THE DEVELOPMENT OF TRAINING PROGRAM TO ENHANCE LEADERSHIP PRACTICES OF STUDENT LEADERS AT NORMAL UNIVERSITIES IN HEBEI PROVINCE, CHINA

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This research aimed to develop a training program to enhance student leadership practices in students in normal universities in Hebei, China. The study utilized an exploratory mixed-methods approach integrating qualitative, quantitative, and experimental methods. A total of 897 student leaders from four normal universities in Hebei participated in the study. Factors related to student leadership development in the context of China were synthesized from the literature. Levels of leadership were measured and found overall to be at the moderate level. A significant regression equation was found $F(7,661) = 31.04, p<.05$, with an $R^2$ of .106. Three were significant predictors of leadership practices: Mentorship and Support, Peer Collaboration, and Supportive Environment. From the regression equation obtained, these factors explained approximately 31% of the variation in the level of leadership practices. The validity of the training program was confirmed through implementation and statistical analysis. Sixty students participated in the training program. A pre-test questionnaire was distributed to both groups and respectively and analysis of data revealed that there was no significant difference between the means of the control group and experimental group. Subsequently, the experimental group participated in the developed training program. A paired samples $t$-test was done to compare the means pre-and post-training. The results of
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the t-test demonstrated that the leadership training program was effective in enhancing the leadership practices.

Keywords: student leadership development; student leaders; students behavior

Introduction

Leadership is a critical skill in today's complex society, providing guidance, vision, and direction. Effective leaders can navigate uncertainty, inspire others, and make informed decisions. The cultivation of student leadership is particularly important, as it prepares young people for future roles and responsibilities (Deal & Yarborough, 2020).

Charismatic and creative leaders are highly desired, as they display strong leadership competencies, charisma, and creativity (Dugan, 2011; Hentrup, 2017; Akbari et al., 2021), all crucial for effective leadership.

Leadership development during the student phase is a crucial period for personal growth and skill development (Xu et al., 2019), and promoting collaboration, teamwork, civic and social awareness (Kouzes & Posner, 2018). Leadership development at this stage helps students to discover their strengths, values, and areas of interest, and it helps students to develop a sense of purpose. By investing in student leadership, educational institutions and communities can foster future responsible and effective leaders.

In the United States, leadership training has been effectively used in undergraduate education to develop future leaders (Cress et al., 2001; Eich, 2008; Grunwell, 2015). These initiatives have transformed student leadership development from leadership education to leadership learning.

However, according to Qian (2017), leadership education and leadership research are still in the development stage in China. Notwithstanding, leadership education for college students is becoming more common in major Chinese universities (Liu & Zhang, 2022). Institutions like Tsinghua University and Peking University have introduced leadership courses and extracurricular activities to foster student leadership (Weng, 2007).

According to Yu & Mhunpiew (2022), as most universities in China are public universities, there needs to be more government financial support to support leadership education programs and reform. This uneven distribution of financial resources has led to uneven student leadership development in different areas of the country. In addition to this, lack of clear training objectives, ineffective training methods and trainers, and the need for more comprehensive training combine to make student leadership training a topic that should be addressed. The objective of this study was to develop a training program to enhance student leadership at normal universities in Hebei Province, China.

Improving student leadership will enable graduates to extend their leadership skills and perspectives to their future careers in education, benefiting future generations of students (Anderson, 2017).

Research objectives

The following research objectives guided this study:

1. To explore the factors that affect student leadership development in higher education.
2. To find the level of current leadership practices and the factors those affect the development of student leaders at normal universities in Hebei, China.

3. To develop a proposed training program for the development of leadership practices in student leaders at normal universities in Hebei, China.

4. To validate the proposed training program for the development of leadership practices in student leaders at normal universities in Hebei, China.

**Literature Review**

**Theoretical framework**

The major theories that were used to support this research provided the desired student leadership practices, the theoretical basis for student leadership development through involvement in university activities, and a theory on which to base the development of the training program. The theories included Kouzes & Posner’s (2017) “Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership”, Astin’s (1984) “Theory of Student Involvement”, and Mezirow's (1997) “Transformative Learning Theory”.

