

EXPLORING THE DEVELOPMENTAL NEEDS OF ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP IN CHINESE VOCATIONAL COLLEGES IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Ye Yiyu¹, Li Jing², Zhong Yunhua³

Corresponding Author E-mail: yeyiyu94@gmail.com

Received: Jul 22, 2025; Revised: Sep 04, 2025; Accepted: Oct 06, 2025

Abstract

The 21st century marks a critical phase in China's transition toward high-quality development in higher vocational education. Academic leadership has become increasingly essential in driving institutional governance, faculty development, and research innovation. This study aimed to 1) identify the practical dilemmas and observable deficiencies of academic leadership, 2) explore its core functions and developmental needs, and 3) construct a strategic model and propose improvement pathways for middle-level administrators in vocational colleges. A mixed-methods approach was employed, combining structured questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The sample comprised 18 deans and associate deans from nine secondary colleges, 20 administrative leaders from the Academic Affairs and Human Resources Offices, and 450 faculty representatives at Jiangxi Environmental Engineering Vocational College. Research tools included a five-dimensional self-developed leadership scale and a thematic interview guide. Descriptive statistics and ANOVA were conducted using SPSS, and qualitative data were analyzed via Nvivo. The results revealed that: (1) “research project interpretation” and “organizational coordination and communication” are the most urgently needed competency areas; (2) “teacher development support” and “academic guidance” represent moderate needs; and (3) “value-oriented culture construction” showed a relatively strong foundation but still requires systematic improvement. The interview themes further corroborated these quantitative trends. Based on the findings, six strategic recommendations are proposed to support the localized development of academic leadership in China’s vocational colleges. These include promoting value-oriented cultural leadership, enhancing faculty development, improving institutional governance, fostering cross-functional collaboration, strengthening research capacity, and adopting data-informed and inclusive leadership models. The findings also highlight the necessity of reinforcing not only top-down leadership structures but also bottom-up mechanisms that empower frontline educators.

Keywords : Developmental Needs, Academic Leadership, Vocational Colleges

^{1,2,3} Chiangrai Rajabhat University

Introduction

The 21st century marks a critical turning point in the high-quality development of vocational education in China. The mission of vocational education has gradually shifted from being employment-oriented to encompassing broader objectives such as lifelong learning and social contribution. This transformation has driven vocational colleges toward becoming high-level and distinct components of a modern educational system. Against this backdrop, demands on school governance, faculty development, and academic organization have significantly increased. Particularly at the departmental level, middle administrators are expected to manage not only administrative duties but also to demonstrate academic leadership by guiding disciplinary development, organizing research initiatives, and fostering academic teams. However, academic leadership in vocational colleges remains at a preliminary stage, often marked by unclear role definitions, cognitive confusion, and insufficient institutional support (Jia. 2020; Huang. 2023: 34).

Meanwhile, national policy directives have emphasized connotative growth in higher vocational education. The Key Points of Vocational and Continuing Education Work in 2017 highlighted the importance of building dual-qualified teaching teams and enhancing research capacity (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China. 2017). Subsequently, the Opinions on the Development and Reform of Higher Vocational Education during the 14th Five-Year Plan proposed a four-pronged strategy involving high-level faculty, curriculum, platforms, and college (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China. 2022). These directives reinforce the essential role of mid-level managers as academic cores in institutional development.

Although previous studies have discussed the features and development of academic leadership from perspectives such as faculty leadership, disciplinary heads, and research teams (Pan & Hou. 2014: 55; Zeng. 2024: 27), there remains a lack of systematic research specifically targeting departmental leaders in vocational colleges. Therefore, this study adopts a demand-oriented perspective, integrating survey and interview data to examine the 1) current challenges, 2) functional roles, and 3) developmental pathways of academic leadership among middle administrators in vocational colleges. The findings aim to provide theoretical insights and policy guidance for enhancing academic leadership within China's vocational education system.

