

## The Leadership Competency Development for Middle Administrators of Higher Vocational Colleges under Henan Province

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### ABSTRACT

This research aims to propose the managerial guidelines on leadership competencies development for middle administrators of Higher Vocational Colleges under Henan Province. This study adopts a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods. The purposive sampling method was adopted to select 13 full-time people including two presidents, five middle-level administrators, three staff members, and three senior teachers within five Higher Vocational Colleges under Henan Province as key informants. The instrument for data collection was in-depth interviews, by frequency analysis through content analysis.

Results of research has found that: the managerial guidelines on leadership competencies development for middle administrators of Higher Vocational Colleges under Henan Province, overall had 4 components as: Leadership and Management Competency, Educational and Instructional Competency, Communication and Interpersonal Competency, and Decision-Making and Problem-Solving Competency.

**Keywords:** Guideline, Leadership Competency Development, Middle Administrators, Henan Province

### 1. Introduction

The 20th Party Congress pointed out that in order to improve the level of ensuring and improving people's livelihood, strengthen and innovate social governance, "we must give priority to the development of education", and support and regulate social forces to run education. In the new journey of building a modern socialist country in an all-round way, vocational education has a broad future and promising prospects. We will accelerate the

establishment of a modern vocational education system and train more high-quality technical and skilled personnel, skilled craftsmen, and artisans from major countries.

Corresponding to school-based management is the hierarchical management of colleges and universities. There are common interactions among multiple levels and modules in university management (Huang, 2002). Such characteristics of hierarchical management put forward higher requirements on the operation management ability and efficiency of universities.

John P. Kotter (2019), stated that leadership is the process of guiding one or more groups towards a specific direction. Professor Liang Zhong Ming (2013) suggests that leadership can be defined as a combination of various leader behaviors, such as foresight and planning, communication and coordination, sincerity and balance, and more.

The concept of leadership can be viewed from two perspectives, one is leadership and the other is leadership competency. Leadership is a kind of influence, which focuses on the relationship or state established with followers to do the right thing together, which is the goal pursued by leaders. While leadership competency is a tool or skill for leadership, and it takes into account the construction of the leader himself, paying more attention to what the leader should provide for living leadership (Qin et al. 2009).

In the university environment, leadership refers to the personal quality, way of thinking, practical experience and mastery of leadership methods of university leaders. However, there is no consensus on the connotation of middle-level leadership in higher vocational colleges, so it should be defined according to the concept of college leadership and combined with the characteristics of higher vocational colleges. This means that it is necessary to comprehensively consider factors such as the educational goals, school-running philosophy, and vocational education characteristics of higher vocational colleges to understand and define the meaning of middle-level leadership in higher vocational colleges. Tai Sik Lee (2011) proposed that competency is the ability to do a certain job, or the degree of ability. In terms of current managerial abilities, successful administrators are usually cultivated through engaging in management work. McClelland (1973) argued that competency traits can be measured in a reliable way, such as knowledge or skills, attitudes and values, motivation, traits, and self-concept.

After decades of development of higher vocational education in our country, especially the rapid development since enrolment expansion, the internal management form of higher vocational colleges needs to make corresponding adjustments to adapt to this change. Therefore, strengthening the ability building of middle-level leaders in higher vocational

colleges has become the key to improve the management efficiency and the quality of higher vocational education. Wang Fang (2009) stated that middle level administrators in schools have special leadership styles. Middle-level administrators shoulder the sacred mission and responsibility. They are not only the representatives who accept the tasks of the university, but also the decision makers who carry out the work of their departments, or the organizers who lead the faculty and staff.

For this reason, the researcher found that the competency is so important for the middle administrators and there are many competencies that have been reported. The research can provide practical guidance for the promotion of the leadership competency for middle-level administrators of higher vocational colleges under Henan Province, and provide support for them to play a better role in the leadership post. These guidelines can be used as an important reference to measure the leadership level of middle-level administrators under Henan higher vocational colleges. Through the study of leadership, it can strengthen the leadership of Party organizations in higher vocational colleges and provide important guarantee for the high-quality reform and development of Higher Vocational Colleges under Henan Province

## **2. Research Purposes**

To propose managerial guidelines on leadership competencies development for middle administrators of higher vocational colleges under Henan province.