The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership is a set of fundamental leadership behaviors and actions that Kouzes & Posner (2017) in the latest version of their book entitled, “The Leadership Challenge”.

Kouzes & Posner (2013) also had a student version of the five practices that was adapted from their original framework that was proposed for students.

The five practices include:

- **Modeling the Way**. This practice involves the leader setting an example through their personal actions by demonstrating integrity. Leaders clarify their values and beliefs, align their actions with those values, and establish principles that guide their behavior. By modeling the way, leaders inspire trust and credibility, which makes it easier for others to follow their example.

- **Challenging the Process**. This practice encourages leaders to challenge the status quo by seeking innovative solutions and to continuously improve. Leaders encourage their teams to take risks, learn from their mistakes, and try out new ideas. By creating an environment that values innovation and encourages learning, leaders foster a culture of creativity and growth.

- **Inspiring a Shared Vision**. Leaders envision an exciting and compelling future that inspires and motivates others. Leaders communicate this vision with their followers passionately. By involving others, they motivate and appeal to their aspirations and leaders foster commitment, enthusiasm, and alignment towards shared goals.

- **Enabling Others to Act**. Effective leaders empower others and create an atmosphere of collaboration and trust. They provide support, resources and opportunities for growth and development. By fostering teamwork, delegating authority, and building relationships, they enable others to make meaningful contributions and feel a sense of ownership.

- **Encouraging the Heart**. This practice involves recognizing and appreciating the contributions of others. Leaders express their appreciation and celebrate the achievements of others. They provide positive feedback, show gratitude, and acknowledge the efforts of others.
Theory of Student Involvement (Astin, 1984) is a widely recognized theory that explains the impact of student engagement and involvement on college student outcomes. The theory suggests that the inputs (which include the characteristics and background of the students), the environment (college experiences and interactions), and the outcomes (student development and achievement) are interconnected and influence each other.

When students actively participate in their college or university's academic, social, and extracurricular activities, they will develop and have positive educational outcomes. The quantity and quality of their involvement also matter. Higher levels of involvement lead to positive educational outcomes.

According to Astin, there are mainly two types of outcomes: learning and development outcomes (those related to academic achievement, critical thinking skills, personal growth, and self-confidence) and attainment and retention outcomes (those related to the completion of the college degree and retention of students in the college).

Astin’s theory is widely used in higher education research and highlights the importance of creating engaging and inclusive environments for students to support their success.

Transformative Learning Theory (Mezirow, 1997) is related to adult education and learning. It focuses on the process of personal transformation and cognitive restructuring individuals undergo when they learn something new. Transformative learning theory was used as the framework in which to base the training program focus and implementation.

The major concepts of the theory include the following:

- Meaning Perspective—individuals possess a set of assumptions, beliefs, and values. These form their perspectives on how they view the world. These meanings are typically acquired through socialization and can be limiting or transforming.
- Disorienting Dilemma—transformative learning often begins with a disorienting dilemma, a situation or experience that challenges their existing meaning. It creates a sense of cognitive dissonance.
- Critical reflection involves the individual examining their own beliefs and assumptions considering the disorienting dilemma. When individuals critically analyze their beliefs, they can identify inconsistencies and find new or alternative ways of thinking.
- Perspective Transformation occurs when individuals revise their meaning perspectives, leading to significant changes in their beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors.
- Rational Discourse—engaging with others through discourse and dialogue is important during the transformative learning process. By exchanging ideas, perspectives, individuals can refine their own beliefs and apply them to real-world situations.
- Autonomy and Empowerment—transformative learning fosters greater autonomy and empowerment by letting individuals examine their assumptions and gain the capability to make informed decisions, become agents of change and engage actively in shaping their own lives.

**Student Leadership Development**

Colleges and universities are the cradles of cultivating talents, and college students are the core and new force of future social construction. Specifically, college student leaders are an excellent group of college students. Their workability directly affects the typical implementation of education, management, and service activities.

