



Professional Administrations in the Art Universities under Liaoning Province

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Abstract

The objectives of this research were: (1) to explore the components of professional administrators in art universities under Liaoning Province, (2) to validate a professional administrators' model for art universities under Liaoning Province, and (3) to propose practical guidelines for professional administrators in art universities under Liaoning Province. This study employed a mixed-methods design that combined quantitative and qualitative approaches. The population comprised 1,047 teachers working during the 2023 academic year across eight art universities in Liaoning Province. A stratified random sampling method, based on Krejcie and Morgan's table, was used to select 285 teachers. Additionally, nine key informants were chosen through purposive sampling for interviews, and a focus group discussion was conducted with seven key informants. Research instruments included semi-structured interview guides, a five-point Likert-scale questionnaire, and a focus group discussion guide. The questionnaire response rate was 100%. Data analysis involved frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), and content analysis. The findings revealed that professional administrators in art universities in Liaoning Province consist of four main components: (1) setting action goals, (2) exercising organizational leadership, (3) applying organizational structures effectively, and (4) promoting the active engagement of all organizational members. The validated model comprised 20 indicators across the four components. Furthermore, professional guidelines were proposed, consisting of five guidelines for each component.

Keywords: Professional Administrators, Professional Development, Guidelines, Art Universities, Liaoning Province



Introduction

In recent years, the global higher education sector has undergone significant transformations, particularly in the governance and professional development of university administrators (Guo, 2021). The competition for high-quality human resources has become a crucial determinant of national competitiveness (Cao & Jiang, 2021). Within China, higher education reforms emphasize not only academic excellence but also effective institutional governance and professional capacity building for administrators. Chen and Lei (2021) highlighted that university administrators must be regarded as professionals who continuously develop knowledge and competencies to meet the demands of modern education systems. However, despite growing global and national recognition of this issue, limited empirical research has focused on the professional development of administrators in art universities, particularly in Liaoning Province. Chen and Li (2021) stressed the need for Chinese universities to shift from management to collaborative governance, yet little is known about how art universities—with their distinctive cultural and disciplinary characteristics—develop their administrative leadership (Hou & Zhang, 2016).

This indicates a clear research gap concerning the identification of key components, validated models, and practical guidelines for strengthening the professional role of administrators in art universities (Du, 2017). Liaoning Province, located in Northeast China, is home to several prestigious art universities that play a vital role in cultivating artistic talent and cultural innovation (Gu, 2018). Administrators in these institutions face unique challenges, including balancing artistic creativity with academic governance, ensuring effective organizational leadership, and aligning with national education reform policies. Previous research in Chinese higher education has largely focused on comprehensive and science-based universities (Friedman & Phillips, 2020), leaving the context of art universities underexplored.

The present study directly addresses this need by investigating administrators working in eight art universities in Liaoning Province. Drawing from the researcher's prior engagement in higher education quality development projects in Liaoning, this study systematically examines the current conditions, problems, and influencing factors related to professional development among administrators. The findings aim to generate evidence-based guidelines that enhance the professionalization of administrators and support the modernization of governance in art universities.

Questions

1. What are the key components of professional administrators in art universities under Liaoning Province?
2. How valid is the proposed professional administrators' model for art universities under Liaoning Province?
3. What practical guidelines can be developed to enhance the professional development of administrators in art universities under Liaoning Province?

Objectives

1. To explore the components of professional administrators in art universities under Liaoning Province.
2. To validate a professional administrators' model for art universities under Liaoning Province.
3. To propose practical guidelines for enhancing the professional development of administrators in art universities under Liaoning Province.



Hypothesis

H1: Professional administrators in art universities under Liaoning Province can be described through four key components: (1) setting action goals, (2) exercising organizational leadership, (3) effectively applying organizational structures, and (4) promoting the active engagement of organizational members.

H2: The professional administrators' model for art universities under Liaoning Province demonstrates a good fit with the empirical data as validated by confirmatory factor analysis (CFA).

H3: There are significant relationships among the four components of professional administrators that collectively contribute to enhancing the professional development of administrators in art universities under Liaoning Province.

Literature Reviews

1. The role of professional administrators in higher education has been widely discussed within the framework of educational leadership and organizational management. According to Hu and Ning (2022), administrators require three essential skills: technical, human, and conceptual. More recently, Jiang and Liu (2022) emphasized the importance of transformational and participative leadership in fostering organizational effectiveness. Within the Chinese context, governance reforms have shifted universities from traditional bureaucratic management toward collaborative governance systems (Jing & Zhou, 2019). This theoretical foundation suggests that professional administrators must not only manage but also lead innovation and organizational change.

