A DEVELOPMENT OF STUDENT LEADERSHIP CHARACTERISTIC PRACTICE MODEL AT NORMAL UNIVERSITIES IN HEBEI PROVINCE, CHINA

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Abstract: Student leadership development provides students with opportunities to demonstrate and cultivate their leadership characteristics. In this research, the main purpose was to create a model for the development of student leadership characteristic practice at Normal Universities in Hebei Province of China. It applied both qualitative and quantitative methods. The researcher applied the content analysis about desirable student leadership characteristics in higher education. Skills, knowledge and attitude were crucial components of student leadership development, and the accomplished results of content analysis were validated by twenty-one experts. The researcher utilized survey questionnaires for data collection of 377 students, 243 teachers and 37 top-level administrators. The results of questionnaires, combined with interview data collection of 52 market employers of internship together as a reference revealed the areas that need urgent improvements. Student leadership theories and initial findings of first and second objective derived a preliminary model, after the experts' validation and discussion; the researcher modified the nascent model until it became the final model. In the following step, the period of implementation included three months, which comprised student leadership conferences, local community service outreach, empowering leaders' camp, co-curricular activities, and evaluation and feedback of student leadership characteristic practice, these called intervention program was developed based on the model. The results of differences between pre-test and post-test, which contained a total of 50 participants, proved that the model was undoubtedly effective with long-term significance. Eventually, the final model and the leadership training offered a potential programmatic option to help develop students as outstanding leaders.

Keywords: Student Leadership, Leadership Characteristic, Leadership Characteristic Practice, Normal Universities in China.

Introduction

Student leadership development is necessary in today's society. Each university should provide opportunities that enrich and support personal growth and academic development which fulfills in a lifelong commitment to effective leadership. University has great effects on students. It is the main factor in the formation of student leadership development. College students were not only the main force in the development and progress of modern society, but also a team with unlimited potential. In the current environment, if the universities could develop student leaders who were good at strong ability and excellent quality, they could be significant for the whole society.

Despite of a late start about Chinese Students leadership in higher education, it was a fact that had been taken seriously in recent years. Although there were several ready-made western student leadership models and practices in overseas universities, undoubtedly, developing or implementing a specific leadership model as well as students' characteristics as potential leaders in Hebei Normal Universities was an arduous task as a pathway to fulfill the direction and needs of Chinese higher education being suitable for China's national conditions. Li (2011) indicated Chinese students had good qualities, such as active thinking, well-motivated, epistemic and potentially lucrative.

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However, under the current philosophy of education, He, Bu, Tang, and Sun (2003) stated there were several aspects might still largely insufficient, such as interpersonal communication, teamwork, fair competition, making open character, and so on. In this scenario, it was not stressed about cooperating with others to achieve common goals. A majority of students did not find a wide range of cooperative partners to enlist support, thus in this study, it would be argued that student leaders in the investigation should be provided a suitable model to encourage and perpetuate leadership knowledge, skills, and ability among students. In addition, every student teacher needed to fulfill the own role as a leader. In order to investigate the student leadership of the status quo, explore student leadership characteristic practice of Normal university students, enhance the overall quality and ability of students leadership, it was significant to conduct this study.

Research Objectives
There are four research objectives:
1. To explore the desirable student leadership characteristics in higher education.
2. To identify the current student leadership characteristic practice of normal universities in Hebei Province of China.
3. To develop a proposed development of student leadership characteristic practice model at normal universities in Hebei Province of China.
4. *To implement the development of student leadership characteristic practice model at Hengshui Normal University in Hebei Province of China.*

Literature Review
This part explained the theoretical basis of the study. The major theories that were explored in this study were student leadership practices, student leadership involvement and student development, they were involved three theories: (1) Kouzes and Posner's (2006) Transformational Leadership Five Practices Inventory. (2) Alexander Astin's (1984) Theory of Student Involvement. (3) Chickering's (1969) Seven Vectors Theory. The details regarding above theories were presented in the following part. Student leadership development as one of the most important concepts could be traced to the initial purposes of higher education (Astin, 1984; Shertzer & Schuh, 2004). Student Affairs maintained a long-term commitment to support students learning in campus life and promote student learning across the division with diverse services and growth opportunities. Student development theory assessed its impact on student leading by outcomes. It revolved around the psychological findings derived from the undergraduate students. Student development theory in higher education was very important because it allowed student practitioners had more comprehensive understanding of many college students who were experiencing changes.