Research Objectives

1. Identify and analyze the practical dilemmas and observable deficiencies in academic leadership within secondary-level faculties of vocational colleges;
2. Explore the core functions and developmental needs of academic leadership in the context of 21st-century vocational education;
3. Construct a strategic model and propose improvement pathways for enhancing academic leadership in vocational colleges.

Literature Review

In recent years, academic leadership has emerged as a critical topic in higher education research. Middlehurst (1993) first introduced the concept, highlighting its pivotal role in driving curriculum reform and disciplinary development. As the organizational structures of higher education college have become increasingly complex, leadership has evolved from traditional administrative models to more integrated forms combining academic guidance, organizational coordination, and faculty development support (Zhu. 2023: 60).

In the Chinese context, research on academic leadership primarily focuses on academic team leaders (Jia. 2020: 89), research organization (Zeng. 2024: 28), and academic community building (Zhu, Li, & Li. 2022). These studies identify functional dimensions of academic leadership, including research leadership, teacher support, resource integration, and cultural construction. However, most of this literature pertains to undergraduate or research universities, with limited exploration of middle-level leadership in vocational colleges.

Huang (2023: 34) proposed a three-tier framework of academic leadership—value orientation, structural mechanism, and strategic practice—from an organizational behavior perspective, emphasizing its contextual and dynamic characteristics. Other scholars using mixed methods have examined the tensions between academic and administrative roles, identifying how middle-level leaders navigate and reconcile dual-role demands (Pan. 2022: 43).

In the vocational education domain, academic leadership remains underexplored. Maddock (2002: 65) argued that in practice-intensive settings with highly diverse faculty, middle administrators must possess the ability to understand industry needs and activate teaching potential. Some studies further emphasize that vocational college leaders must serve as bridges between teaching governance and research organization, thereby facilitating an integrated “teaching–research–industry” model (Jia. 2020: 90).

In summary, although current literature has outlined preliminary frameworks of academic leadership, research specifically targeting the developmental needs of academic leadership in vocational colleges remains scarce. This study addresses this gap by focusing on practical needs and responding to both policy guidance and institutional challenges, thereby expanding the theoretical discourse of academic leadership within the vocational education sector.

Research Framework

This study focuses on the developmental needs of academic leadership within secondary colleges in Chinese vocational colleges in the 21st century. The research follows a logical sequence of theoretical construction, data collection, integrated analysis, and applied output, employing a mixed-methods design for systematic inquiry.

Grounded in the theoretical perspectives of Middlehurst (1993) and Macfarlane (2011), the study first develops a conceptual framework tailored to the context of vocational colleges in China. This

framework comprises five core dimensions: 1) academic guidance, 2) research capacity, 3) teacher support, 4) cultural construction, and 5) organizational coordination.

A structured questionnaire is then designed and distributed to gather evaluation data from middle-level administrators and faculty members. Reliability and validity of the instrument are assessed using Cronbach's alpha and KMO tests, followed by ANOVA to examine inter-group differences.

To enhance the depth of understanding, semi-structured interviews are conducted with selected key participants from the survey sample. These interviews aim to explore institutional mechanisms related to 1) policy implementation, 2) cultural leadership, and 3) teacher engagement.

The integration phase synthesizes both quantitative and qualitative findings to identify strengths and challenges in academic leadership practices. A radar chart is generated to visualize the distribution across leadership dimensions, and targeted recommendations are proposed to inform institutional strategy and teacher development initiatives. The detailed process is illustrated in Figure 1



Figure 1 Simplify Research Framework

Research Methods

semi-structured interviews, to investigate the developmental needs of academic leadership among secondary colleges in Chinese vocational colleges in the 21st century. The specific research procedures were as follows:

1. Population and Sample

The study population comprised middle-level administrators and faculty members at Jiangxi Environmental Engineering Vocational College. A stratified random sampling method was used to select a total sample of 488 individuals, including 18 deans and associate deans from nine secondary colleges, 20 administrative staff members from the Academic Affairs and Human Resources Offices, and 450 frontline

faculty representatives. This college was selected because it is a provincial-level demonstrative vocational institution with comprehensive governance structures and diverse academic departments, making it representative of typical vocational colleges in China. Given the study's focus on an in-depth case, a single representative institution was purposively chosen instead of multiple colleges to ensure data depth and contextual accuracy. Of the distributed questionnaires, 476 valid responses were collected, representing an effective response rate of 97.54%. Additionally, 38 management personnel were purposively selected from the questionnaire sample for in-depth interviews to provide comprehensive interpretations and supplementary insights into the quantitative findings.

