

The 21st century leadership components for administrators of universities in Taian City under Shandong Province

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to propose guidelines for developing the 21st-century leadership components for university administrators in Taian City, Shandong Province, China. A qualitative approach was used, including document analysis and a focus group discussion with nine purposively selected administrators from Shandong Agricultural University and Taishan University. Data were analyzed through content analysis and thematic synthesis. The findings identified three major leadership components: leadership skills, leadership styles, and leadership behaviors. Leadership skills included social skills, teamwork, innovation, critical thinking, lifelong learning, strategic thinking, cross-cultural adaptability, self-management, decision-making, and digital competency. Leadership styles included autocratic, democratic, laissez-faire, situational, paternalistic, transactional, and transformational leadership. Leadership behaviors included goal setting and tracking, employee motivation, teamwork, decision-making, and problem-solving. In total, 49 development guidelines were proposed to strengthen leadership competencies through collaboration among government agencies, universities, society, and administrators. The guidelines provide a practical framework for enhancing leadership capacity and supporting the modernization and sustainable development of higher education institutions in China.

KEYWORDS: 21st-century leadership, University administrators, Leadership development, Higher education, Shandong Province

Introduction

The rapid transformation of higher education in the 21st century has created unprecedented challenges and opportunities for university administrators. Globalization, digital transformation, international competition, technological innovation, and the increasing demand for high-quality education have significantly

changed the role of university leaders. Higher education institutions are no longer responsible only for teaching and research but are also expected to drive innovation, strengthen international collaboration, respond to societal needs, and contribute to sustainable national development. As a result, university administrators must possess leadership competencies that

enable them to navigate complex and rapidly changing environments.

The concept of 21st-century leadership emphasizes the ability of leaders to adapt to change, promote innovation, manage diversity, encourage collaboration, utilize digital technologies, and develop organizational sustainability. Contemporary leadership studies have highlighted the importance of communication skills, teamwork, strategic thinking, innovation, critical thinking, and digital competence as essential leadership capabilities in modern organizations (Katz, 1955; Adair, 2005; Ehlers, 2020). Furthermore, leadership effectiveness is influenced not only by leadership skills but also by leadership styles and leadership behaviors that shape organizational culture and performance (Burns, 1985; Witt & Stahl, 2016; Noorderhaven et al., 2016).

In China, higher education has undergone substantial reform and expansion during the past decades. The Chinese Ministry of Education has continuously emphasized the importance of strengthening leadership capacity among university administrators. The Interim Measures for the Management of University Leaders issued by the Ministry of Education in 2017 stated that university leaders should possess strategic vision, educational expertise, management capability, moral integrity, and the ability to guide institutional development in a rapidly changing society. These requirements reflect the growing expectation that university administrators must demonstrate competencies beyond traditional administrative management.

As an important educational center in Shandong Province, Taian City is home to several higher education institutions that play a significant role in regional

development and talent cultivation. However, the changing higher education landscape requires university administrators to respond effectively to challenges such as digital transformation, internationalization, organizational innovation, stakeholder expectations, and increasing competition among universities. Previous observations indicate that although many university administrators possess strong academic qualifications and professional expertise, there remains a need to strengthen leadership competencies that support strategic management, innovation, organizational development, and effective decision-making.

Previous studies have examined various aspects of leadership in educational organizations, including transformational leadership (Burns, 1985), team-building and collaborative leadership (Noorderhaven et al., 2016), innovation-oriented leadership (Çekmecelioğlu & Özbağ, 2016), digital-age leadership (Su & Liu, 2022), future skills for educational leaders (Ehlers, 2020), and inclusive leadership (van Knippenberg & van Ginkel, 2022). While these studies provide valuable insights into leadership theories and practices, most focus on specific leadership styles, leadership characteristics, or leadership behaviors. Limited research has attempted to develop a comprehensive framework that integrates leadership skills, leadership styles, and leadership behaviors specifically for university administrators within the context of Chinese higher education.

Furthermore, there is a lack of empirical studies focusing on university administrators in Taian City under Shandong Province. The unique social, educational, and policy contexts of the region may require leadership

competencies that differ from those identified in other settings. Therefore, a systematic investigation is needed to identify the essential components of 21st-century leadership and develop practical guidelines that can support leadership development among university administrators in the region.