The theory provided a model and built a stronger understanding of how students' development go through, which in turn provided useful framework on how the professionals make decisions in the best interests of their students. Student affairs began to be known in the middle of the twentieth century, and it stood out as the student development theory from the principles in the fields of psychology and sociology (Evans, Forney, and Guido-DiBrito, 1998; Hamrick, Evans, and Schuh, 2002). Student development theory could be useful in a variety of student affairs, such as the understanding of handle with various situations that might occur, improvement of education policy, putting the needs of students at the forefront of progressive advancement. In this study, Normal university students' practice in terms of leadership skills and abilities were examined by Kouzes and Posner's (2006) Five Practices Inventory.

The two authors claimed that leadership was an identifiable set of skills and abilities that were available to everyone. Astin's (1984) Student Involvement Theory and Chickering's (1969) Seven Vectors Theory both examine students' knowledge in leadership beliefs and behavior, whether they were effective in co-curricular activities for consistent thinking and active participation. According to the Bloom's (1956) Taxonomy, not only corresponded with the above theories, but also summed up the skills, knowledge and attitude which were essential areas to demonstrate student leadership characteristics. In short, in this study through the content analysis of all student leadership theories, after possessed the results of desirable student leadership characteristics, the researcher would get inspiration about elements, directions and variables for the design of questionnaires and interview, the

researcher would like to get a clear picture of students' current characteristic practice in order to achieve the ultimate goal.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework was drawn in the figure 1 as follows: On the left side were components comprising three domains of student leadership characteristic practice: skills, knowledge and attitude.
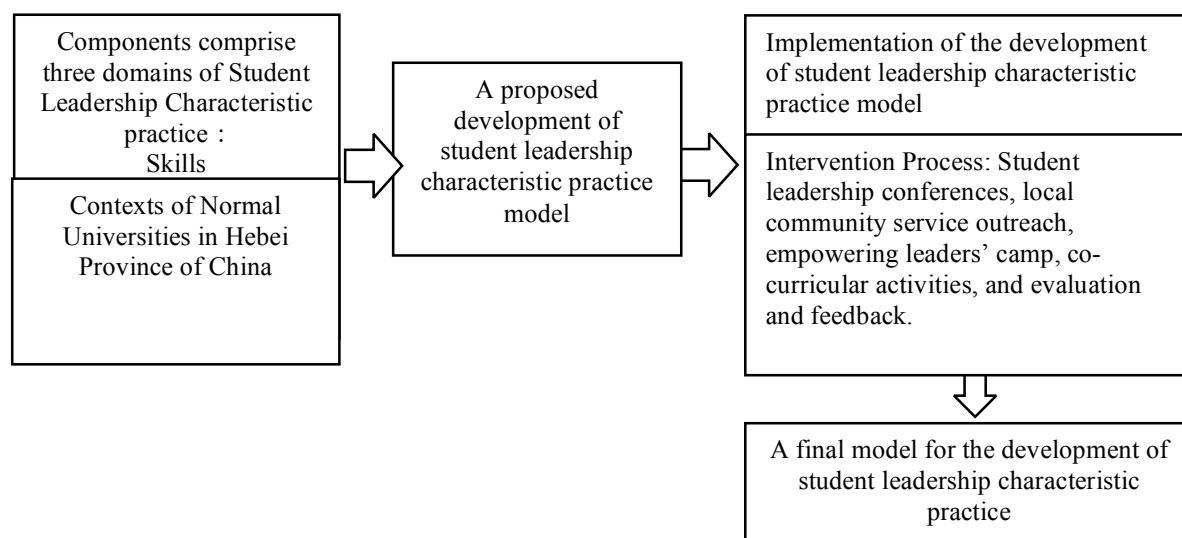

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of the Study

From observing some improved room between the desirable and current characteristics, based on the student leadership theories and the results of first two objectives of the study, a new model was developed to enhance and cultivate student leadership. With the model validation, the researcher designed a student leadership characteristic practice cultivation and intervention program which based on the contents of new model. During the model implementation, pre-test and post-test were conducted in order to compare the results of the control group and experimental group, eventually it showed the effectiveness of the new student leadership characteristic practice model.

