

A STUDY ON EXTERNAL FACTORS AFFECTING THE PRESIDENT'S LEADERSHIP OF PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES IN YUNNAN

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Abstract

Yunnan is located on the southwest border of China. It is a province inhabited by ethnic minorities with a flourishing multi-ethnic culture and coexistence of multiple religions. Due to the constraints and influence of humanities, geography, politics, economy, transportation, and other factors, Yunnan's private universities started late, and the development of higher education in Yunnan also lags behind other developed regions. According to the latest list of national universities released by the Ministry of Education of China, as of 2023, there are 83 universities in Yunnan, of which 21 are private universities, accounting for 25.3% of the universities in the province. Private universities have become an important part of Yunnan's education.

In the review of existing literature, it is found that the existing research materials are more related to the development status of private universities, and there are few studies on the leadership of private university presidents. There is no relevant literature reflecting the current leadership status of private university presidents in Yunnan. Based on the summary of pertinent literature on the leadership of private university's presidents, the researchers have analyzed six leadership dimensions, namely vision, strategy, communication and coordination, interpersonal relationships, motivation and team building, management and operation capabilities, education reform and innovation, and policies and laws and regulations. Therefore, this study will design a questionnaire on the current status of the leadership of presidents of private universities in Yunnan based on these six leadership dimensions, and conduct data analysis on the 202 questionnaires collected on the current status of the leadership of private universities in Yunnan. According to the survey results, in general, the respondents are not very satisfied with the overall leadership of private universities presidents of in Yunnan. Therefore, the core of this study will focus on the factors affecting the president's leadership of private universities in Yunnan.

Keywords: Private universities; Principal leadership; External influence factor

Introduction

With the official announcement of the newly revised "Regulations on the Implementation of the Law of the People's Republic of China on the Promotion of Private Education" by the State Council in 2021, the direction for the development of private education under the new era, new concepts, and new pattern has been pointed out. Private

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schools and public schools have equal status in law, and the total amount of private education in China has continued to grow, becoming an important growth point for China's education (Zhang H., Wang L.Y, 2023). However, in recent years, private higher education in Yunnan has developed rapidly. The private education system in Yunnan has fully implemented the Party's education policy and implemented the fundamental task of cultivating people with moral integrity. In the face of major adjustments in private education policies, it has actively sought change and responded positively, achieving reasonable growth in scale, continuous improvement in conditions, steady improvement in quality, and gradual highlighting of characteristics, and has entered a new stage in a stable and orderly manner (Chuncheng Evening News, 2023). Researchers have summarized the success of China's university leadership elites and found that their success is not only because of their high academic qualifications, but also because of their good personality traits, including good flexibility, high level of social insight, interpersonal relationship application, and coordination ability, strong understanding of professional knowledge and management knowledge, and strong willpower when establishing goals (Wei S.X., 2020).

Research Purposes

- 1: What are the external factors in the Yunnan private universities practice of principal leadership?
- 2: What key factors have a significant impact on the principal leadership
- 3: External factors have a positive and significant correlation with principal leadership

Literature Review

Principal leadership

Wang Y.M, Du Y.J, & Wu H.Y., (2007) believe that principal leadership is the personal qualities of the principal that influence the development of team members and achieve university construction goals. Li Y.F., (2009) believes that principal leadership is the influence of the principal in leading university employees to formulate university development goals and leading university employees and university stakeholders to achieve predetermined goals. Yin J.H., (2009) believes that principal leadership is the influence of a principal with certain qualities on all teachers, students, and staff to achieve long-term development of the university by relying on his or her own decision-making ability, organizational ability, execution ability, evaluation ability, and communication ability.

Qiu X.M., (2018) believes that principal leadership is a comprehensive force of factors such as the principal's personal and team qualities under a specific leadership system and leadership environment. Rao Z.H., (2013) believes that principal leadership emphasizes the principal's comprehensive strength, that is, the motivation to inspire faculty and students to achieve common goals. Dong T.Q. (2020) believes that principal leadership is the comprehensive ability of the principal to influence and guide teachers, students, and administrative staff to continuously realize the preset vision in the process of coping with management work.

