

# Dean's Educational Leadership in 21<sup>st</sup> Century in Colleges in Anyang Under Henan Province

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## Abstract

The research problems of this dissertation were: (1)What are the dimensions of the deans' educational leadership in 21<sup>st</sup> century in colleges in Anyang, Henan Province? (2) What are the future wheels of deans' educational leadership in 21<sup>st</sup> century in colleges in Anyang, Henan Province?The objectives of this dissertation were: (1) to study the dimensions of the dean's educational leadership in 21<sup>st</sup> century in colleges in Anyang, Henan Province. (2) to propose the future wheels of dean's educational leadership in 21<sup>st</sup> century in colleges in Anyang, Henan Province. The research was qualitative research. Delphi method was adopted and it was conducted in two rounds by a group of 21 key informants. In the first round, the data collection instrument was the researcher, open- ended interview schedule. In the second round, the data collection instrument was a five-point rating scale. Questionnaire data analysis was done using content analysis, median, mode and interquartile range. Seven new experts were obtained by purposive sampling method. Four focus group discussions to develop future wheels.

The results of the research showed that: (1) proposed the dean's educational leadership in 21<sup>st</sup> century in Anyang under Henan Province consists of 8 dimensions: innovation, strategic planning, communication, academy, morality, execution, collaboration and decision-making; and (2) A three stage future wheels of dean's educational leadership in 21<sup>st</sup> century in Anyang under Henan Province was developed, under the eight dimensions of innovation, strategic planning, communication, academy, morality, execution, collaboration and decision-making. The first stage of development within 5 years, contained 25 variables; the second stage of development (next 5-11 years) contained 34 variables; the third stage of development (next 12 years – mid-century) contained 24 variables. In conclusion, the 8 dimensions and three stages future wheels were developed in accordance with the research objectives.

**Keywords:** Dean; Educational Leadership; The 21<sup>st</sup> century; Colleges in Anyang; Henan Province

## Introduction

Entering the 21st century, the development of higher education in China has already entered the stage of popularization of higher education from the elite education, and it is becoming more important to promote the modernization of education. In 2015, China proposed to build "double first-class universities", and how to build them in a new era is indeed a more critical issue. A good university should not only have the support of national policies and the top-level design of the president, but also have the executive ability of middle-level leaders and the cooperation and efforts of every teacher. The executive power comes from the leadership, and the leadership determines the executive power. Therefore, a good university president can lead a university to achieve good development, but only the university president is far from enough, deans of each faculty or school really implement the national policy and the president's philosophy in the university. They are both the implementers of the principal's philosophy and the decision-makers of the departments, so their leadership is also extremely important.

When studying the reform trend of internal governance in Chinese universities, Wang Hongcai proposed "the principle of middle governance in universities" (Wang, 2013), that is, the academic and administrative power of universities should be concentrated in the middle level, which is conducive to stimulating the vitality of knowledge innovation and creativity at the grassroots level. To deepen the comprehensive reform within colleges and universities and stimulate the vitality of faculties or schools, deans need to lead teachers and students to form new joint forces, which truly tests dean's educational leadership level.

Because the key to the landing of the top-level design of the school also depends on the middle-level leaders, especially the leaders of the faculties or schools, the solution of specific problems in the development of the school is mainly to see the middle-level party and government leaders. They are not only the implementors of school policies, but also the decision makers of the faculties or schools, with the responsibility and mission to lead the effective work of the department's staff. As the focus of university governance has shifted to faculties or schools, deans, as important leaders in the development and reform of faculties or schools, their leadership level is an important factor affecting the development of faculties or schools and even the development of colleges or universities, and is also the key to realizing the responsibilities of deans and giving full play to the faculties or schools as the main body of running schools.

Professor Wang Jianhua of Nanjing Normal University pointed out in summarizing and reflecting on the development of China's higher education that what China's higher education reform lacks is not top-level design and overall planning, but grass-roots vitality, and restarting higher education reform must strengthen the enthusiasm and initiative of the university's own innovation, rather than the government's overall plan, roadmap and timetable for higher education reform. (Wang, 2014) Because the key to the implementation of the top-level design of the school also depends on the middle-level leaders. The solution to the specific problems in university or college development also mainly depends on the middle-level party and government leaders. They are not only the implementors of university policies, but also the decision makers of the faculty or school, with the responsibility and mission to lead the faculty or school staff to work effectively. Professor Shi Zhongying of Beijing Normal University put forward clearly in her article "Whether a university runs a faculty or a faculty runs a university ": Without a first-class faculty or school, it is difficult to have a first-class college or university (Shi, 2018).

