance Principals' Leadership in Local Higher Vocational Colleges.

4) Data analysis

The constructed approaches were analyzed the propriety, feasibility and utility by average mean and standard deviation.

Research Scope

The study was divided into four phases as follows:

Phase I: Investigate the components of Principals' Leadership in Local Higher Vocational Colleges.

Stage1: Review literature to summarize components of Principals' Leadership in Local Higher Vocational Colleges. Summarize and organize the explanations of 12 scholars on the components of principal leadership, and present a list of years, contents, and frequency of occurrence.

Stage2: Evaluation of suitability of components of Principals' Leadership in Local Higher Vocational Colleges.

Phase II: Explore the current situation and desirable condition of Principals' Leadership in local higher vocational colleges in Nanyang City, China. This phase was undertaken as the following steps:

Stage1: Design survey questionnaire.

A first draft of the questionnaire was constructed by the investigators on the basis of the elements and indicators identified in the first stage and sent to 5 experts to assess its applicability in order to obtain an authentic questionnaire.

Stage2: Questionnaires were conducted.

Phase III: Construct the approaches to enhance Principals' Leadership in Local Higher Vocational Colleges in Nanyang City, China. This phase was undertaken as the following steps:

Stage1: In-depth interview with Experts

Stage2: Construct the approaches to enhance Principals' Leadership in Local Higher Vocational Colleges

Phase Iv: Assess the approaches to enhance Principals' Leadership in Local Higher Vocational Colleges in Nanyang City, China.

At this stage, appreciation through 5 experts who were experienced and keen on Principals' Leadership in local higher vocational colleges.

Research Results

1. To investigate the components of Principals' Leadership in Local Higher Vocational Colleges. Found that The 5 primary indicators include educational Leadership, cultural leadership, structural leadership, interpersonal leadership, academic leadership. Educational Leadership has 2 secondary indicators: innovative ability in education and teaching and teacher Development Leadership. Cultural leadership has 2 secondary indicators: cultural construction ability and team building ability. Structural leadership has 2 secondary indicators: development planning capability and Internal management optimization capability. Interpersonal leadership has 2 secondary indicators: moral leadership and communication and coordination skills. Academic leadership has 2 secondary indicators: Individual academic influence and group academic leadership.

The results of evaluation appropriate components of principals' leadership found that were overall at very high, the order of the components of the average from highest to lowest is Interpersonal leadership, Structural leadership, Cultural leadership, Educational Leadership, Academic leadership.

2. To explore the current situation and desirable condition of Principals' Leadership in local higher vocational colleges in Nanyang City, China. Found that Summary of research results, the existing situation and desirable situation of Principals' Leadership in Local Higher Vocational Colleges was both at a high level, and the needs assessment to enhance Principals' Leadership in Local Higher Vocational Colleges were ranked from high to low was interpersonal leadership, academic leadership, structural leadership, educational Leadership, cultural leadership; and It has an adjusted needs index value of 0.18, 0.15, 0.14, 0.13 and 0.09.

3. To construct the approaches to enhance Principals' Leadership in Local Higher Vocational Colleges in Nanyang City, China. Found that The approaches to enhance Principals' Leadership in Local Higher Vocational Colleges comprised 5 main parts. as follows:

1. Interpersonal leadership as follows: 1.1) Improve personal qualities and moral awareness, and use morality to guide management behavior. 1.2) Establish a people-oriented concept. 1.3) Enhance humanistic care for teachers. 1.4) Build a shared vision and provide development direction.

2. Academic leadership as follows: 2.1) Clarify the development goals and positioning of local higher vocational colleges. 2.2) Emphasize the improvement of the principal's personal qualities and learning abilities. 2.3) Emphasize the value guidance and spiritual shaping of the principal in academic affairs of the school. 2.4) Enhancing the sense of responsibility and mission of principals in promoting the development of national higher vocational education. 2.5) Establish a sound mechanism to ensure the full play of the principal's academic leadership.

3. Structural leadership as follows: 3.1) Clarify the school's educational positioning, establish a common vision and mission, and formulate a medium- and long-term development plan for the school. 3.2) Rely on the joint governance of multiple subjects to manage school. 3.3) Emphasize the value guidance and spiritual shaping of the principal in academic affairs of the school. 3.4) Enhancing the sense of responsibility and mission of principals in promoting the development of national higher vocational education. 3.5) Establish a sound mechanism to ensure the full play of the principal's academic leadership.