Among them, leadership is an essential ability for practical work.
In the past 40 years, the research on college students' leadership abroad has made significant progress, and the research on curriculum development and training mode has become more complete (Liu & Zhang, 2022).

Watt (2003) believed that developing leadership training courses for college students needs to consider five links: understanding leadership, learning level, learning objectives, leadership learning philosophy, and effect evaluation.

Morrisette & Schraeder (2010) explored leadership skills training methods such as combining theory and practice and participatory teaching methods. They believed that first; learners need to learn leadership theory knowledge. In addition, students should participate in Community activities, applying theory to practice; role-playing and other participatory teaching methods are also effective leadership skill training methods (Barbaroux, 2022).

According to Liu & Zhang (2022), the research related to leadership of Chinese college students has also attracted attention and has made rapid progress in the past 15 years. The research can be broadly divided into three areas.

Firstly, research on leadership education for foreign college students, such as Tao's (2011) "Historical Review of Leadership Education for American College Students", shows the historical motivation for the development of American college students' leadership; Fang (2012) made a research on the background, current situation and impact of the rise of leadership education for American college students, and summarized the current situation, methods and effects of leadership education for college students; Bai (2013) published "American College Students Based on the Social Change Model. Leadership Education Research" introduces the relationship between leadership and social change and illustrates the importance of leadership and two approaches to leadership development: classroom learning and extracurricular activities.

The second area is related to the localization theory of leadership training content, methods, approaches, and value orientation.

For example, Xi (2012) published Strategic Thinking on Leadership Education for Chinese College Students. Put the importance of college students' leadership education on the strategic level and conducted comprehensive strategic research on the problems of college students' leadership training in China; Weng (2013) published "The Theoretical Basis and Application Strategies of Student Leadership Training" on leadership. The theoretical basis is explained and investigated, and the leadership education of Chinese college students needs to be revised.

Research shows that many college students in China have never received any leadership education, and only a few have. Lectures are given priority with less time and are not systematic; only a minimal number of people have received outdoor training, participated in community practice and other experiential training; It discusses leadership education, the cultivation and practice of socialist core values education, and the relationship before ideological and political education (Zhang, 2015).

The third area is related to the use empirical methods to conduct localized research on the current situation, ability structure, influencing factors, and curriculum construction of college students' leadership.

For example, Weng (2011) "Current Situation and Approaches of College Students' Leadership Development" published in 2011 investigated the leadership skills most needed by college students (resilience, endurance, ability to communicate with others, desire to lead others, awareness and ability to cooperate with others, Skills to Motivate Others) and discuss
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leadership development approaches: establish a campus culture for leadership development, set up a leadership education program, and integrate leadership education into the standard degree curriculum system; Tao (2011) published "Some Thoughts on the research and practice of Chinese College Students' leadership", which elaborates on the current situation of Chinese College Students' leadership education and the problems faced in the research and practice of college students' leadership education (relative separation of research and practice, lack of theoretical guidance for appropriate educational practice); Liang (2015) conducted the research on influencing factors and training models of college students' leadership to described the necessity of college leadership training program; Li (2016) published "Higher vocational college student leadership level characteristics and thinking" and "Higher vocational college student leadership level differences and improvement of research" also conducted the corresponding research on the status quo, characteristics and improvement of higher vocational college student leadership (Li, 2016).

Conceptual Framework

The figure below shows the conceptual framework of the study.

Figure 1 - Conceptual Framework of the Study
(compiled by co-authors)
Research methods

This study aimed to develop a proposed training program for the development of leadership practices in student leaders at normal universities in Hebei, China. The study utilized an exploratory mixed-methods approach integrating qualitative, quantitative, and experimental methods over a one-year study. The process involved content analysis to determine factors influencing student leadership development in higher education and a questionnaire to gauge current leadership practices in Hebei Province's Normal Universities. Once the factors were determined, question items were developed for the instrument.

The instrument was evaluated by experts for content validity and tested for reliability in a pilot test of 30 students. Statistical analysis was used to determine descriptive statistics and regression analysis was used to determine significant factors.