The findings of this study are expected to contribute both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, the study expands the understanding of 21st-century leadership in higher education by integrating leadership skills, leadership styles, and leadership behaviors into a comprehensive framework. Practically, the proposed leadership development guidelines can assist government agencies, universities, and university administrators in designing leadership development programs, strengthening institutional effectiveness, enhancing organizational competitiveness, and supporting the modernization of higher education in Taian City and other regions of China.

Purposes

To propose guidelines for the 21st century leadership components development for administrators of university in Taian City under Shandong Province.

Literature review

1. Concept of 21st- Century Leadership

Leadership in the 21st century has evolved from traditional command- and-control approaches to more adaptive, collaborative, and innovation- oriented practices. Contemporary leaders are expected to respond effectively to rapid technological changes, globalization, digital transformation, workforce diversity,

and increasing organizational complexity. Therefore, leadership is no longer limited to directing organizational activities but involves inspiring people, promoting innovation, facilitating collaboration, and creating sustainable organizational development.

According to Ehlers (2020), future-oriented leaders must possess a broad range of competencies, including lifelong learning, adaptability, digital literacy, critical thinking, and innovation capabilities. Similarly, Schüller et al. (2019) emphasized that digital competence and data literacy have become essential skills for leaders in modern organizations. In higher education institutions, university administrators are required to lead organizational transformation while simultaneously maintaining academic excellence and institutional competitiveness.

2. Leadership Skills in the 21st Century

Leadership skills refer to the capabilities that enable leaders to effectively perform managerial functions and achieve organizational goals. Katz (1955) proposed that effective administrators require a combination of technical, human, and conceptual skills. Although developed several decades ago, Katz's framework remains highly relevant in explaining the competencies needed by contemporary leaders.

Adair (2005) further argued that effective leadership requires the ability to balance task achievement, team maintenance, and individual development. In educational organizations, leadership skills involve communication, teamwork, decision- making, strategic thinking, and problem-solving abilities.

Innovation has become another critical leadership competency. Çekmecelioğlu and Özbağ (2016) found that leadership significantly influences creativity and innovation within organizations. Likewise, Driscoll (2022) suggested that innovative leaders are more capable of responding to environmental uncertainty and organizational change.

Strategic thinking is also considered a crucial competency for educational leaders. Fulmer et al. (2000) emphasized that leaders should possess the ability to formulate long-term visions, anticipate future challenges, and guide organizations toward sustainable success. Petriglieri and Peshkam (2022) similarly highlighted the importance of reflective learning and strategic adaptation in leadership development.

In addition, contemporary leaders must demonstrate strong interpersonal and teamwork capabilities. Knippenberg and van Ginkel (2022) argued that inclusive leadership enhances collaboration and organizational effectiveness in diverse work environments. Gerpott et al. (2019) also found that effective communication and interaction among team members contribute significantly to leadership emergence and team performance.

3. Leadership Styles

Leadership style refers to the pattern of behaviors leaders use when interacting with followers and influencing organizational performance. Different leadership styles may be appropriate under different organizational circumstances.

Transformational leadership is one of the most influential leadership theories in modern organizations. Burns (1985) described transformational leaders as individuals who inspire followers through vision, motivation, and personal

development. Such leaders encourage innovation, organizational commitment, and continuous improvement.

Situational leadership emphasizes the leader's ability to adjust leadership approaches according to the readiness and competence of followers. Garavan (2016) suggested that leadership effectiveness depends largely on the alignment between leadership behaviors and situational requirements.

Democratic leadership encourages participation, shared decision-making, and open communication among organizational members. Noorderhaven et al. (2016) reported that collaborative leadership enhances team effectiveness and project success.

Paternalistic leadership, which is widely observed in many Asian contexts, emphasizes care, guidance, and moral responsibility toward followers. Silin (1976) and Redding (1990) argued that paternalistic leadership strengthens trust, loyalty, and organizational harmony.

Transactional leadership focuses on performance management through rewards, accountability, and clearly defined expectations. In contrast, laissez-faire leadership provides followers with greater autonomy and independence while maintaining supportive supervision.

4. Leadership Behaviors

Leadership behavior refers to the observable actions and practices demonstrated by leaders when managing organizational activities and interacting with employees. Effective leadership behavior directly influences employee motivation, organizational commitment, and institutional performance.