Method/Procedure

The researcher applied mixed methods which combined qualitative, quantitative and experimental methods in this study: 1. Qualitative and quantitative methods: the content analysis was used to explore the research objective one, defining the desirable student leadership characteristics in higher education. The questionnaires were used for research objective two to explore the current student leadership characteristic practice at normal universities in Hebei Province of China. The interview was used to support research objective three to develop a proposed development of student leadership characteristic practice model of Normal Universities in Hebei Province of China. 2. Experimental Method: the results of implementing a development of student leadership characteristic practice model at Hengshui Normal University in Hebei Province of China were used to support research objective four. Finally got the student leadership characteristic practice model for students as end product. The sample of the study was based on the criteria in selecting five normal universities in Hebei Province. The sources of data for research objective one included 128 textbooks, dissertations, articles and online documents related to student leadership characteristics which were published from 1956 to 2016. For research objective two, the data of questionnaires for teachers, students, top-level administrators, and structured interview for market employers as representatives of internship schools was collected, it was worth mentioning that the researcher did interview with all of representatives at all of the internship schools, each internship school sent a representative, the representatives in charge knew the students' internship situation and could give useful advice. On the basis of the findings from objective one and two, the researcher developed a model for development of student leadership characteristic practice at normal universities in Hebei Province of China. The researcher mainly used the student leadership theories of Kouzes and Posner, Astin, and Chickering.

Before applying the model in all the five normal universities of Hebei Province, the proposed model was implemented for a period of three months at Hengshui Normal University with permission of the top-level administrators. The researcher conducted a pre-test to see whether there was any significant difference between the questionnaire results of two groups. The model was implemented among experimental group students; at the same time, the control group students attended the traditional student leadership education in campus.

After the implementation period of three months, the researcher collected the post-test data. The data were analyzed separately and the results of independent sample t test showed an increased significant level in the experimental group. It strongly proved the effectiveness of the model. The study focused on the student leadership characteristic practice development and was conducted in the academic years 2015 and 2016 (September 2016 to July 2017) at normal universities in Hebei Province of China.

Findings
The main findings and conclusions were detailed in the following section meeting with each research objective.

Research Objective One
To explore the desirable student leadership characteristics in Higher Education. The researcher did content analysis of 128 sources which contained 112 books and 16 articles related to student leadership, leadership development from the library database of Assumption University and online sources, as to explore the desirable student leadership characteristics in higher education. The selected published sources were between the year 1956 and 2016. The extracted coding sheet in the appendix revealed the key themes and similar grouped sub-themes in corresponding categories, and there were three domains as per the results of content analysis: 1. Skills, 2. Knowledge, 3. Attitude. In this process, the researcher spent half year to find out the desirable student leadership characteristics in higher education through content analysis.

Research Objective Two
To identify the current student leadership characteristic practice of Normal Universities in Hebei Province of China. The survey instrument gathering data in this study was Skills Knowledge Attitude (S.K.A.) Student Leadership Characteristics Questionnaire for the fourth year students, Skills Knowledge Attitude (S.K.A.) Student Leadership Characteristics Questionnaire for teachers of the fourth year students and top-level administrators and Interview, and S.K.A. were the 15 components from content analysis grouped into three categories. The researcher constructed the two different questionnaires and six structured interview questions appropriate to the educational policy and culture in five normal universities in Hebei province of China.

The student survey questionnaire was designed by using results which contained 15 components from content analysis to explore the research objective two, defining the current student leadership characteristics in Normal Universities of Hebei Province. The structure of questions was divided into two parts; part one included about demographic variables, such as the name of university, gender, position, age and main disciplinary background. Part two included three sections, item 1-5 measured students' overall skills, item 6-11 measured students' overall knowledge, item 12-15 measured students' overall attitude. Such as in Table 1 and Table 2.
Table 1 indicated that the most participants were from Hebei Normal University for Nationalities (23.3%), Hebei Normal University (21.5%), and Baoding Normal University (21.0%), respectively. Male participants (51.6%) and female participants (48.4%) were almost balanced. Most of the participants were senior students. Out of 657 participants, 57.4% of them were senior students, the most disciplinary background of participants were from English (12.02%), Curriculum and Instruction (11.43%) and Educational Administration (11.43%), respectively. And the most of the participants were students at the age between 20-25 years (65%).