Finally, a training program was developed from the previous findings and implemented and validated. The efficacy of the program was assessed via pre- and post-test measurements on an experimental student group who had undergone the training program.

The study population was student leaders (identified as students who had leadership positions in various student groups and were responsible for certain management duties) from four universities in Hebei. Tab. 1 shows the population and sample for the study.

A total of 901 surveys were distributed and 897 responses were collected.

Table 1 - Population and sample of the study
(compiled by co-authors)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Universities Included in the Study</th>
<th>Student Leaders</th>
<th>Sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tangshan Normal University</td>
<td>1,521</td>
<td>306</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hebei Normal University</td>
<td>1,827</td>
<td>317</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cangzhou Normal University</td>
<td>1,024</td>
<td>278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4,372</td>
<td>901</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Findings

Research Objective One. Seven factors related to leadership development in the context of China were synthesized from the literature, which included sources from both Western and Chinese academic literature related to student leadership development. Findings from the synthesis of the literature and content analysis revealed the following factors affecting student leadership development: Opportunities for Leadership Roles, Mentorship and Support, Leadership Training, Peer Collaboration, Opportunities for Reflection, Supportive Environment, and a Sense of Purpose.

Research Objective Two. For the second objective, the LPI (Leadership Practices Inventory) by Kouzes & Posner (2021) was used to measure the level of leadership practices of the student leaders. The results showed that "Enable Others to Act" scored the lowest at 2.30.

The other five practices scored from highest to lowest were "Model the Way" at 3.91, "Challenge the Process" at 3.73, "Encourage the Heart" at 2.89, "Inspire a Shared Vision" at 2.62, and "Enable Others to Act" at 2.30. According to the interpretation of Likert scale
scores, only two practices, "Model the way" and "Challenge the process," were rated as high, with scores falling between 3.51 - 4.50.

Tab. 2 shows the levels of leadership for the sample of student leaders.

Table 2 - Summary of Leadership Levels (n=897)
(compiled by co-authors)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership practices</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Interpretation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Model the Way</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Inspire a Shared Vision</td>
<td>2.62</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Challenge the Process</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Enable Others to Act</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Encourage the Heart</td>
<td>2.89</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>.782</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The level of factors affecting development of student leadership was also obtained by the instrument. Overall, the student’s perceptions of the factors that affect leadership development were high. The highest factor perceived was *Opportunities for Leadership Roles*, which received a mean of 4.03.

The other means obtained and ranked from highest to lowest were *Mentorship and Support* (3.97), *Sense of Purpose* (3.86), *Leadership Training* (3.77), and *Peer Collaboration* (3.71). *Opportunities for Reflection* (3.67) and *Supportive Environment* (3.65).

As for the standard deviation, it ranges from 0.52 to.78. The overall standard deviation is 0.71, which is less than 1/3 of the overall mean and indicates that the data points are relatively close to the mean and there was little dispersion of the data.

Tab. 3 shows the reported levels.

Table 3 - Level of factors affecting the development of student leadership (n=897)
(compiled by co-authors)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor Levels</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Interpretation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities for leadership roles</td>
<td>4.03</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentorship and support</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership training</td>
<td>3.77</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer collaboration</td>
<td>3.71</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities for Reflection</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supportive environment</td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of purpose</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>.71</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This study examined the leadership practices among students, and the results showed that "Enable Others to Act" scored the lowest at 2.30. The other five practices scored from highest to lowest were "Model the Way" at 3.91, "Challenge the Process" at 3.73, "Encourage the Heart" at 2.89, "Inspire a Shared Vision" at 2.62, and "Enable Others to Act" at 2.30. According to the interpretation of Likert scale scores, only two practices, "Model the way" and "Challenge the process," were rated as high, with scores falling between 3.51 - 4.50.
However, the remaining practices still had a significant gap between them and the highest score, indicating considerable room for improvement in these practices.