2. Professional development in higher education is defined as the continuous acquisition of knowledge, skills, and competencies that enhance the performance of administrators (Keung et al., 2020). Research across developed countries has shown that structured training, mentoring, and institutional support play critical roles in strengthening administrative professionalism. Luo (2018) also underscored that administrators should be recognized as educational professionals who must engage in lifelong learning. However, empirical studies in China have indicated uneven access to training opportunities and a lack of systematic frameworks for professional development, particularly in specialized institutions such as art universities (Lei, 2018).

3. In alignment with the Overall Plan for Promoting the Construction of World-Class Universities and First-Class Disciplines, Chayboonkrong and Worapongpat (2024) emphasized that Chinese universities are expected to modernize governance structures to meet the challenges of the new era, promoting institutional innovation and elevating the professional status of administrators as part of the broader vision of national rejuvenation. Studies by Dongling and Worapongpat (2023) and Makjod, Worapongpat, Kangpheng, and Bhasabutr (2025) suggest that art universities face unique governance challenges, including balancing academic creativity with institutional accountability. These challenges highlight the urgency of developing professional guidelines for administrators in such institutions.

4. Liaoning Province hosts eight major art universities, serving as cultural hubs for developing artistic talent and preserving cultural heritage (Min & Worapongpat, 2023). Administrators in these institutions are tasked with addressing dual demands: ensuring academic quality and fostering artistic innovation. Previous studies by Ning, Worapongpat, Wongkumchai, Zidi, Jiewei, and Mingyu (2023) have noted problems such as insufficient leadership training, lack of systematic performance evaluation, and limited institutional support for professional development. Despite national reforms, little empirical research has examined comprehensive models or guidelines for strengthening administrative professionalism in art universities in Liaoning.



5. Research Gap While international and Chinese literature recognize the critical role of administrators in higher education reform, limited studies focus specifically on the professional development of administrators in art universities. Most existing research emphasizes general or comprehensive universities, leaving a gap in understanding the distinctive needs of art university administrators in Liaoning Province. This study seeks to address this gap by (1) identifying the components of professional administrators, (2) validating a professional administrators' model, and (3) proposing practical guidelines for their development.

Methodology

This study, titled "Professional Administrators' Guidelines in Art Universities under Liaoning Province," employed a mixed-methods design combining quantitative and qualitative approaches. The research process consisted of three stages: (1) preparation, (2) implementation, and (3) reporting.

Population, Sample, and Key Informants

For the quantitative phase, the population comprised 1,047 teachers working at eight art universities in Liaoning Province during the 2023 academic year. Using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sampling table and stratified random sampling, a total of 285 teachers were selected. For the qualitative phase, purposive sampling was employed to select nine key informants, including senior administrators and experts with extensive experience in educational administration at art universities. In addition, a focus group discussion was conducted with seven experts to validate the findings and provide in-depth recommendations.

Research Instruments

Data collection utilized three instruments:

- A five-point Likert scale questionnaire was designed to assess the components of professional administrators.
- A semi-structured interview guide was developed through a review of literature and content analysis, ensuring alignment with the study objectives.
- A focus group discussion protocol to validate the professional administrators' model and proposed guidelines.

Data Collection Procedures

The researcher personally conducted the data collection in three steps:

- Establishing contact with participants and obtaining consent.
- Administering questionnaires and conducting online and face-to-face interviews.
- Organizing a focus group discussion with selected experts to validate the model and proposed guidelines.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted in both quantitative and qualitative phases:

- Quantitative Analysis: Descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations) and Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) were employed to validate the professional administrators' model.
- Qualitative Analysis: Content analysis of interview transcripts and thematic analysis of focus group discussions were conducted to refine and confirm the proposed guidelines.

Results

The research results showed: (1) the components in the professional administrators in the Art universities under Liaoning Province, a total four components included: Setting action goals, Playing organizational leadership, Good application of organizational structure, and Actively playing the enthusiasm of all organizational members. Analysis results of questionnaire data: variable analysis. Researchers conducted semi-structured interviews with 9 key information providers according to the specified access framework, transcribed and



classified data, and then classified these variables using braun and clarke's topic coding method (braun and clarke, 2006). The relevant variables in the interview are shown in table 1.