To sum up, the principal's leadership is not simply imposed by the leader on the lead but is two-way. It is the principal's comprehensive ability to meet the needs of stakeholders and achieve university development goals in the process of achieving university goals and promoting university development and in the process of interacting with stakeholders such as students, teachers, and parents. This includes the principal's words and deeds, strategies, powers, and character cultivation, which can inspire the lead to respond positively (Chen M.T., 2018).

Contingency Theory

Fielder (1962) proposed the "Contingency Model of Effective Leadership", namely the Fielder Model. The model introduces three situational factors: leader-member relationship, task structure, and position power. The research results show that when the working environment is at the two extremes of very favorable and unfavorable, task-oriented leadership behavior is better, and when the working environment is between favorable and unfavorable, relationship-oriented leadership behavior should be considered. Fiedler believes that the behavior of leaders and the goals they pursue are diverse, and the existence of this diversity is determined by the differences in basic needs between leaders. Therefore, the leadership style should and must be defined by this demand structure. This is the basic starting point of Fiedler's leadership contingency theory.

Yan D.M. & Wang X.K., (1988) pointed out that the leadership contingency theory integrates the complexity of leadership phenomena. Leadership, an extremely complex social phenomenon, is not only the result of the leader's behavior but also depends on the surrounding leadership environment; another important contribution of the contingency leadership theory is that it provides people with a set of effective leadership methods; the contingency leadership theory is more in line with the needs of actual leaders. Zheng X.M., (2020) believes that this model organically combines the study of leader traits with the study of leadership behavior, and links it with situational classification to study the effectiveness of leadership. After 15 years of investigation, he proposed that effective leadership behavior depends on the way leaders and followers influence each other and the consistency of the degree of control and influence that the situation gives to leaders.

Literature review

The emergence of Western contingency theory originated from the development of system theory, which emphasizes studying things from the overall perspective rather than from the local perspective. Its research mainly focuses on the contingency of organizational structure, leadership, and human nature. The "power" in "contingency theory" means weighing, and "contingency" means weighing the importance of right and wrong, adapting to the circumstances, and changing with specific situations and different conditions and factors (Kou W.P., 2010). The scope of application of contingency theory has also expanded from the initial organizational structure to many management fields such as leadership style, accounting, and planning. Sun J.G & Wang X.Y., (2016) believe that contingency theory clarifies the complexity of leadership phenomena. The emergence of a certain leadership phenomenon is not determined by the will of the leader himself but is inseparable from the leadership environment in which he is located.

In summary, the contingency theory discusses the relationship between the effectiveness of leadership and the environment in which it is located. The three elements of leaders, followers, and environment and their interactions and influences; including leadership style, characteristics of followers, and organizational structure are all factors that affect the effectiveness of leadership behavior. Contingency theory helps leaders adjust their leadership style and continuously improve their ability to adapt and change through practice and experience. From statically seeking a certain optimal trait or behavior to dynamically constructing a contingency model, these changes reflect the continuous development of leadership contingency theory (Zhang D.C., 2013). From focusing on the personal characteristics of leaders to the impact of leadership situations on leadership behavior, leadership contingency theory can understand the influencing factors of leadership more deeply and comprehensively; it can explain the complexity of the leadership process; it can connect the causal relationship between leadership and the final actual leadership effect; it helps to improve and enhance the direction of leadership, and it is of great value to the research and practice of leadership of private universities in Yunnan.

Research Methods

This is a qualitative article. It was distributed to 200 people in the form of "WJX" by the relevant stakeholders of Yunnan private universities, and then the collected first-hand information was coded and analyzed. Mining influencing factors, etc. Interviews help researchers obtain interpretive data and "symbiotic knowledge" generated by interactions during the interview process (Yin, 2013), observe and understand various phenomena from the perspective of the research object, and the interview method is used to collect data and analyze data results.

This article uses data analysis and interviews to dig out valuable information as much as possible, disrupts all the data information obtained from the interview, uses exploratory methods to analyze, summarize and uses data mining, word frequency, and other methods and means to refine and organize information from the data. This study adopts a bottom-up procedural analysis method (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) when processing interview transcription data. The specific operation is divided into four stages: data preprocessing, primary coding (Open coding), secondary coding (Axial coding), and tertiary coding (Selective coding).