2. Research Instruments

1. Structured Questionnaire: Based on the theoretical frameworks of academic leadership proposed by Middlehurst (1993), Macfarlane (2011), and Jia (2020), a self-developed academic leadership scale was created. The scale comprised 25 items distributed across five dimensions: 1) academic guidance, 2) research project interpretation, 3) teacher development support, 4) value-oriented culture construction, and 5) organizational coordination and communication. Responses were recorded using a 5-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree).

Table 1 Reliability and Validity of the Scale

Test Criteria	Values	Interpretation
Cronbach's α	0.91	Excellent internal consistency (>0.9)
KMO	0.838	KMO > 0.8 , indicating suitability for factor analysis
Bartlett's Test	$p < 0.001$	Passed significance test, indicating correlations among variables
Suitability for Factor Analysis	Suitable	Meets basic requirements for structural validity tests

As shown in Table 1, after expert validation and a pilot study, the scale demonstrated excellent reliability with a Cronbach's α coefficient of 0.91. Validity tests showed a Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) value of 0.838, and the Bartlett test of sphericity was significant ($p < 0.001$), indicating suitability for factor analysis.

2. Semi-structured Interview Guide: Interview questions focused primarily on three areas: (1) understanding of academic leadership; (2) major obstacles encountered in academic leadership practices within their respective departments; and (3) suggestions for mechanisms and strategies to enhance academic leadership in vocational colleges. All interviews were recorded with participants' written consent and subsequently transcribed.

3. Data Collection and Analysis

1) Quantitative data collected through questionnaires were analyzed using SPSS 26.0 for descriptive statistics and analysis of variance (ANOVA) to identify perception differences across respondent groups. 2) Interview transcripts were analyzed qualitatively using Nvivo 12 software, employing open coding, axial coding, and thematic synthesis methods to identify key concepts and underlying reasons behind

developmental needs. The qualitative analysis results were integrated with quantitative findings to establish a complementary and corroborative analytical structure.

Research Results

Based on comprehensive analyses of 476 valid questionnaires and interview data from 38 administrative personnel, the key results of this study are as follows: The sample characteristics are shown in Table 2 .

Table 2 Classified Background Information of Surveyed Sample (n=476)

Background Information	Variable	Quantity	Percentage(%)
Gender	Male	260	54.62
	Female	216	45.38
Age	Under 30	80	16.81
	30–39	190	39.92
	40 and above	206	43.28
Job Title/Position	Instructor	80	16.81
	Deputy Head	45	9.45
	Dean	55	11.55
Work Experience	Less than 5 years	100	21.01
	5–10 years	150	31.51
	More than 10 years	226	47.48
Education Level	Bachelor's	60	12.61
	Master's	380	79.83
	Doctorate	36	7.56
Position Type	Administrative Staff	20	4.20
	Academic	18	3.78
	Management		
	Teaching Faculty	438	92.02
Sum		476	97.54

A total of 476 valid questionnaires were collected from middle-level administrators and teaching staff at Jiangxi Environmental Engineering Vocational College. In terms of gender, male respondents accounted for 54.62%, slightly exceeding female respondents at 45.38%. Regarding age distribution, the majority fell within the 30–39 (39.92%) and 40 and above (43.28%) age groups, indicating a sample dominated by mid- to senior-level educators.

As for job titles, the participants included instructors (16.81%), deputy heads (9.45%), and deans (11.55%), representing a broad spectrum of academic leadership roles. In terms of work experience, 31.51% had 5–10 years of experience, while 47.48% had more than 10 years, suggesting a relatively seasoned teaching population.