Table 1: Number and Percentage of Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Demographics	Number	Percentage
University name: Hebei Normal University	141	21.50
Hengshui Normal University	120	18.20
Baoding Normal University	138	21.00
Cangzhou Normal University	105	16.00
Hebei Normal University for Nationalities	153	23.30
Gender: Male	339	51.60
Female	318	48.40
Position: Fourth year students	377	57.40
Fourth year teachers	243	37.00
Top-level administrators	37	5.60
Main disciplinary background:		
Chinese	43	8.33
English	62	12.02
Mathematic	32	6.20
P.E.	42	8.14
History	37	7.17
Biology	36	7.00
Physics	20	3.88
Chemistry	46	8.91
I.T	24	4.70
Curriculum and Instruction	59	11.43
Geography	40	7.75
Educational Administration	59	11.43
Others	16	3.10
Age: 20-25 years old	427	65.00
26-30 years old	44	6.70
31-35 years old	77	11.70
36-40 years old	33	5.00
41-45 years old	33	5.00
46-50 years old	43	6.60

According to senior students, Table 1 revealed that the average mean was 3.71, all the mean of each item was above 3.50, and therefore, the senior students perceived that the overall level of current student leadership characteristics according to planning skills was not poor. After completed all of the data analysis of items of two questionnaires, results of the Data Collection from the students, teachers and administrators were below:

- In skills section, there were two items were low which were: flexibility skills and organizational skills;
- In knowledge section, there were two items were low which were: have knowledge of learning principles and have knowledge of self-knowledge & identity are poor;
- In attitude section, there were four items were low which were: healthy mentality, respect and modest, and confidence.

Table 2: Students' Perception toward to Planning Skills

Student Leadership Skills		N	Mean	S.D	Interpretation
1.	Strong collaborative skills	427	4.13	0.79	High
2.	A certain plan	427	3.67	0.80	High
3.	Coordinate various resources	427	3.95	0.62	High
4.	An important role	427	3.67	0.72	High
5.	A strong ability	427	3.65	0.75	High
	Total	427	3.71		High

Besides, the purpose of structured interview was to support the research objective two to identify the current student leadership characteristics of Normal Universities in Hebei Province of China. The interview was conducted with 52 market employers of internship program.

The interview included six questions. Results of the Interview with the Market Employers of Internship Schools: it was worth mentioning that the market employers of internship schools had emphasized three components of the student leaders should be improved necessarily, even the relevant data corresponding with the three components did not reveal a lower level during the questionnaire results, the internship was the most capable to demonstrate the authentic depiction in real practice. The results of interview should not be overlooked, conversely, the researcher paid more attention to it, and it assisted the questionnaire results, both sides complement each other to make the findings of objective two to be consummate.

Hence, it was evident from the results from the qualitative and quantitative data collected, detected, and classified from the students, teachers, administrators and market employers, finally located targets, the skills should be developed are flexibility skills, organizational skills, communication skills, and planning skills. The knowledge should be provided are learning principles, innovation, and self-management capacity. The attitude should be changed are healthy mentality, respectful and modest, responsibilities and confidence. They combined together to become model elements, and these led to objective three of this study.

Research Objective Three
To develop a proposed development of student leadership characteristic practice model at Normal Universities in Hebei Province of China. The results of objective one and two, the desirable student leadership characteristics in Higher Education and the current student leadership characteristics of Normal Universities in Hebei Province of China, revealed that there was a deep gap between them. In order to fill this gap, the researcher designed and developed a proposed student leadership model by combining the results of these research objectives.

The findings of content analysis showed that there were three domains that were very necessary for successful and effective student leadership characteristics in higher education, namely: skills, knowledge, and attitude. Hence, the researcher gathered all the key components of these three domains in a proposed student leadership characteristic practice model; it also directed the student leadership characteristic intervention program through desirable practice of student involvement.

The proposed model was sent to twenty-one experts for operational validity, after their review and comprehension, they returned their suggestions and comments. To follow the instructions, the researcher modified the preliminary model to be the final one, and one point was deserved to be mentioned, all of the Chinese experts recommended the researcher to add "Moderation" among the attitude components, the final model met their requirements, eventually the objective three was achieved.