## **3. Benefit of Research**

Provided guidance for the leadership competencies development for middle administrators of higher vocational colleges under Henan province and even in China.

## **4. Research Process**

Step 1: Explore the current situation and composition of leadership competencies development for middle administrators of higher vocational colleges under Henan province. Determining the variables through in-depth interviews and literature research.

Step 2: Quantitative analysis of factors of leadership competencies development for middle administrators of higher vocational colleges under Henan province.

Step 3: Based on the results of the quantitative analysis in the second step, propose managerial guidelines on leadership competencies development for middle administrators of

higher vocational colleges under Henan province and organize experts to do Focus Group discussion to arrive at the final guidelines.

## **5. Population and Sample**

1. 13 key information providers from 5 vocational colleges under Henan Province conducted in-depth interviews as key informants.

2. According to the Krejci and Morgan tables, 306 faculty members were elected with a stratified sampling technique from 5 universities, including presidents, middle administrators, staff members and senior teachers.

3. 9 experts confirm the managerial guidelines on leadership competencies development for middle administrators of Higher Vocational Colleges under Henan Province

## **6. Instruments**

1. Literature review and document checklist form and In-depth interviews form.

2. IOC; Try out; Five-level rating scale questionnaire.

3. Focus Group Discussion form.

## **7. Data analysis**

1. Content analysis was performed on the data from in depth-interviews with frequencies.

2. Conduct a descriptive analysis of the questionnaire results to find out the components of leadership competencies for middle administrators of Higher Vocational Colleges under Henan Province.

3. The focus group was moderated by the researcher on, discussion was about “managerial guidelines on leadership competencies development for middle administrators of Higher Vocational Colleges under Henan Province”.

## **8. Conclusion and discussion**

### **1. Variable analysis of literature review and key informants**

Through a comprehensive analysis of both the literature review and in-depth interviews with key informants, a rigorous process of repeated comparison led to the selection of 68 impactful variables as shown in the Table 1 below:

**Table 1:** Literature review and in-depth interview variable statistics

No.	Variables
1	Government-issued Mid-level Administrators Management Policies
2	Government-issued Talent Incentive Policies
3	Government Dedicated Funds
4	Talent Selection and Appointment Policies
5	Comprehensive System for the Development of Qualities
6	Recruitment Orientation
7	Hierarchical Management Policies
8	College Diploma
9	Develop Annual Departmental Objectives
10	Formulate Strategic Planning
11	Manage Change and Innovation Projects
12	Cultivate Team Cohesion and Collaborative Atmosphere
13	Create Inclusive and Diverse College Environment
14	Complete Tasks and Objectives on Schedule
15	Conduct Vocational and Skills Training
16	Motivate Faculty Work
17	Collect Feedback to improve approaches
18	Provide Instructional Guidance
19	School Teaching Improvement and Innovation
20	Learn and Enhance One's Own Knowledge and Abilities
21	Guide Teams to Achieve Transformation Goals
22	Cultivate a Highly Cohesive and Collaborative Team
23	Utilize Educational Technology and Multimedia Resources
24	Engage In Curriculum Development and Innovation
25	Achieve Successful Experiences
26	Development in Curriculum, Teaching Innovation and Faculty Development
27	Rich Abilities in Curriculum Design
28	Communicate in a Clear and Concise Manner