Adair (2005) emphasized that leaders must demonstrate behaviors that support goal achievement, team cohesion,

and individual growth. Similarly, Singfield (2020) highlighted the importance of goal setting and performance monitoring in achieving organizational transformation.

Motivating employees is another critical leadership behavior. Obama (2014) suggested that leaders should inspire individuals to contribute their best efforts by creating meaningful purposes and opportunities for development. Effective leaders also provide recognition, support, and encouragement to improve employee engagement.

Decision-making and problem-solving behaviors are essential in higher education administration. Witt and Stahl (2016) argued that responsible leaders should consider multiple stakeholder perspectives when making decisions. Huang Meng (2015) and Megheirkouni (2020) further emphasized that effective problem-solving behaviors contribute to organizational resilience and sustainable development.

Team-building behavior also plays a significant role in leadership effectiveness. According to Xiong et al. (2011) and Shen (2022), leaders who foster collaboration, trust, and communication are more successful in developing high-performing organizational teams.

Research Process

Phase 1: Document Analysis. Relevant literature, theories, policy documents, books, academic journals, and previous studies related to leadership and higher education administration were reviewed and analyzed using content analysis. The purpose of this phase was to identify the essential components of 21st-century leadership for university administrators and to develop a preliminary framework of leadership components.

Phase 2: Focus Group Discussion. The preliminary framework derived from the document analysis was further examined through a focus group discussion. The discussion aimed to validate the identified leadership components and generate practical guidelines for the development of 21st-century leadership among university administrators in Taian City under Shandong Province. The findings from both phases were synthesized to formulate the final leadership development framework.

Population and Key Informants

The population of the study consisted of approximately 730 administrators from Shandong Agricultural University and Taishan University in Taian City, Shandong Province, China. The key informants were selected using purposive sampling. A total of nine participants were invited to participate in the focus group discussion, including administrators and academic personnel with at least ten years of experience in higher education administration. The participants consisted of five representatives from Shandong Agricultural University and four representatives from Taishan University. Selection criteria included administrative position, professional experience, educational background, and recognized contributions to university management.

Research Instruments

Two research instruments were employed in this study including (1) Document Analysis Form. A document analysis form was developed to collect and synthesize information from academic literature, policy documents, books, and previous research related to leadership components and leadership development in

higher education. (2) Focus Group Discussion Guide. A semi-structured focus group discussion guide was developed based on the preliminary findings from the document analysis. The guide consisted of open- ended questions concerning leadership skills, leadership styles, leadership behaviors, and strategies for developing leadership competencies among university administrators.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using content analysis. Relevant concepts and themes were identified and synthesized from the document review, while focus group data were coded and categorized to identify key themes and recommendations. The findings from both phases were then integrated to develop the framework of 21st- century leadership components for university administrators in Taian City under Shandong Province.

Conclusion and Discussion

Conclusion

1. Literature Research

From review of literature, the researcher has studied variables from related concepts, principles, theories, and related research. Findings from the Literature Review

The review of related literature, theories, and previous studies revealed that 21st- century leadership for university administrators extends beyond traditional administrative functions and requires a comprehensive set of competencies that enable leaders to respond effectively to dynamic educational, technological, and societal changes.

The findings indicated that leadership in the 21st century can be categorized into three major dimensions:

leadership skills, leadership styles, and leadership behaviors.

The first dimension, leadership skills, represents the core competencies required by university administrators to manage educational institutions effectively. The literature emphasized the importance of communication skills, decision-making ability, teamwork, innovation capability, social competence, adaptability, strategic thinking, self- management, and professional knowledge. In addition, recent studies highlighted the growing importance of digital competence, lifelong learning, critical thinking, and cross- cultural adaptability as essential competencies for leaders operating in increasingly complex and globalized environments. These competencies enable university administrators to cope with organizational change, promote innovation, and enhance institutional competitiveness.

The second dimension, leadership styles, focuses on the approaches leaders use to influence and guide organizational members. The literature identified several leadership styles relevant to higher education administration, including situational leadership, democratic leadership, laissez- faire leadership, paternalistic leadership, transactional leadership, and transformational leadership. The review suggested that effective university administrators should be capable of applying different leadership styles according to organizational circumstances, staff characteristics, and institutional goals. Among these styles, transformational leadership was frequently emphasized as an important approach for inspiring organizational change, innovation, and long-term development.

