

Research on the Path of Cultivating Leadership among Vocational College Students

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Abstract: The cultivation of leadership among vocational college students has long been an important measure for Western universities to cultivate future social elites and leading talents in various industries. At present, many well-known universities in China are actively cultivating the leadership of college students and have achieved certain results. However, compared with universities in Western countries, there are still problems such as deviation in training objectives, limited coverage of training objects, single training forms, incomplete curriculum systems, emphasis on leadership skills training, and lack of value education. Chinese universities can learn from the leadership training experience of American universities to enhance the leadership of Chinese university students. Specifically, it is necessary to establish a correct training concept and achieve full coverage of training objects; Enrich training forms, standardize and improve the curriculum education system; With the cultivation of values as the core, improve the training content.

Keywords: leadership in vocational colleges, vocational colleges, leadership development, cultivation path

Introduction

Throughout human civilization, the core of competition among organizations, regions, and nations has primarily been a contest of talent, with leadership talent playing a pivotal role^[1]. Leaders, through their influence, attract high-quality talents, forming teams that drive significant achievements. In the context of a complex international landscape and the rapid evolution of the internet era, there are heightened demands for talent. This necessitates a profound understanding and enhancement of leadership skills, not just as a personal aspiration but as a national imperative. Individuals must recognize the importance of leadership and proactively cultivate these skills, aligning personal development with broader national objectives.

1. Theoretical basis for improving leadership among vocational college students

The enhancement of leadership skills in vocational college students integrates key theoretical frameworks. Leadership theories like transformational, moral, and situational leadership offer insights into leadership traits and behaviors, aiding in the development of students' leadership potential. Personality psychology, especially the Five Personality Traits theory, illuminates how traits such as extroversion and conscientiousness influence leadership. Educational psychology suggests strategies like social cognitive theory and self-determination theory for learning leadership skills through observation and intrinsic

motivation. However, the real advancement in leadership requires practical application, training, and reflection, going beyond theoretical understanding to improve students' leadership abilities effectively^[2].

2. Analysis of the current situation of leadership among vocational college students

Vocational college students face several challenges in developing leadership skills. Firstly, poor self-awareness and confidence often hinder their willingness to assume leadership roles, leading to a conservative approach in their endeavors. Secondly, the lack of an enabling educational environment and structured training mechanisms in vocational colleges crucially impacts the nurturing of student leadership. Without dedicated leadership courses, practical exposure, and support resources, students' leadership capabilities remain underdeveloped. Thirdly, inadequate teamwork abilities impede their effectiveness in leadership roles within teams, as effective collaboration and communication are essential for leadership. Despite this, the leadership potential among vocational students is varied, each possessing unique strengths and areas for growth. Enhancing their leadership skills requires a combination of appropriate training, educational support, and practical experiences. Concurrently, students must actively engage in exploring and cultivating their leadership potential through continuous learning and practice^[3].

3. The experience of cultivating leadership among American college students

American universities have a history of over 50 years in cultivating leadership among college students, accumulating rich experience in training objectives, methods, and content. As early as 1980, more than 600 universities in the United States began teaching leadership courses. Whether it is a state university, a private university, or a multi campus university with a dual nature of public and private, the United States maximizes the concentration of internal and external resources to actively cultivate the leadership of college students.

The development of leadership skills in American college students encompasses a comprehensive approach, targeting a broad spectrum of students with an aim to nurture new civic leaders. Leadership education in these institutions is both inclusive and mandatory, with programs like Cleveland State University's "Student Leadership Program" open to all interested students without prerequisites, and others like Ball State University's "Excellent Leadership Program" mandating participation for freshmen. This systematic and ongoing process involves theoretical learning, practical activities, and reflective evaluation^[4]. American universities offer leadership courses for credit, employing classroom teaching, lectures, and seminars to provide a solid theoretical foundation. Additionally, extracurricular activities such as community services, internships, overseas study tours, and other practical experiences play a crucial role in enhancing students' leadership skills and fostering social responsibility. This multifaceted approach ensures a well-rounded cultivation of leadership abilities, preparing students for diverse roles in society.

American universities have incorporated leadership development into their college student development plans, arranging detailed courses and learning plans, and forming a standardized and comprehensive degree system. For example, the Gordon Engineering Leadership Program implemented by Massachusetts Institute of Technology is a professional leadership program based on subject knowledge and engineering practice. In addition to taking leadership courses, students also need to enter the engineering leadership laboratory, participate in interdisciplinary and international engineering practice projects, receive guidance from industry leaders, and complete additional corporate internship tasks in order to obtain the "Gordon Engineering Leader" qualification certificate^[5].

Leadership development in American universities follows a structured approach, beginning with imparting theoretical knowledge, as seen in Raven University's "Landers Leadership Scholars" program,

where students learn fundamental leadership theories. Programs like Rutgers University's National Women's Leadership Education emphasize understanding the role of women in politics and decision-making. The next phase focuses on skill cultivation, where students engage in clubs, student organizations, community service, and other activities, enhancing abilities such as self-management, communication, decision-making, and adaptability. Lastly, there's a strong emphasis on value cultivation, integral to leadership education. Universities, like the University of Miami with its "Leadership Commitment" program, prioritize value education, instilling principles like critical thinking, empathy, responsibility, respectful communication, and teamwork. This holistic method integrates theoretical, practical, and ethical dimensions to develop well-rounded leaders.

4. Analysis of breakthrough paths in cultivating leadership among vocational college students

The cultivation of leadership among Chinese college students started relatively late, and the relevant theories and practices still need to be improved. Chinese universities can learn from the experience of American universities and effectively cultivate the leadership of Chinese college students. The breakthrough path for cultivating leadership among vocational college students can be analyzed and reflected on from the following aspects:

4.1 Educational Curriculum Design

Vocational colleges can incorporate leadership development into their curriculum design. Provide relevant leadership courses or modules, covering leadership theory, practical skills, and case studies, to help students understand and master the basic concepts, principles, and skills of leadership.

4.2 Providing practical opportunities

Providing diverse practical opportunities is the key to cultivating leadership. Schools can encourage students to participate in organizations such as clubs, student unions, and volunteer activities, hold leadership positions or participate in leadership projects, and exercise students' leadership skills through practical practice. Establishing leadership training programs, and each university should tailor specialized leadership training programs based on its own vision and goals, subject and professional characteristics, and students' future employment positions. For example, the leadership development program set up by the University of Surrey for chemical engineering students includes a 3-day introductory course focused on leadership theory and skills, and a 6-day advanced course focused on outdoor activities and chemical skill experiments. Each student is required to take on leadership and observer roles at least twice during the 3-day introductory course, completing 16 different tasks, in order to learn and master basic leadership theories and skills.

4.3 Mentor guidance and guidance

Provide students with a mentoring system and arrange specialized mentors or mentors for leadership development guidance and guidance. Mentors can provide personalized guidance and suggestions to help students discover their leadership potential, solve problems in leadership practice, and provide necessary feedback and support.

Conflicts of interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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