In conclusion, the researcher aimed to find out the following problems: what are some dimensions of dean's educational leadership and how to develop it within three stages in the future?

In the process of popularization of higher education, the scale of colleges is expanding day by day, the organization is becoming more complex, and the functions are becoming more diversified, which poses a challenge to the traditional management mode of colleges and poses a new challenge to deans. Guided by the relevant theories of leadership and university governance, this study conducts research on dean's educational leadership of on the basis of previous studies on leadership, especially the selection of university presidents and the leadership of university presidents.

## Research Objectives

1. To study the dimensions of the dean's educational leadership in 21<sup>st</sup> century in colleges in Anyang, Henan Province.
2. To propose the future wheels of dean's educational leadership in 21<sup>st</sup> century in colleges in Anyang, Henan Province.

## Literature Review

Ratsuanjit, T. ., & Wannakum, W. (2024) found that to further enhance leadership effectiveness, the suggested guidelines emphasize the importance of fostering a supportive environment, implementing practical strategies for school improvement, and closely monitoring both students' academic progress and teaching practices. These measures are designed to ensure that academic leadership continues to positively impact educational outcomes.

Kunsuwan, L. ., Sikkhabandit, S. ., & Theerawitthayalert, P. . (2023) found that The actual state of new leadership consists of 4 main components: transformational leadership, visionary leadership, innovation leadership, and technology leadership. A new leadership model for the school administrators under the Kanchanaburi Primary Educational Service Area Office consists of 5 components: integrated leadership, technology leadership, communication strategy leadership, process leadership, and research leadership.

Liao, S., & Mhunpiew, N. . (2024) found that The model identifies key competencies, including determination, teaching, organization, influence, implementation, learning, and enthusiasm. Recommendations for enhancing leadership competence are proposed, encompassing policy awareness, goal setting, network building, curriculum planning, and fostering a vibrant learning environment.

Wang, S., & Mhunpiew, N. (2024) found that the three capabilities needing priority development were the application of technology, determining (criteria) standards, and participation of relevant personnel. A theoretical model of instructional leadership capabilities was developed based on the research objectives' findings.

Jongyung, T. (2024) found that the components of educational leadership—vision and mission development, instructional leadership, organizational management, professional development, community engagement, assessment and evaluation, and ethical leadership—all contribute to effective school management and student success. The indicators of effective educational leadership—goal achievement, teacher and staff satisfaction, student engagement and success, community involvement, effective communication, innovation and improvement,

resource management, and professional growth—form a comprehensive framework for evaluating leadership impact.

In conclusion, although the specific practice of educational leadership varies greatly from country to country and school to school, its dimensions are similar, and all of them can ensure a positive impact on educational outcomes.

## **Research Methodology**

### **1. Research design**

Phase 1: Qualitative research. The researcher studied the concept principle theory and related literature of the dean's educational leadership.

Phase 2: Qualitative research. The researcher employed concepts related to the dean's educational leadership in 21<sup>st</sup> century in colleges in Anyang under Henan Province. An expert working group was established to utilize the Delphi technique. Open-ended interviews were conducted to further define the dimensions of educational leadership. The findings were then summarized through these interviews.

Phase 3: Qualitative Research. The researcher developed future wheels based on the proposal for the dean's educational leadership in 21<sup>st</sup> century in colleges in Anyang, Henan Province. A focus group was formed to support the proposal. These future wheels provided visual representations of the proposed changes, illustrating how they interact with various components and outlining the anticipated outcomes and implications of these changes.

### **2. Population and Sample**

Phase 1: The group of key informants comprised 21 experts from 5 colleges in Anyang, Henan Province. This group included 15 deans, 3 presidents, and 3 individuals responsible for key functional departments related to the dean's work, such as the Office of Academic Affairs, the Office of Scientific Research, the Office of Student Affairs. All participants had over 10 years of experience in educational management and communication with potential informants were conducted via telephone and online channels, using a purposive sampling method to select the key Informants.

Phase 2: Focus groups consisting of 7 new key informants were engaged in the development of the future wheels. Their insights and perspectives contributed to a comprehensive and realistic projection of dean's educational leadership in 21<sup>st</sup> century in colleges in Anyang under Henan Province.

### **3. Research Instruments**

Step1 This approach facilitated a comprehensive and up-to-date interpretation, ultimately supporting the development and understanding of deans' educational leadership.

Step 2: In the first round of the Delphi technique, the researcher conducted open-ended interviews with the panel of key informants to gain deeper insights into the dean's educational leadership in 21<sup>st</sup> century in colleges in Anyang under Henan Province. The content of these interviews was then summarized and analyzed. For the second round, a questionnaire was developed based on the insights obtained from the initial interviews.