No.	Variables
29	Listen to Team Members' Suggestions and Opinions
30	Explain in a Concise and Clear Manner
31	Take Effective Measures Dealing with Conflicts or Potential Communication Barriers
32	Employ Appropriate Methods Handling Conflicts or Tense Situations
33	Encouraging Faculty and Staff to Provide Feedback
34	Maintaining Effective Communication and Collaboration with Superiors, Peers, and Subordinates
35	Maintaining Cooperation and Coordination Among Different Departments
36	Further Support and Training
37	Make Wise Decisions Quickly
38	Weigh Different Options and Risks
39	Take Decisive Actions
40	Identify and Analyze the Root Causes of Problems
41	Formulate Effective Solutions and Implement Them
42	Identify and Assess Potential Risks
43	Encourage Faculty and Team Members to Participate
44	Collaborating with Other Departments or Stakeholders
45	Adjust Decisions
46	Make contributions to college development and operation
47	Roles and Responsibilities
48	Individuals' Expertise and Capabilities
49	Work Objectives and Performance Indicators
50	Training Opportunities
51	Positive Feedback and Suggestions
52	Creativity
53	Changes
54	Positive Work Environment
55	Communication and Feedback
56	Professional Development

No.	Variables
57	Leadership Development Training
58	Project Management and Execution Training
59	Individual Development Plans
60	Mentorship System
61	Cross-Departmental Collaboration
62	Challenging Projects
63	Continuous Learning and Reflection
64	Academic Exchanges and Professional Training Activities
65	Communication, Emotional Intelligence, And Interpersonal Competency
66	Cross-Cultural Leadership
67	Leadership Ethics and Moral Values
68	Continuous Feedback Mechanism

## 2. Result of Data Analysis of the detailed questionnaire

For the evaluation process, a 5-points rating scale questionnaire was employed. This scale allowed for a nuanced evaluation and includes key metrics as mean, and Standard Deviation. The specifics of this assessment as detailed below:

**Table 2:** Result of Data Analysis on Questionnaire: Descriptive statistics (n = 38)

Descriptive statistics					
Items	Mean	S.D.	Sk.	Ku.	Level
ARR1	3.64	1.06183	-0.249	-0.84	High
ARR2	3.49	1.04096	-0.088	-0.826	High
ARR3	3.26	1.06676	0.197	-1.004	Moderate
ARR4	3.12	1.03785	0.269	-0.724	Moderate
ARR5	3.55	0.99085	-0.062	-0.777	High
ARR6	3.67	1.01298	-0.308	-0.757	High
ARR7	3.57	1.00616	-0.12	-0.822	High
ARR8	3.56	0.99724	-0.093	-0.795	High
ARR9	3.63	1.00001	-0.244	-0.746	High

## Descriptive statistics

Items	Mean	S.D.	Sk.	Ku.	Level
ARR10	3.20	0.89188	0.219	-0.385	Moderate
ARR11	3.21	0.89869	0.209	-0.42	Moderate
ARR12	3.24	0.92528	0.211	-0.513	Moderate
ARR13	3.34	1.0407	-0.288	-0.964	Moderate
ARR14	3.20	0.93144	0.037	-0.701	Moderate
ARR15	3.20	0.90647	-0.16	-0.951	Moderate
ARR16	3.18	0.91684	0.059	-0.195	Moderate
ARR17	3.16	0.94637	-0.065	-0.104	Moderate
ARR18	3.25	0.93057	0.209	-0.534	Moderate
ARR19	3.22	0.89706	0.171	-0.45	Moderate
ARR20	4.48	0.68812	-1.096	0.398	High
ARR21	4.49	0.65404	-0.99	0.164	High
ARR22	4.52	0.64856	-1.114	0.414	Highest
ARR23	4.49	0.70704	-1.254	1.302	High
ARR24	4.49	0.69305	-1.089	0.111	High
ARR25	4.46	0.68719	-1.078	0.616	High
ARR26	4.41	0.71544	-0.903	-0.101	High
ARR27	4.45	0.73276	-1.188	0.786	High
ARR28	4.44	0.79272	-1.815	4.36	High
ARR29	2.59	1.00776	0.861	0.119	Moderate
ARR30	2.58	1.00864	0.673	-0.094	Moderate
ARR31	2.64	1.02137	0.554	-0.25	Moderate
ARR32	2.49	1.08716	0.726	-0.118	Low
ARR33	2.72	1.0448	0.673	-0.26	Moderate
ARR34	2.63	1.0449	0.499	-0.422	High
ARR35	2.68	1.08982	0.625	-0.35	High
ARR36	2.47	1.07175	0.84	0.041	Low
ARR37	2.49	0.97593	0.702	0.084	Low



## Descriptive statistics

Items	Mean	S.D.	Sk.	Ku.	Level
ARR38	2.65	1.01621	0.709	-0.051	High

The research data underwent a KMO test and yielded a score of 0.907 as shown in Table 3. In the work, Kaiser and Rice employed the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (KMO) to assess the data's appropriateness for utilizing factor analysis techniques. When conducting factor analysis for testing validity, it was crucial to satisfy the prerequisite of strong item correlations.