In education level, a substantial majority held master's degrees (79.83%), while only a small portion (7.56%) held doctorates. Based on position type, teaching faculty comprised 92.02% of the sample, followed by administrative staff (4.20%) and academic management personnel (3.78%). This composition

highlights a faculty-centered sample structure, supplemented by institutional leadership roles, offering a balanced perspective for analyzing academic leadership in vocational education settings.

1. Overall Academic Leadership is Relatively Strong but Uneven Across Dimensions

Table 3 Academic Leadership Dimensions (n=476)

Dimensions	Mean	Std. Deviation	Level	Rank
Value-oriented Culture Construction	4.10	0.49	High	1
Teacher Development Support	3.91	0.52	Medium	2
Institutional Operation & Standardization	3.88	0.51	Medium	3
Organizational Coordination & Communication	3.82	0.53	Medium	4
Research Project Interpretation	3.76	0.62	Medium	5
Overall	3.89			

As shown in Table 3, respondents demonstrated a moderately high overall recognition level across dimensions of academic leadership. "Value-oriented Culture Construction" scored highest ($M=4.10$, $SD=0.49$), indicating institutional leaders placed substantial emphasis on building academic community culture and fostering teachers' sense of mission. "Teacher Development Support" ($M=3.91$, $SD=0.52$) and "Institutional Operation and Standardization" ($M=3.88$, $SD=0.51$) followed closely. However, "Research Project Interpretation" had the lowest score ($M=3.76$, $SD=0.62$), highlighting significant barriers in research construction and resource coordination. In addition to these quantitative results, qualitative interviews further revealed that younger faculty members often lacked effective mentorship in conducting research projects, and administrators pointed out frequent communication gaps across departments. These qualitative insights not only confirmed the quantitative patterns but also illustrated the underlying institutional and cultural challenges.

2. Overall Research Project Interpretation is a Major Weakness Due to Inadequate Resource Accessibility and Incentive Mechanisms

Table 4 Research Project Interpretation Dimension (n=476)

Items	Mean	Std. Deviation	Level	Rank
Project Support and Guidance	3.85	0.60	Medium	1
Level of Team Collaboration	3.80	0.57	Medium	2
Research Platform Construction	3.78	0.59	Medium	3
Research Incentive Mechanism	3.68	0.61	Low	4
Convenience of Resource Acquisition	3.65	0.62	Low	5

Overall	3.75		
---------	------	--	--

As detailed in Table 4, within the dimension of "Research Project Interpretation," the items "Convenience of Resource Acquisition" (M=3.65) and "Research Incentive Mechanism" (M=3.68) received the lowest scores. Interviews further confirmed that teachers generally perceived research resources as centralized, and younger faculty members lacked effective pathways for research participation. Current incentives were insufficient to stimulate teachers' enthusiasm toward research activities.

3. Overall Perceptual Differences among Role Groups on Research and Communication Dimensions are Evident

Table 5 Dimension Scores Across Different Role Groups(n=476)

Roles	Research Project Interpretation	Level	Rank	Organizational Coordination & Communication	Level	Rank
Deans/Associate Deans	3.90	Medium	1	4.10	High	1
Academic Affairs/Human Resources Staff	3.85	Medium	2	3.90	Medium	2
Faculty Representatives	3.66	Low	3	3.75	Medium	3
Overall	3.80			3.92		

Table 5 illustrates that deans and associate deans rated significantly higher in "Research Project Interpretation" (M=3.90) and "Organizational Coordination and Communication" (M=4.10) compared to faculty representatives (M=3.66 and M=3.75, respectively). Faculty representatives expressed in interviews that although the management's intentions were positive, inefficiencies in communication and inadequate feedback mechanisms during practical implementation negatively affected teachers' participation and the effectiveness of institutional policies.