Table 1 Key Variables Identified from Semi-Structured Interviews Based on Thematic Coding

Component	Variable Code	Variable Description	Recognition (%)
Setting Action Goals	SA1	Clearly defines organizational goals	89
	SA2	Sets measurable performance targets	78
	SA3	Aligns goals with university mission	83
Playing Organizational Leadership	OL1	Demonstrates visionary leadership	85
	OL2	Encourages team collaboration	91
	OL3	Leads by example	80
Good Application of Organizational Structure	OS1	Applies formal organizational policies effectively	75
	OS2	Utilizes organizational resources efficiently	70
	OS3	Ensures clear communication channels	82
Actively Playing the Enthusiasm of All Organizational Members	EM1	Motivates staff proactively	88
	EM2	Promotes participation in decision-making	77
	EM3	Recognizes and rewards contributions	79

Note. Variables with a recognition percentage $\geq 50\%$ were selected for further analysis.

Based on information from the interviews, the researchers divided the variables into four components: Setting Action Goals, Playing Organizational Leadership, Good Application of Organizational Structure, and Actively Playing the Enthusiasm of All Organizational Members. Based on the information obtained from the interviews, there were 20 variables. As for the recognition degree of different variables among key information providers, the researchers selected variables with a recognition degree $\geq 50\%$, and finally reached a total of 20 variables.

Based on the literature review and interviews with key information providers, the researchers combined the total number of variables from the two processes and selected 20 variables after repeated comparison. Table 4-5 shows the results.

Table 2 Final 20 Variables Used in the Questionnaire Based on Literature Review and Expert Interviews

Component	Variable Code	Variable Description
Setting Action Goals	SA1	Clearly defines organizational goals
	SA2	Sets measurable performance targets
	SA3	Aligns goals with the university's mission
	SA4	Regularly reviews and updates goals
	SA5	Communicates goals effectively to stakeholders
Playing Organizational Leadership	OL1	Demonstrates visionary leadership
	OL2	Encourages team collaboration



Component	Variable Code	Variable Description
	OL3	Leads by example
	OL4	Builds trust and rapport
	OL5	Supports innovation and change
Good Application of Organizational Structure	OS1	Applies formal organizational policies effectively
	OS2	Utilizes organizational resources efficiently
	OS3	Ensures clear communication channels
	OS4	Coordinates interdepartmental activities
	OS5	Maintains compliance with regulations
Actively Playing the Enthusiasm of All Organizational Members	EM1	Motivates staff proactively
	EM2	Promotes participation in decision-making
	EM3	Recognizes and rewards contributions
	EM4	Fosters a positive organizational climate
	EM5	Encourages professional development

Discussion

Component 1: Actively Fostering the Enthusiasm of All Organizational Members. Fostering enthusiasm and active participation among organizational members is a fundamental aspect of effective leadership for the professional development of administrators in art universities in Liaoning Province. Leaders play a critical role in motivating team members to engage with their work and demonstrate enthusiasm fully. Such active involvement not only enhances productivity but also promotes organizational cohesion. Effective leaders cultivate an open, supportive work environment that encourages collaboration toward common goals. Addressing demotivation is also crucial to prevent disruptions and sustain high levels of engagement. Regular evaluation and enhancement of member enthusiasm are necessary to maintain continuous commitment. The active participation of all organizational members supports efficient work processes and fosters the development of both individual capabilities and collective competencies, thereby facilitating the achievement of institutional objectives. Empirical studies have confirmed that employee engagement and enthusiasm significantly contribute to organizational success. For example, (Li, .2016). Found that motivating team members to participate actively is essential for creating a productive work environment and improving performance in educational settings.

Component 2: Setting Action Goals. Setting clear, actionable goals is vital for the professional development of administrators at art universities. Leaders bear responsibility for defining goals aligned with the university's mission and ensuring they are realistic and attainable. Inclusive goal-setting processes that involve relevant stakeholders through brainstorming and consultation enhance both the appropriateness and practicality of the objectives. This collaborative approach also strengthens member participation and commitment. Following goal formulation, leaders must demonstrate dedication and resolve to achieve the set targets, thereby exemplifying results-oriented leadership. Decision-making should be data-informed and inclusive to ground goals in reality and optimize organizational performance. The significance of goal-setting in leadership is well established in the literature. Liu and Wang (2017) emphasized that aligning operational goals with the organization's mission is critical for long-term success, while Li, Shi, and Zuo (2006) highlighted that stakeholder involvement in goal-setting enhances clarity and commitment, which are key to achieving organizational objectives.