Table 3: KMO and Bartlett Test (Researcher)

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.907
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	13459.493
	df	703
	Sig.	.000

Table 4: Variance Interpretation Rate (Researcher)

Component	Total Variance Explained								
	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	11.08	29.159	29.159	11.081	29.159	29.159	7.426	19.543	19.543
2	6.98	18.375	47.534	6.983	18.375	47.534	7.149	18.812	38.355
3	5.64	14.847	62.381	5.642	14.847	62.381	6.963	18.323	56.679
4	4.73	12.462	74.843	4.735	12.462	74.843	6.902	18.164	74.843

As Table 4, the factor analysis resulted in the extraction of four components, each of which exhibited eigenvalues greater than 1. These components accounted for variance interpretation rates of 19.543%, 18.812%, 18.323%, and 18.164%, respectively, following

rotation. The cumulative variance interpretation rate after rotation summed up to 74.843%.

**Table 5:** Factor loading (Rotated) (Researcher)

Items	Factor Loading (Rotated)			
	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
ARR1		0.818		
ARR2		0.880		
ARR3		0.850		
ARR4		0.788		
ARR5		0.902		
ARR6		0.879		
ARR7		0.903		
ARR8		0.921		
ARR9		0.901		
ARR10	0.854			
ARR11	0.847			
ARR12	0.819			
ARR13	0.781			
ARR14	0.829			
ARR15	0.749			
ARR16	0.890			
ARR17	0.869			
ARR18	0.868			
ARR19	0.892			
ARR20			0.882	
ARR21			0.917	
ARR22			0.912	
ARR23			0.914	
ARR24			0.923	
ARR25			0.876	
ARR26			0.864	
ARR27			0.791	
ARR28			0.787	

Factor Loading (Rotated)				
Items	Factor Loading			
	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
ARR29				0.713
ARR30				0.815
ARR31				0.889
ARR32				0.824
ARR33				0.859
ARR34				0.783
ARR35				0.778
ARR36				0.879
ARR37				0.807
ARR38				0.818

Note: The absolute value of loading was greater than 0.4.

Table 5 presented the extracted information regarding the factors related to the research items and their corresponding relationships. From the table above, evident that the standard loading coefficient values for all research items exceed 0.4. This signifies a robust correlation between the research items and the factors, indicating that the factors effectively capture the information.

Component 1 was described by 9 key variables, with no value below 0.5. After rotating the axis, the variable factor loading in the component was between 0.788-0.921. and named it “**Leadership and Management Competency**”.