Step 3: The key instruments at this stage were the future wheels, developed based on the insights and proposals from previous stages. These future wheels were iteratively refined based on feedback from the panel of key informants.

#### 4. Data Analysis

Step 1: Using a content analysis approach, the content of the literature research was to identify the concept of dean's educational leadership in 21<sup>st</sup> century in Anyang under Henan Province.

Step 2: The Delphi technique was employed to collect the knowledge, experience, and judgment of experts, with statistical descriptions used to analyze the data. Two rounds of the Delphi technique were conducted. Insights into the dean's educational leadership were analyzed using mode, median, and interquartile range.

Step 3: The analysis was primarily be qualitative, focusing on the coherence, feasibility, and comprehensiveness of the future wheels in representing the proposed dean's educational leadership. The researcher also analysed feedback from the panel of key informants to identify themes and patterns that guided the refinement of the future wheels.

### Research Scope

#### 1. Scope of Content to Study

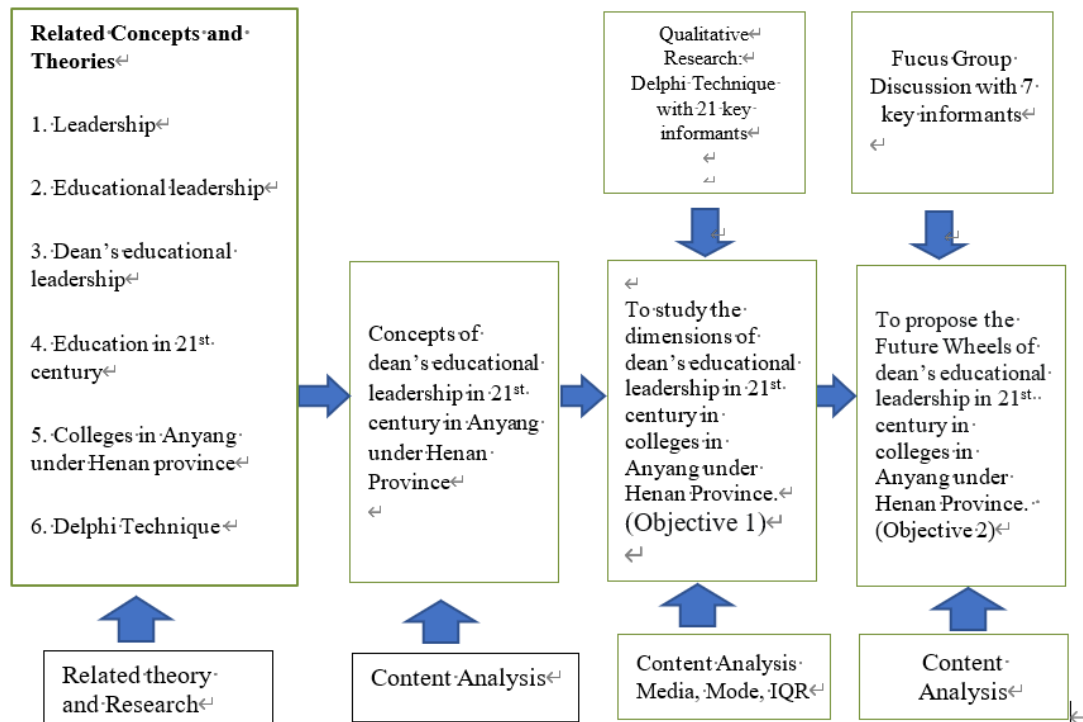
- 1). Leadership
- 2). Educational leadership
- 3). Dean's educational leadership
- 4). 21st century

#### 2. Scope of Population and Sample

To gain comprehensive insights and ensure the effectiveness of the Delphi method in this research, the strategic selection of key informants is essential. The informants were identified through purposive sampling, focusing on individuals with expertise and experience relevant to the dean's educational leadership in the 21st century in Anyang under Henan Province. This selection process aimed to ensure a balanced representation of perspectives, thereby supporting a robust and iterative Delphi process.

A total of 21 key informants participated in the study, carefully distributed across various categories to provide a multifaceted view of the challenges and strategies related to the dean's educational leadership in Anyang.

## Conceptual Framework



**Figure 1** Conceptual Framework

## Research Results

1. The dimensions of dean's educational leadership in 21<sup>st</sup> century in colleges in Anyang, Henan Province

The results showed that dean's educational leadership in 21<sup>st</sup> century in colleges in Anyang under Henan Province may contain 8 dimensions and 79 variables, which were summarised as follows:

1. Innovation included: a. Innovation vision and strategy, b. Ability to drive change, c. Innovation Project implementation, d. Support and encourage innovation, e. Cooperation and network building, f. Data-driven decision making, g. Professional Development and Training, h. Student participation and feedback, i. Evaluation and dissemination of innovation results, j. Culture and atmosphere.