Research Objective Three. To develop the training program, it was necessary to incorporate the data from all previous research objectives and analyze for significant factors. Therefore, a regression analysis was conducted on each of the factors related to leadership development and level of leadership practices. Each of the factors related to leadership development were the independent variables (IV) and the level of leadership practices was the dependent variable (DV). A multiple linear regression analysis was done to find the significant factors.

A significant regression equation was found $F (7,661) = 31.04, p<.05$, with an $R^2$ of .106. Three were significant predictors of leadership practices: Mentorship and Support, Peer Collaboration, and Supportive Environment. From the regression equation obtained, these factors explain approximately 31% of the variation in the level of leadership practices.

Table 4 - Results of the multiple regression analysis (n=897)
(compiled by co-authors)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model (constant)</th>
<th>Coefficientsa</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>unstandardized</td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.314</td>
<td>46.234</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities for leadership roles</td>
<td>.077</td>
<td>.086</td>
<td>1.604</td>
<td>.109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentorship and support</td>
<td>.061</td>
<td>.130</td>
<td>2.471</td>
<td>.013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership training</td>
<td>.067</td>
<td>.93</td>
<td>1.390</td>
<td>.810</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer collaboration</td>
<td>.069</td>
<td>.124</td>
<td>2.289</td>
<td>.029</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities for reflection</td>
<td>.071</td>
<td>.68</td>
<td>2.276</td>
<td>.782</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supportive environment</td>
<td>.069</td>
<td>.124</td>
<td>2.189</td>
<td>.029</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of purpose</td>
<td>.074</td>
<td>.093</td>
<td>1.553</td>
<td>.121</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Dependent Variable: Level of leadership practices
b. Predictors: Opportunities for leadership roles, Mentorship and Support, Leadership Training, Peer Collaboration, Opportunities for Reflection, Supportive Environment, Sense of Purpose

A training program to enhance leadership practices was developed based on the statistical findings that identified the leadership practices levels. The training needs were identified through assessing leadership practices levels, with an emphasis on "Enabling Others to Act" due to its low score. Key factors, such as mentorship and support, peer collaboration, and a supportive environment, were integrated into the program.

The training program was structured around Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory. Learning goals were defined around the five exemplary practices: Model the Way, Challenge the Process, Inspire a Shared Vision, Encourage the Heart, and Enable Others to Act. The program also facilitated dialogue among students, provided diverse perspectives, and integrated reflection.

Prior knowledge was assessed, thought-provoking scenarios were presented to challenge beliefs, and ongoing support was offered through resources and mentoring. The training program was divided into theoretical training, practical training, and assessment and
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feedback, providing a comprehensive and systematic approach to leadership skills development. This program's design aimed to offer an inclusive, transformative learning experience that could effectively enhance leadership practices among student leaders.

Research Objective Four. The final objective of the study was to implement the training program. The training program was implemented at Hengshui Normal University in Hebei Province. This university was selected for implementation because it has a unique college which set up activities and associations especially for cultivating student leadership. Furthermore, with the permission of the student affairs management department, and assistance of the administrators, staff, and students at the university, ran the training program's implementation for one month.

The process was broken down into the following three steps: Pre-test, implementation of the program and post-test. Sixty student leaders took part in the training. Statistical analysis found that the pre and post means were significantly different. Table 5 shows the results of the t-test before and after the training.

Table 5 - Paired samples statistics of leadership practice (n=60)
(compiled by co-authors)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Pre-test</th>
<th>Post-test</th>
<th>Std. Deviations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inspire a Shared Vision</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenge the Process</td>
<td>2.54</td>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enable Others to Act</td>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>4.23</td>
<td>.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourage the Heart</td>
<td>2.69</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>.83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the above table, a comparison of the pre-and post-test data of students for Inspire a Shared Vision by the paired-samples t-test revealed that the p-value was 0.000, which was less than 0.01, indicating that students' leadership practices after the training differed from those before the training at the 0.01 level of significance; further comparison of the means revealed that students scored higher on Inspire a Shared Vision after the training than before.