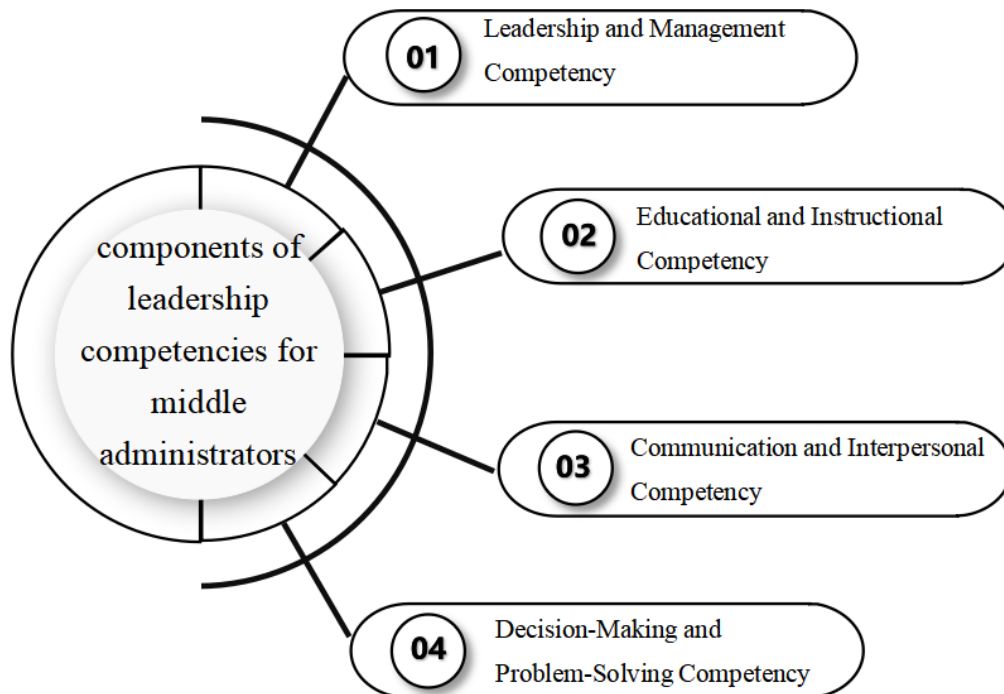
Component 2 was described by 10 key variables, with no value below 0.5. After rotating the axis, the variable factor loading in the component was between 0.749-0.892. and named it “**Educational and Instructional Competency**”.

Component 3 was described by 9 key variables, with no value below 0.5. After rotating the axis, the variable factor loading in the component was between 0.787-0.923. and named it “**Communication and Interpersonal Competency**”.

Component 4 was described by 10 key variables, with no value below 0.5. After rotating the axis, the variable factor loading in the component was between 0.713-0.889. and named it “**Decision-Making and Problem-Solving Competency**”.

By employing a combination of qualitative research, quantitative research, and factor analysis techniques, the researcher successfully identified and delineated the

constituent components of leadership competencies relevant to middle administrators within higher vocational colleges situated in Henan Province. The process of extracting these components was accomplished through Exploratory Factor Analysis. A concise summary of these identified components can be visualized in Figure 1.



**Figure 1** Components of leadership competencies for middle administrators of Higher Vocational Colleges under Henan Province

Component 1 “**Leadership and Management Competency**” consisted of 9 variables: (1) Competency of developing annual departmental objectives. (2) Competency of formulating strategic planning. (3) Competency of managing change and innovation projects. (4) Competency of cultivating team cohesion and collaborative atmosphere. (5) Competency of creating inclusive and diverse college environment. (6) Competency of completing tasks and objectives on schedule. (7) Competency of conducting vocational and skills training. (8) Competency of motivating faculty work. (9) Competency of collecting feedback to improve approaches.

Component 2 “**Educational and Instructional Competency**” consisted of 10 variables: (1) Provide instructional guidance. (2) School teaching improvement and innovation. (3) Learn and enhance one's own knowledge and abilities. (4) Guide teams to achieve transformation goals. (5) Cultivate a highly cohesive and collaborative team. (6) Utilize educational technology and multimedia resources. (7) Engage in curriculum development and

innovation. (8) Achieve successful experiences. (9) Development in curriculum, teaching innovation and faculty development. (10) Rich abilities in curriculum design.

Component 3 “**Communication and Interpersonal Competency**” consisted of 9 variables: (1) Communicate in a clear and concise manner. (2) Listen to team members' suggestions and opinions. (3) Explain in a concise and clear manner. (4) Take effective measures dealing with conflicts or potential communication barriers. (5) Employ appropriate methods handling conflicts or tense situations. (6) Encouraging faculty and staff to provide feedback. (7) Maintaining effective communication and collaboration with superiors, peers, and subordinates. (8) Maintaining cooperation and coordination among different departments. (9) Further support and training.