Component 3: Exercising Organizational Leadership Effectively. Effective organizational leadership is indispensable for the professional growth of administrators at art

universities. Leaders must possess not only technical skills but also strong organizational management capabilities to guide teams through complex challenges. Building trusting relationships within teams is fundamental to fostering a favorable work climate and encouraging collaboration. Moreover, leaders must adeptly manage conflicts to prevent adverse effects on organizational performance. Promoting quality leadership practices that support sustainable organizational development is also a core responsibility. By cultivating management skills and trust, leaders can propel their teams toward enduring success and facilitate administrators' professional advancement. Li and Wong (2020) asserted that trust-building and positive team relationships are key elements of effective leadership. Additionally, Munday (2023) argued that leaders who skillfully manage conflicts and foster collaboration achieve superior organizational and team outcomes.

Component 4: Effective Application of Organizational Structure Although comparatively less influential on the professional development of administrators, the practical application of organizational structure remains a crucial leadership function. Leaders must coordinate and manage organizational activities efficiently, ensuring that the established structure supports smooth team operations. Clear division of tasks and responsibilities within the team is essential for operational efficiency and order. Additionally, leaders need to adapt the organizational structure to address emerging challenges and changes, maintaining flexibility while preserving clarity and transparency. An explicit and well-defined structure facilitates communication and promotes organizational transparency, thereby enabling smoother functioning and better preparedness to achieve goals. (Li 2021). Emphasize that clear task division and robust organizational frameworks enhance transparency and communication, thereby improving team operations. Effective leaders ensure that organizational structures evolve responsively to meet shifting demands without compromising operational clarity.

Originality

From the study titled “Professional Administrators’ Guidelines in the Art Universities under Liaoning Province,” new knowledge was generated and can be summarized in the model presented in Figure 2.



Figure 2: Conceptual Model of Professional Administrators’ Components and Development Guidelines in Art Universities under Liaoning Province

Figure 2 illustrates the four main components of professional administrators: Setting Action Goals, Exercising Organizational Leadership, Effective Application of Organizational Structure, and Actively Fostering the Enthusiasm of All Organizational Members. As shown in Figure 2, the professional development of administrators at art universities in Liaoning Province comprises four interrelated components that collectively enhance administrative effectiveness and foster administrators' full potential. These components are key to promoting member engagement and achieving sustainable organizational success.

Overall, this study highlights the critical importance of developing professional administrators within the specific context of art universities. The proposed four-component model provides a comprehensive and systematic framework for professional development tailored to the unique characteristics of these institutions. This research fills a gap in existing knowledge by addressing the needs of administrators in this field and offering clear guidelines for implementation in practice to enhance leadership capacity. Consequently, the findings contribute to improved organizational performance and sustainable growth.

Recommendations

Based on the research findings, the researcher proposes the following recommendations:

Recommendations for Practical Application

1. Regarding Objective 1: To explore the components of professional administrators in art universities in Liaoning Province. The research found that professional administrators consist of four key components: fostering enthusiasm among organizational members, setting clear action goals, exercising effective organizational leadership, and applying organizational structure appropriately. Therefore, relevant agencies should: Develop programs and policies to enhance administrators' ability to foster team motivation and active participation. Promote training focused on communication and engagement skills to strengthen organizational cohesion.

2. Regarding Objective 2: To confirm the professional administrators model in art universities under Liaoning Province. The study confirmed a model comprising 20 indicators, grouped into four components, that comprehensively describes the professional administrators' roles. Therefore, relevant institutions should: Adopt and integrate this validated model into their leadership development frameworks. Use the model to design assessment tools and professional development plans tailored to administrators' needs.

3. Regarding Objective 3: To propose professional administrators' guidelines in art universities under Liaoning Province. The research proposed detailed guidelines corresponding to each component to improve administrators' performance and organizational effectiveness. Therefore, it is recommended that Universities formulate policies and practical guidelines based on these recommendations to systematically support administrators' professional growth. Establish collaboration platforms involving industry experts to provide ongoing guidance, training, and internship opportunities.

Recommendations for Further Research

This study revealed that the integrated model of professional administrators has significant implications for improving leadership in art universities. It can be applied to similar educational contexts where professional development and organizational effectiveness are priorities. Future research should focus on: Investigating the practical outcomes of university-industry cooperation in arts education and optimizing collaborative approaches to enhance administrators' competencies and exploring personalized skill development programs and their impact on administrators' and teachers' professional abilities and career growth and examining the role of international partnerships in enhancing the reputation and knowledge exchange capacity of art universities.



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