The third dimension, leadership behaviors, refers to the observable actions

performed by leaders in managing organizations and interacting with employees. The literature consistently identified employee motivation, goal setting and monitoring, decision-making, problem-solving, and team building as critical leadership behaviors contributing to organizational effectiveness. These behaviors support the achievement of institutional objectives while fostering employee engagement, collaboration, and continuous improvement.

Furthermore, the literature review revealed that leadership development does not occur solely at the individual level. External factors, including government policies, technological support, organizational resources, and the broader social environment, also play significant roles in shaping leadership effectiveness. Therefore, leadership development should be viewed as a collaborative process involving universities, administrators, government agencies, and society.

Based on the synthesis of the literature and related studies, the researcher concluded that 21st-century leadership for university administrators is a multidimensional construct comprising leadership skills, leadership styles, and leadership behaviors. These three dimensions served as the conceptual framework for the subsequent focus group discussion and the development of leadership guidelines for university administrators in Taian City under Shandong Province.

2. Findings from Focus Group Discussion

The focus group discussion involved nine experts, including university administrators and academic personnel from Shandong Agricultural University and Taishan University, all of whom possessed

extensive experience in higher education administration. The discussion aimed to validate the preliminary leadership components identified from the literature review and to formulate practical guidelines for leadership development among university administrators in Taian City under Shandong Province.

The findings confirmed that 21st-century leadership for university administrators consists of three interrelated dimensions: leadership skills, leadership styles, and leadership behaviors. The experts agreed that these dimensions collectively contribute to leadership effectiveness and institutional development in the contemporary higher education environment.

Regarding leadership skills, the participants emphasized that university administrators should possess competencies beyond traditional management capabilities. The most frequently mentioned competencies included innovation, decision-making, digital literacy, communication, teamwork, strategic thinking, lifelong learning, cross-cultural adaptability, and self-management. The experts highlighted that digital transformation, international collaboration, and increasing organizational complexity require administrators to continuously update their knowledge and develop adaptive leadership capabilities.

With respect to leadership styles, the experts indicated that no single leadership style is sufficient for all situations. Effective university administrators should demonstrate flexibility in applying different leadership approaches according to organizational contexts and stakeholder needs. Democratic leadership, transformational leadership, and situational leadership were

identified as particularly important for promoting participation, organizational innovation, and institutional change. In addition, paternalistic leadership was considered relevant within the Chinese cultural context because it promotes trust, responsibility, and supportive relationships between leaders and staff.

Concerning leadership behaviors, the experts emphasized the importance of establishing clear organizational goals, encouraging participation in decision-making, motivating employees, fostering teamwork, and strengthening problem-solving capabilities. The participants agreed that effective leadership behaviors directly influence organizational performance, employee engagement, and institutional success.

The discussion also revealed that leadership development should not be viewed solely as an individual responsibility. Universities, government agencies, and society all play important roles in supporting leadership development through policy support, professional development opportunities, resource allocation, mentoring systems, and collaborative networks. Therefore, enhancing leadership effectiveness requires coordinated efforts among multiple stakeholders.

Based on the consensus of the experts, a total of 49 practical guidelines were synthesized and organized under the three dimensions of leadership skills, leadership styles, and leadership behaviors. These guidelines formed the foundation of the proposed framework for developing 21st-century leadership among university administrators in Taian City under Shandong Province.

Following the literature review and the focus group discussion, the findings

from both phases were synthesized to develop a comprehensive framework of 21st-century leadership for university administrators in Taian City under Shandong Province. The integrated analysis revealed that leadership development is a multidimensional process involving leadership competencies, leadership styles, leadership behaviors, organizational support, and external environmental factors. The key findings are presented as follows.

Development of the 21 st- Century

Leadership Framework for University Administrators

The synthesis of findings from the literature review and focus group discussion revealed that the development of 21 st-century leadership among university administrators is a multidimensional process involving leadership competencies, organizational support, and external environmental factors. The findings suggest that leadership effectiveness is not solely determined by individual capabilities but is influenced by the interaction between leadership skills, leadership styles, leadership behaviors, institutional resources, organizational policies, and external support systems.