4. Overall Teacher Development Support System is Solid but Lacks Personalized Mechanisms

Table 6 Teacher Development Support Dimension (n=476)

Items	Mean	Std. Deviation	Level	Rank
Professional Title Promotion Mechanism	3.95	0.52	Medium	1
Training and Development Opportunities	3.92	0.54	Medium	2
Project Application Channels	3.90	0.56	Medium	3

Items	Mean	Std. Deviation	Level	Rank
Professional Growth Feedback	3.89	0.55	Medium	4
Research Capability Coaching	3.88	0.58	Medium	5
Overall	3.91			

As presented in Table 6, scores across indicators within "Teacher Development Support" were relatively balanced, with "Professional Title Promotion Mechanism" scoring highest (M=3.95) and "Research Capability Coaching" scoring lowest (M=3.88). Interviews indicated that current training programs tend to be generic, lacking individualized and systematic support tailored to faculty members' unique needs, thereby limiting effective promotion of personalized teacher development.

5. Overall Organizational Coordination Mechanisms Reflect Strong Administrative Influence, Leading to Low Teacher Participation

Table 1 Organizational Coordination and Teacher Participation Dimension (n=476)

Items	Mean	Std. Deviation	Level	Rank
Conflict Resolution Mechanism	3.91	0.53	Medium	1
Timeliness of Information Delivery	3.88	0.57	Medium	2
Cross-departmental Collaboration Efficiency	3.86	0.58	Medium	3
Opinion Feedback Channels	3.75	0.60	Medium	4
Acceptance of Teachers' Opinions	3.69	0.63	Low	5
Overall	3.82			

As seen in Table 7, "Conflict Resolution Mechanism" (M=3.91) and "Timeliness of Information Delivery" (M=3.88) scored relatively high, whereas "Acceptance of Teachers' Opinions" scored lowest (M=3.69). Teachers mentioned during interviews that current communication mechanisms leaned heavily toward administrative approaches, limiting their participation in academic decision-making. Insufficient feedback channels negatively impacted their organizational identification and sense of belonging.

6. Overall Interview Themes Further Validate Questionnaire Findings

Qualitative analysis using Nvivo extracted five core themes from interview data consistent with survey findings: 1) difficulty understanding research policies, 2) ineffective communication and feedback mechanisms, 3) repetitive and generalized training content, 4) superficial cultural construction, and 5) unclear academic guidance directions. These qualitative insights corroborated the quantitative data, further enhancing the robustness and reliability of the research conclusions.

In summary, the findings derived from both questionnaire analysis and interview validation indicate that academic leadership in vocational collegess is generally strong, though unevenly developed across dimensions. The "Value-oriented Culture Construction" dimension received the highest scores,

suggesting a strong emphasis on academic climate and teachers’ sense of mission. “Teacher Development Support” and “Institutional Operation and Standardization” were rated moderately high, while “Research Project Interpretation” and “Organizational Coordination and Communication” were relatively weaker. In particular, issues related to research resource accessibility and incentive mechanisms were frequently raised, reflecting a gap in policy implementation. A radar chart based on the research findings (as shown in Figure 2) visually illustrates these differences in development levels across the academic leadership dimensions, highlighting the strength of “Value-oriented Culture Construction” and the relative weakness of “Research Project Interpretation.” These insights provide a clear foundation for targeted improvement strategies in academic leadership development.