Component 4 “**Decision-Making and Problem-Solving Competency**” consisted of 10 variables: (1) Make wise decisions quickly. (2) Weigh different options and risks. (3) Take decisive actions. (4) Identify and analyze the root causes of problems. (5) Formulate effective solutions and implement them. (6) Identify and assess potential risks. (7) Encourage faculty and team members to participate. (8) Collaborating with other departments or stakeholders. (9) Adjust decisions. (10) Make contributions to college development and operation.

### 3. Focus Group Discussion

A total of nine experts actively participated in the Focus Group Discussion, which was structured around four distinct components. These components encompassed Leadership and Management Competency, Educational and Instructional Competency, Communication and Interpersonal Competency, and Decision-Making and Problem-Solving Competency. This finding was consistent with Liang Zhongming, 2013. Within these components, a total of 22 guidelines were collaboratively generated. These guidelines were distributed as follows:

- Leadership and Management Competency: 5 guidelines
- Educational and Instructional Competency: 8 guidelines
- Communication and Interpersonal Competency: 6 guidelines
- Decision-Making and Problem-Solving Competency: 3 guidelines

Component 1. There were 5 managerial guidelines which were: 1) Project Management and Execution Training; 2) Developing cross-cultural leadership competencies; 3) Leadership development training for middle administrators; 4) Establishing precise delineations of roles and responsibilities for middle administrator; 5) Setting clear work objectives and performance for middle administrators.

Component 2. There were 8 managerial guidelines which were: 1) Developing

effective professional development programs for middle administrators; 2) Fostering a culture of continuous learning and reflection among middle administrators; 3) Developing Individual Development Plans (IDPs) for middle administrators; 4) Establishing an effective mentorship system for middle administrators; 5) Promoting leadership ethics and moral values among middle administrators; 6) Cultivating creativity among middle administrators; 7) Developing effective training opportunities for middle administrators; 8) Fostering the expertise and capabilities of middle administrators.

Component 3. There were 6 managerial guidelines which were: 1) Developing communication, emotional intelligence, and interpersonal competency skills among middle administrators; 2) Fostering cross-departmental collaboration ability among middle administrators; 3) Fostering the ability to provide positive feedback and valuable suggestions; 4) Developing effective communication and feedback abilities; 5) Facilitating academic exchanges and professional training activities; 6) Fostering a positive work environment for middle administrators.

Component 4. There were 3 managerial guidelines which were: 1) Developing challenging projects for middle administrators; 2) Establishing a continuous feedback mechanism for middle administrators; 3) Fostering adaptability in middle administrators. This finding was consistent with Zhang Tong. (2023). Exploration of innovative development.

## **9. Recommendation**

### **1. Recommendations for Policies Formulation**

The diversity of policies for the leadership competency development for middle-administrators of vocational colleges under Henan Province reflects the needs and characteristics of different colleges and regions. However, this diversity in policies can lead to insufficient policy coherence, and therefore, there is a need for better coordination of the implementation of different policies to ensure the comprehensive development of middle-level administrators' leadership. In addition, the implementation of policies should be accompanied by effective evaluation and supervision mechanisms to ensure that the policies achieve the expected outcomes and to make timely adjustments when necessary.

### **2. Recommendations for Practical Application**

By implementing these detailed recommendations, higher vocational colleges under Henan Province can ensure that leadership competency development plans for middle-level administrators are comprehensive, sustainable, and adaptable to the evolving educational landscape. This will help improve management efficiency, enhance educational

quality, and contribute to the overall development of the institution.

### 3. Recommendations for Further Research

There are still numerous aspects that have not been exhaustively explored within this paper, particularly in relation to the fundamental constituents of leadership competencies. The primary areas for prospective research encompass the following:

1. Longitudinal Implementation Studies.
2. Case Studies.
3. Stakeholder Perspectives.
4. Comparative Studies.
5. Crisis Leadership.
6. Cultural Context.
7. Advanced Data Analysis.
8. Evaluation Framework.
9. Ethical Leadership.
10. Student-Centered Leadership.

These future research directions can help build upon the predictive theory and contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of leadership competency development of higher vocational colleges, with a focus on practical and real-world applicability.

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