The analysis indicated that leadership development begins with several key inputs, including leadership competencies, organizational resources, policy support, and external environmental factors. These inputs provide the foundation for strengthening the leadership capacity of university administrators. The literature review highlighted the importance of leadership skills, leadership styles, and leadership behaviors, while the focus group discussion further emphasized

the role of resource allocation, organizational support, and policy implementation in facilitating leadership development.

The process of leadership development involves three major mechanisms. First, university administrators need to continuously enhance their leadership skills, particularly in communication, teamwork, innovation, strategic thinking, decision-making, self-management, cross-cultural adaptability, and digital competence. Second, administrators should adopt flexible leadership styles that are appropriate to different organizational contexts and challenges. Third, effective leadership behaviors, including goal setting, employee motivation, teamwork promotion, participative decision-making, and problem-solving, should be consistently practiced improving organizational performance.

The findings further revealed that leadership development requires collaborative support from multiple stakeholders. Universities play an important role in providing organizational resources, learning opportunities, and supportive policies. Government agencies contribute through policy formulation, leadership development programs, and institutional support. Society and external organizations facilitate leadership growth through partnerships, resource sharing, and professional collaboration. At the individual level, university administrators

are responsible for continuous learning, self-reflection, and professional development.

As a result of these interconnected processes, the proposed framework is expected to enhance leadership effectiveness, strengthen managerial competencies, improve institutional competitiveness, and support the modernization of higher education. Ultimately, the framework contributes to the development of capable university administrators who are prepared to lead higher education institutions in responding to the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century.

Based on these findings, the study concludes that 21st-century leadership for university administrators consists of three interrelated dimensions including leadership skills, leadership styles, and leadership behaviors, supported by institutional, governmental, and societal mechanisms that collectively promote sustainable leadership development and organizational excellence. Based on the synthesis of findings from the literature review and focus group discussion, a comprehensive framework for developing 21st-century leadership among university administrators in Taian City under Shandong Province was established. The framework illustrates the relationships among leadership skills, leadership styles, leadership behaviors, supporting factors, and expected outcomes. The proposed framework is presented in Figure 1.