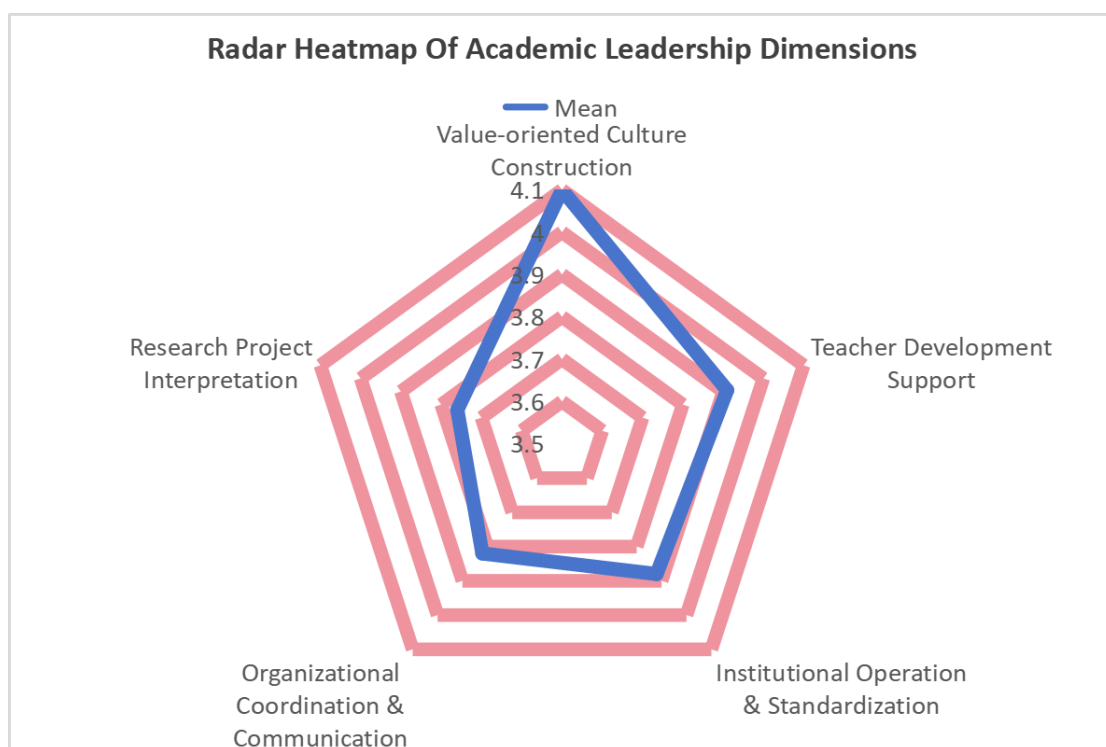


Figure 2 Radar Heatmap of Academic Leadership Dimensions

Discussion

This study’s findings address the three research objectives in a systematic manner.

First, in relation to Objective 1 (identifying developmental needs of academic leadership), the results revealed that research project interpretation and organizational coordination are the most urgent areas requiring improvement, while value-oriented cultural leadership already shows a relatively strong foundation. The qualitative themes—such as difficulties in understanding research policies, insufficient feedback channels, and repetitive training—enrich this interpretation by linking the quantitative data with the theoretical perspectives. For example, the lack of research project interpretation reflects gaps in academic identity formation (Pan & Hou. 2014), while coordination difficulties correspond to institutional

penetration as emphasized by Zeng, Wang, and Sun (2024). This integration of qualitative and quantitative findings provides a more holistic view of academic leadership development. These findings are consistent with national policy directives (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China. 2017; 2022) and international reports emphasizing the importance of leadership capacity in vocational education (OECD. 2019).

Second, with respect to Objective 2 (analyzing role-based differences and influencing factors), ANOVA results demonstrated significant differences between administrators and faculty members, particularly in organizational coordination. This is consistent with international findings that middle-level academic leaders often face dual-role tensions in balancing administrative and scholarly responsibilities (Pan. 2022). Such tensions suggest that Chinese vocational colleges may need targeted professional development programs to help middle-level leaders navigate these demands effectively.

Third, in addressing Objective 3 (constructing a strategic model for academic leadership development), the study proposes a framework that integrates value-oriented culture, faculty support, institutional governance, organizational coordination, and research interpretation. This multidimensional model provides a structured path for enhancing academic leadership in vocational colleges.

In terms of international comparison, differences and similarities can be observed. In Australia and Singapore, academic leadership development emphasizes close collaboration between academia and industry to ensure vocational education remains responsive to labor market needs (Lee. 2020). By contrast, in the United States and the United Kingdom, academic leadership is frequently assessed in terms of research productivity and competitive funding acquisition (Bolden, Gosling, O'Brien, Peters, & Haslam. 2012). Compared with these contexts, Chinese vocational colleges display a policy-driven model of leadership development, shaped heavily by national directives (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China. 2017; 2022). This comparison underscores the contextualized yet globally relevant nature of academic leadership in China.