The statistically significant t-test results revealed a substantial improvement in the leadership practices. The training program’s approach to leadership skills development, which was combined with the theory and learning methods contributed to the outcomes. These results validate the training program’s effectiveness and its potential to be utilized in further groups of student leaders in Hebei to increase their leadership skills.

Conclusion and discussion

For the first objective, findings from the synthesis of the literature and quantitative content analysis revealed that the following factors affect student leadership development in the research context.
They were Opportunities for Leadership Roles, Mentorship and Support, Leadership Training, Peer Collaboration, Opportunities for Reflection, Supportive Environment, and a Sense of Purpose. For the second objective, the levels of current leadership practices measured by Kouzes & Posner’s (2006) Five Leadership Practices Inventory were moderate. The practices of Model the Way and Challenge the Process were found to be at a high level. The practices of Inspire a Shared Vision and Encourage the Heart were moderate. The practice of Enable Others to Act was found to be a low level.

For the third objective, to develop a proposed training program, the findings from all previous objectives and statistical analysis to reveal significant findings were summarized. The significant findings were used to develop a training program based on transformative learning principles.

For the fourth objective, the training program was implemented. The students were divided into control and experimental groups and given pre-tests to measure their level of leadership practices. These pre-training levels were statistically analyzed and found not to be significantly different. The training program was implemented for the experimental group for one month.

Upon conclusion of the training program, a post-test was given to measure students’ levels of leadership practices. A statistical analysis found that pre-training levels and post-training levels were significantly different, thereby statistically validating the effectiveness of the training program.

This research aimed to improve student leadership practices by developing a training program based on the Five Exemplary Practices of Leadership (Kouzes & Posner, 2006). Leadership development programs are essential for cultivating essential leadership skills, fostering personal growth, promoting collaboration and social responsibility, and for student preparation for career success (Seemiller & Murray, 2020; Komives, 2011).

The Five Exemplary Practices of Leadership have been used in various leadership education contexts. It has been used in the context of entrepreneurship education in Mexico (Diaz et al., 2019). It has been used in leadership studies of school principals and teachers (Emmanuel & Valley, 2022; Bryant, 2017).

The practical and beneficial aspects of The Five Exemplary Practices of Leadership have been validated and verified by Kouzes & Posner in various settings.

Thus, the decision to utilize these specific leadership practices is based on previous academic research and successful validation of these leadership practices.

The results of this study provided insights into the factors that contribute to student leadership development in higher education institutions, particularly at Tangshan Normal University in Hebei Province, China. The factors contributing to leadership development in this study have also been verified in other academic literature.

Opportunities for Leadership Roles and Mentorship and Support have been defined in this study as the available opportunities for students to take on leadership roles and having others, such as faculty, administrators, and other experienced student leaders to mentor and show the way. The opportunity to mentor others is an important aspect of leadership development. In a study of peer mentoring experiences where first-generation college students mentored other first-generation college students, the peer mentors were able to develop their leadership practices by participating in this program (Hirsch et al., 2021).

Student leadership capacity is influenced by the mentorship process by either faculty, staff, employer, or peer.
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This was confirmed in a study by Campbell et al., (2012). The positive impact of mentorship programs was also confirmed in other studies.

Walters & Kanak (2016). A first-year honors program was evaluated for effectiveness and found that when senior students were asked to mentor and provide peer guidance to incoming freshmen, they could grow and increase their leadership capabilities.

Leadership training can also enhance college student leadership capacity. As training often includes experiential learning activities such as workshops, simulations, and real-life scenarios, students can put their skills to practice and develop their leadership in a supportive environment. Leadership training can also stress such characteristics as empathy and emotional intelligence.

A study of medical students found that leadership training was beneficial for medical students and recommended to be offered throughout the curriculum (Maddalena, 2016). Leadership development initiatives, which often include aspects of specific training, have also been shown to improve students’ leadership capabilities (Idso et al, 2019; Dorasamy, 2014). Self-reflection is an activity that encourages students to think introspectively and be self-aware. It helps them to gain better insight into their behaviors. Concerning leadership development, self-reflection has been shown to play a role in enhancing leadership skills. In their literature analysis, Wu & Crocco (2019) found that critical reflection was essential to leadership development, but measuring self-reflection needed to be more well-established.