Research result

The questionnaire design is divided into five parts. The first part is the current status scale of the private universities' leadership in Yunnan. The second part is the satisfaction of the president's leadership. The third part is the channels of contact with the president. The questions in this part are multiple-choice questions. The more you check, the more channels you have to contact with the president. The fourth part is the frequency of contact with the president. The fifth part is the basic information of stakeholders other than the president of private universities in Yunnan.

Interview Subjects

This study is carried out in the direction of the leadership of the Yunnan private universities presidents. It follows the principle of voluntariness. In qualitative research, whether the research subjects are willing and actively cooperate has a direct impact on the effect of the research. This study finally identified 15 members of the board of directors of private universities in Yunnan, incumbent presidents, vice presidents, former presidents, and experts who have conducted relevant research on the presidents of private universities in Yunnan as interview subjects, and conducted in-depth interviews with semi-structured interviews. For privacy protection, the full names and university information of the interviewees are not displayed. As shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1 Interview Status List

Interview No.	Interview duration	Number of interviews	Interview format	Interview content	Interview data
01	50min	2	Phone	true	conform to
02	58min	2	Phone	true	conform to
03	45min	1	Phone	true	conform to
04	90min	3	Phone call, face-to-face interview	true	conform to
05	60min	2	Phone	true	conform to
06	55min	2	Phone	true	conform to
07	65min	2	Phone	true	conform to

08	70min	2	Phone	true	conform to
09	110min	2	Phone	true	conform to
10	80min	1	face-to-face interview	true	conform to
11	120min	3	Phone call, face-to-face interview	true	conform to
12	56min	1	Phone	true	conform to
13	150min	3	Phone call, face-to-face interview	true	conform to
14	40min	1	Phone	true	conform to
15	100min	2	Phone call, face-to-face interview	true	conform to

Open coding

Table 2 Examples of open coding of interview data (Interception)

Manuscript excerpt	Initial concept
As the principal of a private university, more emphasis may be placed on professional ethics and the ability of educational administration. Being a principal may be related to his adaptation to the role, role transformation and role competence, role identification, and the establishment of decision-making awareness. Some people have innate qualities and innate leadership, while others may not have them. Many people understand the concept of the principal as a concept similar to a professional manager. Compared with the principal of a public university, the principal of a private university may be more of a representative of stakeholders, satisfying and continuously providing corresponding balance and guarantees for these stakeholders. This is the role positioning that a principal of a private university should have...	A1-32 Professional ethics A1-33 Ability to manage education administration A1-34 Adaptation to the role A1-35 Transformation of the role A1-36 Competence in the role A1-37 Recognition of the role A1-38 Establishment of decision-making awareness A1-39 Innate qualities and leadership A1-40 Professional managers A1-41 Representative of stakeholders A1-42 Role positioning A1-43 Non-power influence A1-44 Knowledge and academic quality A1-45 Good personality A1-46 Including the ability to give speeches, deal with students, teachers, and society A1-47 Unique ideas A1-48 Wisdom A1-49 Ability to think politically A1-50 Ability to think dialectically A1-51 Strong sense of social responsibility
The new changes and new requirements of higher education as a whole, focusing on high-quality development, provide support for the economic, social, and cultural development of the region; whether we have the preparation and conditions to adapt to the new requirements and new changes. How to position people, things, and disciplines, what kind of people to cultivate, how to interact with the economy and culture, and how to support them? The most important thing is the mechanism and system of university operation, the power operation of investors, the power operation of administration, the overall leadership of the party, and the operation of academic power. This is a four-power issue.	A2-12 New changes and new requirements for higher education as a whole A2-13 Supporting the economic, social and cultural development of the region around high-quality development A2-14 Whether we have the preparation and conditions to adapt to new requirements and changes A2-15 How to position people, objects, disciplines and majors A2-16 What kind of people should be cultivated, how to interact with the economy and culture, and how to support A2-17 The mechanism and system of university operation A2-18 The overall leadership of investors, administration and the party plus the operation of academic power
There are many private university presidents who lack professional spirit, professional ethics, and corresponding professional ability. Many private university presidents' knowledge	A3-25 Professional spirit A3-26 Professional ethics A3-27 Professional ability A3-28 Knowledge but no culture