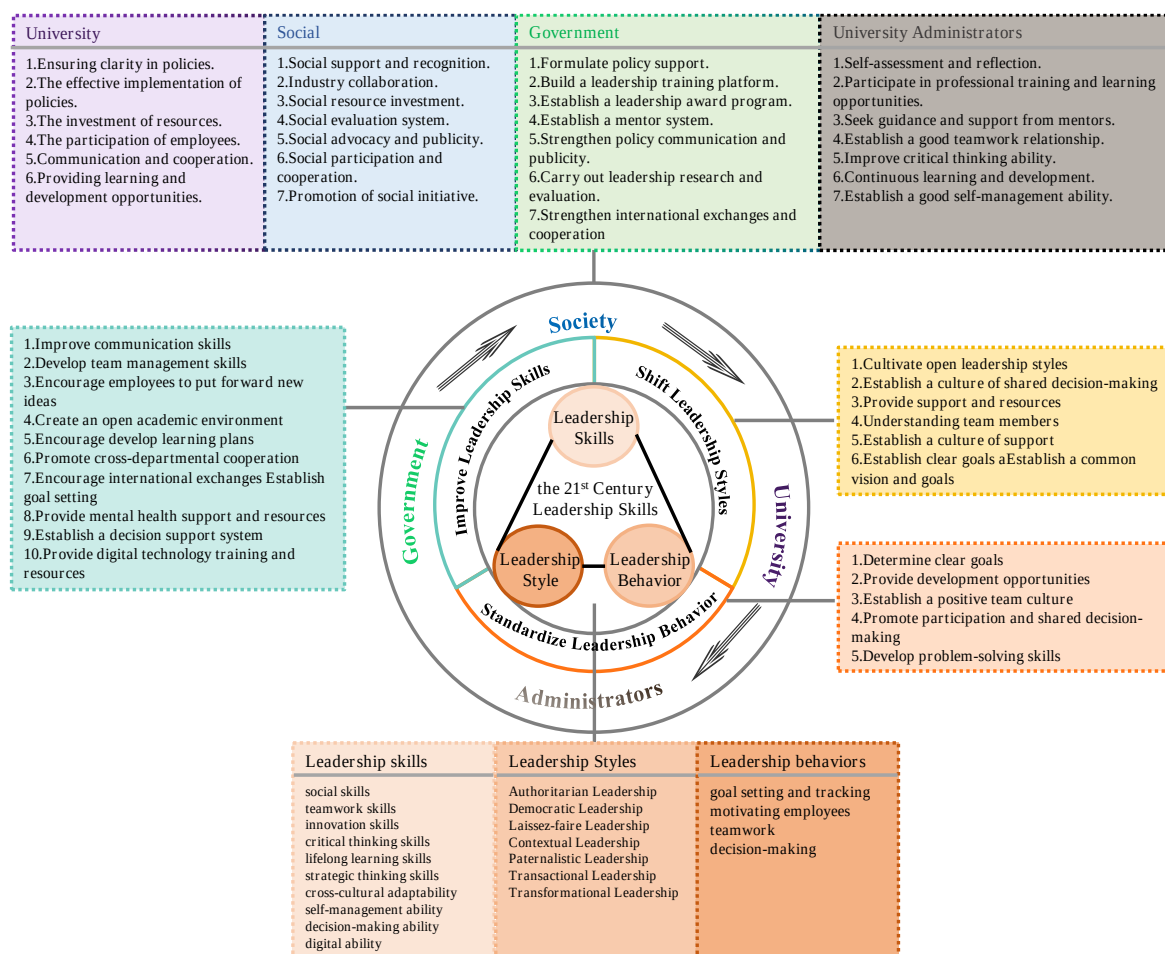


Figure 1 Model for improving the 21st leadership skills of university administrators in Taian City under Shandong Province

Figure 1 presents the proposed framework for developing 21st-century leadership among university administrators in Taian City under Shandong Province. The framework was developed through the synthesis of findings from the literature review and focus group discussion.

The framework consists of three interrelated components. The first component, 21st-century leadership components, comprises leadership skills, leadership styles, and leadership behaviors. Leadership skills include communication, teamwork, innovation, critical thinking, lifelong learning, strategic thinking, cross-cultural adaptability, self-management, decision-making, and digital competency.

Leadership styles encompass democratic, transformational, situational, paternalistic, transactional, autocratic, and laissez-faire leadership. Leadership behaviors focus on goal setting and monitoring, employee motivation, teamwork, decision-making, and problem-solving.

The second component involves leadership development strategies, which focus on strengthening leadership competencies, promoting appropriate leadership styles, and enhancing effective leadership behaviors. Key strategies include improving communication and team management skills, fostering innovation and lifelong learning, encouraging collaboration and international

engagement, strengthening decision-making capabilities, promoting shared decision-making, establishing a common vision, and developing problem-solving and team-building practices.

The third component highlights key stakeholders in leadership development, including universities, government agencies, society, and university administrators themselves. Universities contribute through policy implementation, resource allocation, and professional development opportunities. Government agencies support leadership development through policy initiatives, training programs, mentoring systems, and international collaboration. Society contributes through partnerships, recognition, and resource support, while university administrators play a central role through self-reflection, continuous learning, professional development, and self-management.

Collectively, these components contribute to enhanced leadership effectiveness, stronger managerial competencies, improved institutional performance, and the sustainable development of higher education institutions in the 21st century.

Discussion

The findings revealed that 21st-century leadership for university administrators in Taian City under Shandong Province consists of three major dimensions: leadership skills, leadership styles, and leadership behaviors. This finding suggests that effective leadership in contemporary higher education extends beyond traditional administrative functions and requires a comprehensive integration of competencies, leadership approaches, and leadership practices.

First, the study found that leadership skills constitute a fundamental dimension of 21st-century leadership. The identified competencies include communication, teamwork, innovation, critical thinking, lifelong learning, strategic thinking, cross-cultural adaptability, self-management, decision-making, and digital capability. This finding is consistent with Katz (1955), who emphasized that effective administrators require a combination of human, technical, and conceptual skills. It also supports the views of Adair (2005), who argued that successful leadership requires balancing organizational goals, team development, and individual growth. Furthermore, the emphasis on innovation, lifelong learning, and digital capability is consistent with Ehlers (2020) and Schüller et al. (2019), who highlighted the importance of future skills and digital competencies in responding to rapid technological and societal changes. The researcher believes that these competencies are particularly important for university administrators because higher education institutions are increasingly expected to adapt to digital transformation, internationalization, and organizational innovation.