After reviewing the experts' comments and suggestions for validating the preliminary model, the researcher did the necessary modification on the previous one, and the researcher also put the key components into the modified model in order to fill the gap between current and desirable student leadership characteristics urgently. The Figure 2 showed the final development of student leadership characteristic practice model for Normal Universities in Hebei Province of China.
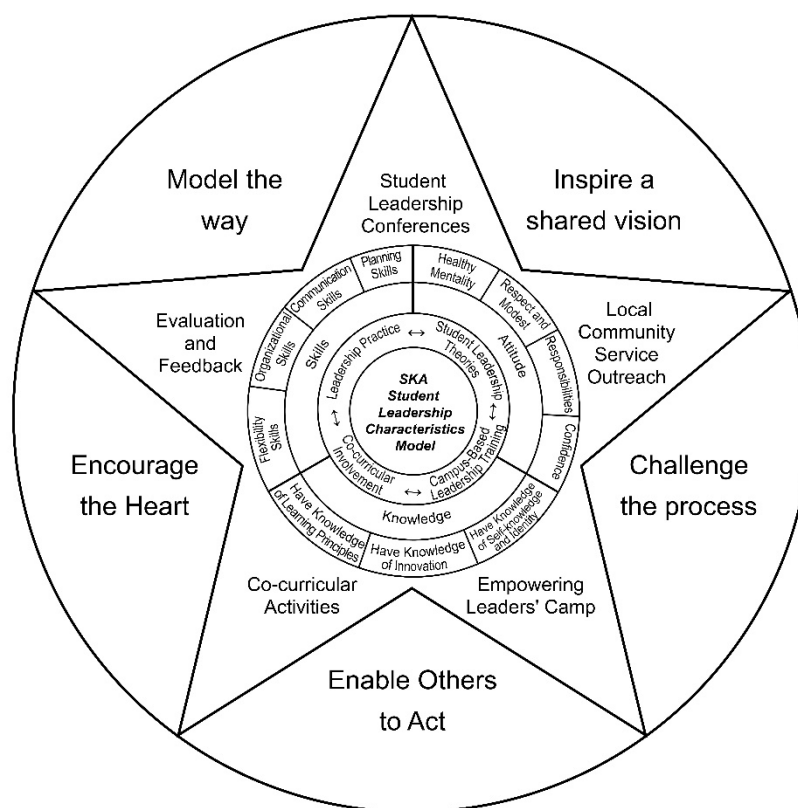
Figure 2: A Development of Student Leadership Characteristic Practice Model for Normal Universities in Hebei Province of China

Research Objective Four

To implement a development of student leadership characteristic practice model at Hengshui Normal University in Hebei Province of China. The final objective of this research was to implement the student leadership characteristics model. This process was broken down into the following three steps: pre-test, intervention program and post-test. The steps are explained in details below. When the implementation protocol was ready to run, the researcher approached Hengshui Normal University for collecting data of pre-test. The student affair management permitted the researcher to utilize the senior students of the student affairs for model implementation.

A total number of fifty students were selected from the student affairs, the guidance director did the selection and division by random allocation, and in addition these students were divided into two groups equally: control group and experiment group.

The adjusted questionnaire was distributed to both control group and experiment group respectively as to deeply comprehend students' perception towards student leadership characteristics education in the university. After pre-test data collection, the researcher analyzed the data and it revealed that there was no significant difference between the results of the control group and experimental group.

During April to June 2017, student leadership characteristic practice intervention program was held by Student Affairs at Hengshui Normal University, which aimed to prove the new model which could develop senior students as high quality leaders with great characteristic practice.

The experimental group followed the contents of intervention program as follows: Student leadership characteristic practice development conferences, local community service outreach, empowering leaders' camp, co-curriculum activities base on Campus Training which included grand debate, social skills, speech competition, students Mega, goal setting, importance of support structure, social activism and making difference, creative leadership, courage and creativity, social activism and making difference, creative leadership Courage and creativity, attitude to failure, role play, positive

mindset and moderation. It was worth to mention that Kouzes and Posner's (2006) five leadership practices inventory was throughout during the whole intervention program.

According to their gains, the students of experimental group developed their skills about flexibility skills, organizational skills, communication skills and planning skills as their essential cultivated student leadership characteristic practice; they also acquired their knowledge about learning principles, innovation, self-knowledge and identity as their essential cultivated student leadership characteristic practice, and they opened up their attitudes about healthy mentality, being respectful and modest, responsibilities and confidence as their essential cultivated student leadership characteristic practice.

The implementation process was over by the end of June of 2017. The researcher utilized same instrument both for pre-test and pro-test data collection. The results of this progress independent samples t-test clearly stated the effectiveness of the student leadership model for student leaders in the normal universities of Hebei Province of China. See Table 3.