According to researchers, leadership study in China is still in the development stage, and many areas still need to be fully developed with distinct concepts of leadership (Qian et al., 2017, Li, 2016; Weng & Yan, 2018). The low levels of leadership practices reported by students in this context may demonstrate the lack of knowledge of leadership, especially transformational leadership.

This study’s findings may indicate the need to understand transformational leadership in the Chinese context further, as supported by a meta-analysis conducted by Liu (2018). Liu studied 233 researchers from 2005 to 2015 related to transformational leadership in Chinese. Findings from the meta-analysis showed that more research on transformational leadership needs to be conducted to fully understand its antecedents and causes.

The training model developed in this study was intended to enhance transformational leadership practices in student leaders in the Chinese context. In universities, fostering student leadership is very important as it prepares future leaders of the 21st century by preparing them for successful careers and shapes them to become responsible citizens.

By implementing a training model, universities can benefit both the students and the whole university community. The developed training model’s components were identified from the research findings. Subsequently, the training methods were based on learning as indicated by transformative learning theory.

The effectiveness of training models has been indicated by research as students who have participated in short-term training programs have shown an increase in leadership capacities (Rosch & Caza, 2012).

Similarly, the use of training programs is one of the types of leadership-enhancing activities that are widely used in universities (Engbers, 2006). Universities can create a comprehensive environment in the university by providing leadership opportunities in the form of training, education, and leadership development. According to Engbers, who listed topics and training methods for leadership development, such as personal goal setting and
vision development, the training program developed from this research also had similar components.

**Recommendations**

The following recommendations are made based on the findings of this research and the training program developed. For student affairs committees in the context of universities in China, encouraging student leadership is very important because it prepares students for success in the future. By implementing this training model, the committee can benefit both students and the whole university. It is recommended to provide regular sessions of the training program for students across different academic programs. An essential aspect of the training model should be to include mentorship and peer support and training.

By establishing components of the training program where experiences students can help others, this not only develops leadership in the less experienced students but promotes leadership in the experienced students also. Additionally, the student affairs committee can also supplement the training program with other types of leadership activities such as service learning or by integrating leadership into the curriculum.

This will lead to a more comprehensive perspective of leadership development. It is also recommended that the student affairs committee of the normal universities practice continuous assessment and improvement to ensure the effectiveness of the training model. This can be done by collecting feedback from the students and tracking their progress.

Students and student leaders should take advantage of this training program by actively engaging and participating in the program, that is, they should make the most of these opportunities. The benefits of leadership training should be promoted to students.

It is recommended for student leaders to have these mindsets and participatory perspectives:

1) Be open and willing by approaching the training program with an open mind and willingness to learn and grow,

2). Active participation by willingly attending the training,

3). Seeking mentorship that is offered by the training program or mentors,

4). Applying the knowledge by putting the skills learned into practice,

5) Engaging in self-reflection to assess one’s progress and growth as a leader,

6). Collaborating with peers and interacting with other participants in the training program,

7). Be committed to continuous learning and development. By having these mindsets, students can develop essential leadership skills, gain confidence, and become effective leaders who can make a positive impact.

For future researchers, the results of this study hope to provide insight into the benefits and effectiveness of leadership training programs. Future researchers may look at the strengths and weaknesses in the design of the training program or methodology of the research to identify gaps and improve the program. Future researchers may also be interested in developing their own training models based on different leadership practices than the ones in this study or develop models that are specific to their contexts.

Finally, future researchers may be interested in looking at the long-term impacts of the training model to see if leadership practices attained by the training program have long-term effects.
The training program developed in this study has practical implications for use by Student Affairs Committees at normal universities in Hebei Province. The training program intended to provide a comprehensive and systematic approach to leadership development for student leaders.

By adopting the training program, normal universities can encourage leadership development by encouraging student engagement and regular participation in the training program to create student leaders who can become influential leaders in Hebei who can positively impact the province and surrounding communities.

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF TRAINING PROGRAM TO


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