4. Educational leadership as follows: 4.1) Building a curriculum research community with the goal of constructing high-level courses. 4.2) Guided by the development of internationalization, promote cooperation and exchange among curriculum leaders. 4.3) Guided by high-level course leadership, strengthen the training of course leaders. 4.4) Provide teachers with a professional development platform and opportunities for growth.

5. Cultural Leadership as follows:

5.1 Enhance the leadership awareness of cultural construction, play a leading role in cultural guidance, and become a "guide". 5.2 Emphasize the study of cultural leadership theory and continuously improve one's cultural leadership skills.

5.3 Identify the role positioning of cultural leadership, create a school culture that encourages humanistic values, fosters trust and cooperation, and embodies an inspiring school culture.

5.4 To cultivate cultural leadership and educational emotions, one must first establish ideals and beliefs; The second is to combine ideas with practice; The third is to strengthen the cultivation of moral qualities and personality.

4. To assess the approaches to enhance Principals' Leadership in Local Higher Vocational Colleges in Nanyang City, China. Found that The evaluation revealed that the propriety, the feasibility, and the utilities of the approaches were at the highest level in all evaluation standards.

The principals' Leadership in Local Higher Vocational Colleges consisted of 5 components and 10 indicators which are presented in detail as follows: Educational Leadership has 2 indicators: innovative ability in education and teaching; teacher Development Leadership. Cultural leadership has 2 indicators: cultural construction ability; team building ability. Structural leadership has 2 indicators: development planning capability; internal management optimization capability. Interpersonal leadership has 2 indicators: moral leadership; communication and coordination skills

Academic leadership has 2 indicators: individual academic influence; group academic leadership.

The overall existing situation of principals' Leadership and in each aspect was at a high level. The overall desirable situation of principals' Leadership and in each aspect was at a high level (the details as shown in Table 1). The needs assessment to develop principals' Leadership in Local Higher Vocational Colleges ranked from high to low was interpersonal leadership, academic leadership, structural leadership, educational Leadership, cultural leadership (the details as shown in Table 2).

Table 1. Mean and standard deviation of the existing situation and the desirable situation of principals' Leadership in Local Higher Vocational Colleges

Aspect	Principals' Leadership in Local Higher Vocational Colleges	Existence			Desired		
		\bar{x}	SD	Level	\bar{x}	SD	Level
1	Educational Leadership	3.803	0.927	High	4.296	0.712	High
2	Cultural leadership	3.778	0.954	High	4.140	0.686	High
3	Structural leadership	3.821	0.961	High	4.338	0.693	High
4	Interpersonal leadership	3.696	1.041	High	4.375	0.680	High
5	Academic leadership	3.801	0.997	High	4.374	0.703	High
Totally		3.779	0.976	High	4.304	0.694	High

From Table 1. The Research Findings is 1.Educational Leadership $X = 4.296$, $SD = 0.712$ Level is High. 2. Cultural Leadership $X = 4.140$, $SD = 0.686$ Level is High. 3.Structural Leadership $X = 4.338$, $SD = 0.693$ Level is High. 4. Interpersonal Leadership $X = 4.375$, $SD = 0.680$ Level is High. 5. Academic Leadership $X = 4.374$, $SD = 0.703$ Level is High. Totally $X = 4.304$, $SD = 0.694$ Level is High.

Table 2. Mean of the desirable situation (I) and the existing situation (D), the modified priority needs index ($PNI_{modified}$), and order of needs

Principals' Leadership in Local Higher Vocational Colleges	I	D	$PNI_{modified} = (I-D)/D$	Order of needs
Educational Leadership	4.296	3.803	0.130	4
Cultural leadership	4.140	3.778	0.096	5
Structural leadership	4.338	3.821	0.135	3
Interpersonal leadership	4.375	3.696	0.184	1
Academic leadership	4.374	3.801	0.151	2

From Table 2. The Research Findings is 1. Interpersonal Leadership $PNI_{modified} = 0.130$, 2. Academic Leadership $PNI_{modified} = 0.151$ 3.Structural Leadership $PNI_{modified} = 0.135$ 4.Educational Leadership $PNI_{modified} = 0.130$ 5. Cultural Leadership $PNI_{modified} = 0.096$

Discussion

The research results on the approaches to enhance Principals' Leadership in Local Higher Vocational Colleges are discussed as follows.