but no culture, culture but no ideology, or ideology but lack a grasp of the truth. This is the saddest thing.	A3-29 Culture but no ideology A3-30 Ideas but no grasp of the truth
I found that there are fewer and fewer local principals now, and many are invited from outside. And I feel that the mobility of principals of private universities in Yunnan is quite high. Some principals may be poached by different universities, and the salary and benefits affect the choice of principals. The different sources of principals have a relatively large impact on their leadership. However, the current situation of most private universities is that the principals are hired by the board of directors....	A4-14 There are fewer and fewer local principals, and many are invited from outside. A4-15 The different sources of principals A4-16 The mobility of principals is quite high A4-17 Principals may be poached by different universities A4-18 Salary and benefits affect the choice of principals A4-19 The different sources of principals actually have a relatively large impact on their leadership A4-20 Principals are hired by the board of directors
So, my first suggestion is to run universities according to the law, and the power level of the board of directors should be effectively improved. Then the power of the president should be fully demonstrated. The second suggestion is that we have not formed a good mechanism for the selection of presidents. The selection of presidents depends on personal connections, such as introductions from familiar people. So, can we truly democratically and openly select the presidents of private universities? Let other intellectuals in society effectively intervene in the construction of the leadership of the president. The third is our training system and honor system for the leadership of the president and the president himself, that is, to be a good professional president.	A5-31 Run university according to the law A5-32 Then the power level of the board of directors must be effectively improved A5-33 The power of the president must also be fully demonstrated A5-34 The selection system for the president A5-35 The leadership of the president and the training system and honor system for the president himself A5-36 Now we are facing changes in the system and mechanism of government management of private universities, and we must adapt quickly

Axis Encoding

Table 3 Example of principal axis coding for interview data A1

Leadership Contingency	Leadership Qualities	Personality Charisma	A1-5 Personality Charisma
		Innate advantages	A1-39 Innate qualities and leadership
		Personality	A1-45 Good personality
		Thought	A1-47 Unique Thoughts
		Wisdom	A1-48 Wisdom
	Leadership Style	Character	A1-55 The strength of a principal's leadership depends on his character and his ambition.
		Emotional Intelligence	A1-118 Emotional Quotient
		Style	A1-105 Personal style is also an important indicator of the sustainable development of principals' leadership
		University conditions	A1-28 University operation conditions
	Environment variables	Organizational Structure	A1-29 Middle-level cadres of the university A1-30 Overall quality of the teaching staff
		Social expectations	A1-104 The role of a principal is social. If the expectations of society are not met, it will affect the leadership of the principal.

The above research has the following results

1. In the study of external factors affecting leadership, three main categories are obtained, leadership traits, leadership behavior, and environmental variables; 2. It is found that external factors have a significant impact on the principal leadership: Based on the coding and concept categories, the relationship between the concept categories is analyzed, and the two concept categories of external factors and leadership contingency are summarized, which include the two main categories of board authorization and source of appointment; 3. Board authorization: The main category of board authorization includes five subcategories, rules and regulations; providing support; ambiguity of rights and responsibilities; governing the university according to law; and cause community; 4. Leadership contingency factors: In the concept category of leadership contingency, five main categories are obtained, namely leadership ability, stakeholders, financial pressure, environmental variables, and government policies; 5. Leadership ability: The content includes whether the connotation can be improved, whether the team can be built well, whether the integration of industry and education can be implemented, and whether it has its own characteristics, which will be the factors affecting the leadership of the principal; 6. Stakeholders: Among them, stakeholders such as the chairman, board of directors, and investors of private universities are some of the factors affecting the principal's leadership; 7. Financial pressure: Many university are in debt, so they are involved in some debt disputes, and whether they can obtain education funding, these financial pressures will affect the leadership of the principal; 8. Environmental variables: The social environment and the university's own environmental conditions will affect the leadership of the principal; 9. Government policies: Policies and related systems will directly affect the final effectiveness of the principal's leadership, and the relationship between the education department the local government department, and the university is also a factor that affects the development of the university and the leadership of the principal.