Second, the findings identified leadership styles as an essential component of leadership development. The study revealed that effective university administrators should be capable of applying various leadership styles, including democratic, transformational, situational, paternalistic, transactional, autocratic, and laissez-faire leadership, depending on organizational circumstances. This finding is consistent with Burns (1985), who emphasized the importance of transformational leadership in inspiring organizational change and

development. It also supports the work of Noorderhaven et al. (2016), who found that participative and collaborative leadership contributes to team effectiveness and organizational success. The prominence of paternalistic leadership in this study may reflect the cultural characteristics of Chinese organizations, where trust, guidance, and supportive relationships between leaders and followers are highly valued. The researcher therefore argues that leadership flexibility is a critical characteristic of university administrators in the 21st century.

Third, leadership behaviors emerged as a key dimension influencing organizational effectiveness. The findings highlighted goal setting and tracking, employee motivation, teamwork, decision-making, and problem-solving as essential leadership behaviors. These findings are consistent with Adair (2005), who emphasized the importance of task achievement, team maintenance, and individual development in leadership practice. Similarly, Singfield (2020) stressed that goal setting and performance monitoring are crucial for organizational improvement, while Witt and Stahl (2016) emphasized responsible decision-making and stakeholder engagement. The researcher believes that these leadership behaviors provide a practical mechanism through which leadership competencies and leadership styles can be translated into effective organizational outcomes.

In addition, the findings demonstrated that leadership development is not solely the responsibility of individual administrators. Universities, government agencies, and society also play important roles in supporting leadership development through policy support, resource allocation, professional development opportunities,

mentoring systems, and collaborative networks. This finding supports the perspectives of Strielkowski and Chigisheva (2018), who emphasized that leadership development requires cooperation among educational institutions, policymakers, and external stakeholders. Therefore, leadership development should be viewed as a systemic process involving multiple actors rather than as an individual endeavor.

Overall, the study contributes to the understanding of 21st-century leadership in higher education by integrating leadership skills, leadership styles, and leadership behaviors into a comprehensive framework. The proposed framework provides practical guidance for strengthening leadership capacity among university administrators and supports the modernization and sustainable development of higher education institutions in Taian City under Shandong Province.

Recommendation Recommendations for Practical Application

The findings of this study indicate that 21st-century leadership for university administrators consists of leadership skills, leadership styles, and leadership behaviors. Therefore, universities should utilize the proposed framework as a guideline for leadership development programs and professional training activities.

1) Universities should strengthen leadership skills by promoting communication, innovation, strategic thinking, decision-making, digital competency, and lifelong learning among university administrators. These competencies are essential for responding to rapid changes in higher education and enhancing institutional competitiveness.

2) Universities should encourage administrators to adopt flexible leadership styles that are appropriate to different organizational contexts. Particular emphasis should be placed on transformational, democratic, and situational leadership styles to promote participation, innovation, collaboration, and organizational effectiveness.

3) Universities should foster leadership behaviors that contribute to organizational success, including goal setting and monitoring, employee motivation, teamwork, participative decision-making, and problem-solving. These behaviors should be incorporated into leadership evaluation and professional development systems.

4) Government agencies should provide policy support, leadership training opportunities, mentoring systems, and collaborative platforms to strengthen leadership development in higher education institutions. Universities should also establish partnerships with external organizations and communities to enhance leadership learning and knowledge exchange.

5) Recommendations for Policy Development. Government agencies and higher education authorities should develop policies that support systematic leadership development for university administrators. Such policies should emphasize digital transformation, innovation capability, international collaboration, and continuous professional development. Furthermore, leadership development programs should be integrated into institutional strategic planning to ensure sustainable leadership growth and organizational excellence.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future studies should examine the applicability of the proposed leadership framework in different higher education contexts across China. Quantitative research is recommended to validate the relationships among leadership skills, leadership styles, leadership behaviors, and organizational effectiveness. Comparative studies across provinces or institutional types may also enhance the generalizability of the findings.

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