The Principals' Leadership in Local Higher Vocational Colleges consisted of 5 components and 10 indicators, Educational Leadership (2 indicators), Cultural leadership (2 indicators), Structural leadership (2 indicators), Interpersonal leadership (2 indicators), Academic leadership (2 indicators), All the components are rated at a high level.

This finding may be due to the fact that the key to a school's success lies in the principal's correct and effective leadership. Without strong leadership, various factors of a good school cannot be combined or sustained (Edmonds, 1979). In 2002, the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) developed the "School Leadership Standards" and established a leadership evaluation mechanism for principals in the United States, proposing six standards covering school goals, school culture and curriculum development, school organizational management, school community relations, ethical requirements for school leadership, and the relationship between schools and other factors. The main finding of this study is also consistent with the views of the School Leadership Standards developed by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). The main findings of this study are also consistent with Zhou Wenjin's (2012) research, which concluded that ideal principal leadership consists of five components: educational and teaching research ability, organizational and decision-making ability, business and strategic development ability, cultural leadership ability, and interpersonal communication ability.

The overall existing situation of principals' Leadership and its separate aspects are rated at a high level. The component with the lowest average mean is interpersonal leadership. The overall desirable situation of principals' Leadership and its separated aspects are rated at a high level. The component with the highest average mean is interpersonal leadership. The characteristics found in interpersonal leadership component include moral leadership and communication and coordination skills. Therefore, development of principals' leadership in Local Higher Vocational Colleges should emphasize on interpersonal leadership component as it is rated as the lowest aspect. The components with the lowest means in the overall desirable situation of principals' leadership in Local Higher Vocational Colleges are teacher Cultural leadership (2 indicators) and Educational Leadership (2 indicators).

In summary, the approaches to enhance Principals' Leadership relied on data collected from various sources and instruments namely the review of related literatures, the synthesis of components and indicators of principals' Leadership, the study of existing situation of academic leadership and needs for principals' Leadership development, the multi-case study of 5 expert who were school administrators demonstrated excellent leadership, and connoisseurship. The evaluation revealed that the propriety, the feasibility, and the utilities of the approaches were at the highest level in all evaluation standards.

Suggestion

1.Theoretical Recommendation

1). Government vocational education administrators in Local Higher Vocational Colleges In Nanyang City, China.

Should organize a development project for management personnel to adjust vision, communication and transfer of knowledge to subordinates correctly and clearly.

2). Administrators of public vocational colleges in Local Higher Vocational Colleges In Nanyang City, China. Should encourage subordinates without Sticking to old ways of working Bring new technology For example, in academic work, a database management program (RMS) should be used in organizing teaching and learning at the college.

3). Executives should have access to needs The needs of each subordinate by opening their minds to learning new things and accepting the abilities of their co-workers, which will make it easier for administrators to access personnel in the college without conflicts between superiors and subordinates.

2. Policy Recommendations

1).Vocational education supervisory department should raise awareness of the development of Principals' Leadership in Local Higher Vocational Colleges In Nanyang City, China.This should be set as an important policy.

2).The success factors that affect the transformational leadership of college administrators should be studied. Public vocational education in Local Higher Vocational Colleges In Nanyang City, China.

3). The relationship between administrators' leadership and teachers' satisfaction with leadership should be studied. Changes in vocational college administrators in Local Higher Vocational Colleges In Nanyang City, China.

4). Government vocational education administrators in Local Higher Vocational Colleges In Nanyang City, China.

3. Practical Recommendations

1) The next step should be to study the development of leadership indicators that reflect the presidents of higher vocational colleges under the guidance of the "double high Plan".

2) Personality charm of the presidents of higher vocational colleges should be developed as well as moral leadership, for effective communication and coordination ability and the ability to integrate resources inside and outside the school.

3) Professional standards for presidents of higher vocational colleges should be conducted. This can create a body of knowledge for further use and research in the development of Principals' Leadership in Local Higher Vocational Colleges at a higher level.

4) The targeted research on the leadership evaluation system of the president of local higher vocational colleges which is suitable for China's national conditions is also the direction that needs to be further explored in the future.

5) On the basis of existing research, further empirical research can be conducted. For example, the sampling method of research samples can be improved and stratified sampling method can be adopted; It can also increase the number of interviews, so as to further improve the universality of research conclusions.

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