Proposed Strategic Model

Proposed Strategic Model for Academic Leadership Development

Based on the integration of quantitative and qualitative results, this study proposes a five-dimensional strategic model for developing academic leadership in vocational colleges. The model includes: (1) value-oriented cultural leadership, (2) teacher development support, (3) institutional governance and policy clarity, (4) organizational coordination and communication, and (5) research project interpretation. This framework can serve as a practical guideline for policymakers and administrators in strengthening academic leadership capacity in China's vocational education sector.

Study Limitations

Despite the valuable insights generated, this study has several limitations. First, the research focused on a single vocational college, which limits the generalizability of the findings across different institutional contexts. Second, although a mixed-methods approach was employed, the qualitative data were based on a relatively small number of interviews, which may introduce subjectivity. Third, the study relied primarily on cross-sectional data, restricting the ability to capture dynamic changes in academic

leadership development over time. These limitations should be addressed in future research by expanding the sample scope, increasing qualitative data sources, and adopting longitudinal designs.

Conclusion

This study aimed to explore the developmental needs of academic leadership in secondary colleges within Chinese vocational colleges in the 21st century. Through a combination of quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews, a five-dimensional framework was established, encompassing value-oriented cultural construction, teacher development support, institutional operation and standardization, organizational coordination and communication, and research project interpretation. The findings reveal an overall moderate-to-high level of academic leadership across the sample, but also indicate clear discrepancies among the dimensions.

Notably, the strongest performance was observed in the domain of value-oriented culture, reflecting the increasing emphasis on shared mission and organizational identity in vocational college. Teacher development support and institutional standardization ranked next, suggesting improvements in internal mechanisms and faculty training. However, relatively lower scores in organizational communication and research interpretation reveal existing challenges in interdepartmental collaboration and research mobilization, which may hinder the advancement of academic leadership capacity.

These findings underscore the necessity for college to reinforce not only top-down leadership structures but also bottom-up engagement mechanisms that empower frontline educators. Strategic efforts should focus on improving research incentives, building interdisciplinary platforms, and cultivating academic discourse environments that support innovation and collaboration. By addressing these developmental gaps, vocational colleges can gradually foster a more dynamic and sustainable academic leadership model suited to 21st-century educational transformation.

Future Research Directions: Future studies could expand the scope to include multiple vocational colleges, adopt longitudinal designs, and further test the applicability of the proposed strategic model in diverse contexts. In addition, comparative studies across different provinces or regions in China could shed light on contextual variations. Future research could also explore interdisciplinary aspects of academic leadership by integrating perspectives from management, psychology, and organizational behavior. Moreover, examining the policy implementation process and its impact on leadership practices at the institutional level would provide valuable insights.

Suggestion

Drawing on both quantitative and qualitative findings, the following six recommendations are proposed to support the development of academic leadership in Chinese vocational colleges. While the study identified five core dimensions of academic leadership, the recommendations are refined into six actionable strategies to provide more specific and operational guidance. To facilitate implementation, the six recommendations are further organized into short-term, mid-term, and long-term priorities.

Short-term priorities (1–2 years):

1. Enhance Faculty Development Mechanisms

Establish comprehensive professional development systems that provide training, mentorship, and growth opportunities for faculty at different career stages. Specific practices include implementing a mentorship program pairing junior faculty with senior professors, offering structured career development workshops, and creating online platforms for continuous professional learning.

2. Foster Cross-functional Collaboration and Communication

Develop platforms for interdepartmental collaboration, such as task forces or joint governance committees, to strengthen communication and problem-solving among academic leaders and teaching staff. Specific practices include creating interdisciplinary working groups, establishing cross-departmental research projects, and using digital platforms (e.g., collaborative apps or internal forums) to enhance communication efficiency.