The results of comparison table revealed that before the final model implementation, between pre-test and post-test of experimental group, their relative progress score of skills, knowledge and attitude were: 0.89, 0.95, and 0.89. Between pre-test and post-test of control group, their relative progress score of skills, knowledge and attitude were: 0.27, -0.06, and -0.05, obviously the latter's progress score is smaller, therefore after the student leadership characteristic practice model ran for three months, it could be concluded that the new model for development of student leadership characteristic practice used for this study helped to improve student leadership significantly.

Table 3: Comparing mean values of "Skills, Knowledge and Attitude" for both experimental and control groups

Comparison items	Mean of skills	Mean of knowledge	Mean of attitude
Pre-test of Experimental Group	3.33	3.32	3.49
Pro-test of Experimental Group	4.22	4.27	4.38
Progressive Score	0.89	0.95	0.89
Comparison items	Mean of skills	Mean of knowledge	Mean of attitude
Pre-test of Control Group	2.87	3.31	3.44
Pro-test of Control Group	3.14	3.25	3.39
Progressive Score	0.27	-0.06	-0.05

In the following part the researcher examined whether these increase in the mean scores are significant or not. The researcher conducted the progress sample t test for all the three domains which included skills, knowledge and attitude, such as table 4.

Table 4: Progress sample t test of skills for both control and experimental groups

No. Groups	Mean	SD	t-Test for Equality of Means		
			t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
1. Experimental Group	0.8926	0.09801			
			28.798	48	.000*
2. Control Group	0.2964	0.04583			

There was a significance difference (0.000<0.05) of the two tests in experimental group, it indicated that the new model for development of student leadership characteristic practice used for this study helped to improve skills significantly. Students' practice and involvement which based on student leadership theories offered a potential programmatic treatment for student affair to help with developing their skills, attitude and knowledge as socially responsible leaders. The final data indicated that the final student leadership characteristic practice model was effective and powerful.

Discussion

Skills and Knowledge were identified as the key competencies for knower of leadership (Henderson & Hawthorne, 2000), and Attitude might be changed through an important domain of research on attitude change focuses on responses to communication, persuasion, collaboration, and so on (Wood, 2000). Walker and Dimmock (2002) concluded that Chinese leadership characteristics and features as follows: moral criterion, human nature, intelligence, slyness, liberty, honor, sometimes the ability to lead by inaction, those were different from traditional leadership in western world, thus Chinese culture could not be ignored, and those non-western leadership characteristics could be significant in ascertaining features of leadership that might supply optional solutions.

During the validation of the preliminary model, experts responded positively with gratitude, they suggested the researcher should accord to the existing situation and current student leadership characteristics through the designed model to solve the urgent tasks as the top priority, and there was one noteworthy exception, they requested the researcher should add a component namely "moderation" into attitude factor in the model, this request was mainly based on Confucian, he emphasized the people should have conception of moderate desire was a crucial part, and his moderation meant harmony between "Li"(ritual) and desire, and avoid indulgence and mortification. After the researcher did the modification of the preliminary model undertaken experts' suggestions and comments, the final model finally freshly baked.

Since involvement was identified by Astin (1984) as a key determinant of college student success, satisfaction, and persistence. Involvement helped students to foster skills developing, knowledge learning, and attitude changing, hence enhance positive relationships in the organization, and these opportunities mostly were not available in the classroom study (Abrahamowicz, 1988; Astin, 1984; Schuh & Laverty, 1983). In this study, during the implementation step, students got fully involvement through student leadership characteristic practice intervention program, the comparison of pre-test and post-test results indicated and concluded that, through the intervention program which paid attention to all of the components in the final model, would enhance and develop student leadership characteristic practice in Hengshui Normal University, and this results also indicated that the model implementation was achievable for all normal universities in Hebei Province of China.

Conclusions

In a word, the findings of the current study revealed a greater insight into the components that influence student leadership development in higher education. Leadership development opportunities were urgent to be intentionally designed during the research. Students' practice and involvement which based on student leadership theories offered a potential programmatic treatment for student affair to help with developing their skills, attitude and knowledge as socially responsible leaders, cultivate everyone's leadership characteristics through student leadership conferences, local community outreach, empowering leaders' camp, co-curricular activities and evaluation and feedback, and set aside the students' backgrounds and any experiences. The final data indicated that the final student leadership characteristic practice model was effective and powerful.

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