Summarize

The external factors affecting the leadership of the Yunnan private universities presidents mainly include board authorization, source of appointment, leadership ability, stakeholders, financial pressure, environmental variables, and government policies. The details are as follows:

1. Board authorization

The president needs to perform his duties by the charter, but in actual operation, the president's control over financial power and human rights is often lower than that stated in the institutional documents. The support provided by the board of directors has an important impact on the leadership of the president, and lack of support will weaken the leadership of the president. The unclear responsibilities and powers between the board of directors and the president have limited the decision-making power of the president, affecting his leadership. The appointment and leadership process of the president must be combined with national policies and guidelines and run university by the law. The president and the board of directors need to maintain their relationship through a benign communication mechanism and form a community of cause. The consistent value positioning has a direct impact on the management style of the president.

2. Source of appointment

The leadership of principals is significantly affected by personal experience, professional qualities, and other factors due to different sources of principals. Principals may change frequently due to poaching by different universities, which affects the stability and development of the university. Salary and benefits have become one of the important factors affecting the selection of principals.

3. Leadership ability

Whether the principal can successfully improve the connotation of the university is directly related to the core competitiveness and long-term development of the university.

Building a good cadre team and teaching staff is an important indicator to measure the leadership of the principal. Whether the integration of industry and education can be implemented affects the close connection between the university and the industry and the characteristics of the university. Whether the university has a unique university-running characteristic is also an important manifestation of the principal's leadership.

4. Stakeholders

The chairman and the board of directors have the highest decision-making power and have a decisive influence on the principal's decisions and actions. Investors provide funds and resources and have the right to decide on the use and allocation of funds, which affects the principal's resource allocation and decision-making ability. The principal needs to find a balance between stakeholders and coordinate relationships to maintain the stability and development of the university.

5. Financial pressure

Investors have limited funds and focus on investment returns. The principal needs to make prudent decisions and balance education quality and economic benefits. University debt and debt disputes increase operating costs and risks, affecting the principal's decision-making. Education funding is crucial to university operations and development, and the principal needs to actively strive for it.

6. Environmental variables

The development of public universities squeezes private space, regional economic and cultural development restricts education development, and market mechanisms and public opinion indirectly affect the principal's leadership. The overall situation of the university, governance structure, teaching investment, scattered management energy, and profitability directly affect the leadership of the principal.

7. Government policies

Policy formulation and implementation directly affect the principal's decision-making process, leadership style, and final results. Government power provides confidence and motivation for principals to run universities. The tax system reduces the economic pressure on university and provides a better management environment. It affects the reputation and status of university and indirectly affects the leadership of principals. It determines the living environment and development prospects of private universities in Yunnan and strongly supports the enhancement of principals' leadership. Communication with local governments and education authorities helps principals understand policy trends, obtain resource support, and solve university problems.

Discuss

In summary, there are many external factors affecting the leadership of presidents of private universities in Yunnan. However, when discussing the external factors affecting the leadership of presidents of private universities in Yunnan, board authorization is a particularly critical factor. Board authorization is directly related to the decision-making power, resource allocation power, and overall leadership of the president in the university management process. First, although the university charter and rules and regulations clearly define the responsibilities and powers of the president, in actual operation, the president's control over financial power and human rights is often lower than the level described in the system documents. This inconsistency limits the president's autonomy in resource allocation and personnel management and affects the effective exercise of his leadership. Secondly, the degree of support from the board of directors to the president directly affects his leadership. When the board of directors actively provides the president with necessary resources, policies, and environmental support, the president's leadership can be fully demonstrated and enhanced. On the contrary, lack of support or insufficient support will weaken the president's decision-making and execution power. However, the problem of unclear responsibilities and powers between the board of directors and the president is common, which leads to many restrictions

on the president in actual management work and a lack of necessary decision-making power. In this case, it is difficult for the president's leadership to be fully exerted, and it may even affect the normal operation and development of the university due to obstructed decision-making. Specifically, the board of directors takes on too many affairs, the principal often exceeds his authority, and the boundaries between the decision-making and executive levels are blurred. In addition, when authorizing, the board of directors should ensure that the principal has a legal and compliant governance environment to avoid unnecessary losses to the university due to legal risks. At the same time, standardized governance is also an important guarantee for improving the leadership of the principal. Finally, the principal and the board of directors should form a community of cause and maintain the relationship between the two parties through a benign communication mechanism. Consistent value positioning and a common understanding of the university's development vision will help the principal better perform his duties and exert leadership. At the same time, a good communication mechanism is also an important way to resolve differences and coordinate interests.

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