Mid-term priorities (3–5 years):

3. Improve Institutional Governance and Policy Clarity

Streamline operational processes and clarify leadership roles and responsibilities. Specific practices include publishing clear policy manuals accessible to all staff, introducing annual orientation sessions on governance procedures, and setting up regular feedback meetings where faculty can voice concerns regarding institutional policies.

4. Strengthen Research Capacity and Support Systems

Expand institutional support for faculty research. Specific practices include creating competitive internal research funds, reducing redundant administrative approvals, offering regular training on applied research methods, and establishing collaborative research platforms that link academia with industry.

Long-term priorities (5+ years):

5. Promote Value-Oriented Cultural Leadership

College should foster a shared academic vision and mission by strengthening cultural identity, recognizing academic contributions, and encouraging reflective leadership practices. Specific practices include organizing regular academic salons and forums to promote scholarly dialogue, establishing annual awards to recognize teaching and research excellence, and integrating value-oriented leadership into faculty evaluation criteria.

6. Adopt Data-informed and Inclusive Leadership Models

Implement evidence-based evaluation tools for academic leadership and encourage participatory leadership approaches. Specific practices include conducting annual faculty satisfaction surveys, developing leadership performance dashboards, and forming participatory decision-making committees involving faculty representatives.

References

- Bolden, R., Gosling, J., O'Brien, A., Peters, K., & Haslam, S. A. (2012). **Academic leadership: Changing conceptions, identities and experiences in UK higher education**. Leadership Foundation for Higher Education.
- Bolden, R., Petrov, G., & Gosling, J. (2009). **Distributed leadership in higher education: Rhetoric and reality**. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 37(2), 257–277.
- Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2018). **Designing and conducting mixed methods research** (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Deem, R., & Brehony, K. J. (2005). **Management as ideology: The case of 'new managerialism' in higher education**. *Oxford Review of Education*, 31(2), 217–235.
- Huang, X. B., Zhong, Y. H., & Sun, S. J. (2023). **Three categories of academic leadership in universities: research and future prospects**. *Higher Education Development and Evaluation*, 39(5), 32-46.
- Jia, L. Y. (2020). **Research on the connotation and structural dimensions of academic leadership among university disciplinary leaders (Master's thesis)**. Yanbian University, China.
- Lee, M. (2020). **Academic leadership in vocational education: Industry collaboration and institutional development in Singapore**. *Journal of Vocational Education Research*, 42(3), 215–230.
- Lester, J. (2008). **Organizing higher education for collaboration: A guide for campus leaders**. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Macfarlane, B. (2011). **Professors as intellectual leaders: Formation, identity and role**. *Studies in Higher Education*, 36(1), 57–73.
- Middlehurst, R. (1993). **Leading academics**. Buckingham: SRHE & Open. University Press.
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2014). **Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook** (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China. (2017). **Action plan for innovative development of higher vocational education (2015–2018)**. Beijing: Ministry of Education of China.
- Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China. (2022). **Opinions on promoting high-quality development of modern vocational education**. Beijing: Ministry of Education of China.
- OECD. (2019). **VET in a Changing World: Preparing Learners for the Future of Work**. Paris: OECD Publishing.
- Pan, J. (2022). **Academic leadership in Chinese universities: Navigating dual-role demands between administration and scholarship**. *Higher Education Policy*, 35(1), 41–60.
- Pan, J., & Hou, J. H. (2014). **The growth landscape of university teachers' academic leadership**. *Research in Educational Development*, 34(23), 54-58.
- Zeng, Y. L., Wang, M., & Sun, N. (2024). **Academic leadership: A vital engine for organized scientific research in universities**. *Heilongjiang Researches on Higher Education*, 42(4), 20-25.

-
- Zhu, H., Li, L., & Li, H. (2022). Teacher trust in others and teacher commitment co-mediate the path from school leadership to students' reading literacy in rural Chinese schools. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13, 992003.
- Zhu, R. (2023). Construction of teacher leadership in universities from an academic community perspective. *Journal of Jilin Institute of Chemical Technology*, 40(2), 59-62.