2. strategic planning included: a. Clarity of vision and mission, b. Goal setting and prioritization, c. Data-driving decision, d. Resource planning and distribution, e. Stakeholder engagement, f. Risk management and response strategies, g. Executive and monitoring system, h. Continuous improvement

3. Communication included: a. The clearness and effectiveness of communication, b. Listening skill, c. The frequency and quality of feedback, d. The ability of managing conflict, e. Relationship building and maintenance, f. Teamwork and collaboration, g. Transparency and openness, h. Stimulation and support, i. Cultural adaptability, j. Problem solving ability

4. Academy included: a. Academic Knowledge and Background, b. Curriculum and teaching quality, c. Data analysis and application, d. Research and Innovation, e. Teacher Professional Development, f. Academic standards and assessments, g. Academic Resource Management, h. Student Academic Support, I. Curriculum reform and development, j. Adherence to policies and standards.

5. Morality included: a. Integrity and transparency, b. Fairness and justice, c. Responsibility, d. Respect and care, e. Ethical decision-making ability, f. Role modelling, g. Transparent communication, h. Ethics Education and training.

6. Execution included: a. Effectiveness of program implementation, b. Goal achievement, c. Task allocation and Resource Management, d. Time Management, e. Progress tracking and reporting, f. Problem solving skills, g. Adaptability of the execution process, h. Teamwork and coordination, i. Quality control, j. feedback and improvement, k. Implementation effect evaluation.

7. Collaboration included: a. Team building and development, b. Communication and Information sharing, c. Promote collaboration, d. Respect and Inclusion, e. Common goal setting, f. Tasks are assigned and roles are defined, g. Conflict Management, h. Motivation and Recognition, i. Collaboration skills training, j. Collective participation in decision-making, k. Establishment of cooperation network, l. Feedback and Improvement.

8. Decision-making included: a. Data-driven decision making, b. Strategic thinking, c. Problem solving ability, d. Risk assessment and management, e. Stakeholder involvement, f. Innovation and flexibility, g. Transparency and reasonableness of decision-making, h. Ability to implement, i. Time management, j. Feedback and reflection

2. The future wheel of dean's educational leadership in 21<sup>st</sup> century in colleges in Anyang, Henan Province

Under the 8 dimensions of innovation, strategic planning, communication, academy, morality, execution, collaboration and decision-making, this research was discussed and got three-time ladders.

The first ladder has 25 components (dean's educational leadership within 5 years): IT application, Cross-subject innovation, Policy and system innovation, Educational achievement transformation, Continuous enhancement ability, International Vision, Risk management and reply, Listen and feedback system establishment, Cultural sensibility communication, Cross-subject communication, Research Innovation improvement, Subject Development strategy, Academic resource integration, Morality education and training, Effective dealing of morality problem, Morality supervision and evaluation, Execution of project and plan, Flow optimization, Effectiveness enhancement, Multi-cultural teamwork management, Strategic alliance establishment, Resource optimization and sharing, Thought of decision long-term influence, Evaluation of decision effect, The decisive ability on emergency.

The second ladder has 34 components (dean's educational leadership in the following 5-11 years): Educational skill innovation, Prospective educational innovation, Dynamic innovation, Long-term transformation, Continuous innovation, Strategic flexible and adaptation, Talent's cultivation, Global cooperation, Digital communication skills, Communication technique, Individuation and empathy, Cross-culture communication ability, High quality project motivation, Academic leading team establishment, Academic achievement promotion, Innovational academic project development, Academic resource optimization, Long-term morality culture construction, Morality leadership cultivation, Morality decisive systematization, Morality and social influence extension, Morality

performance evaluation, Long-term strategic plan implementation, Key cultural project promotion, Cross- department executive coordination, Executive achievement supervision, Cross-subject collaboration innovation, Long-term collaboration maintenance, Collaborating project achievement evaluation, Collaborating achievement sharing, Future trend foresight and application, Continuous improvement of decisive process, Integrating evaluation of complex decision, Adaptive decision in complex environment.

The third ladder has 24 components (dean's educational leadership in the following 11 years to mid-century): Perspective global educational leadership, Profound integration of education and social development, Ecosystem continuous education, Global educational network establishment, Innovation of future education mode, Global influence of culture, Communication platform development, Global educational speaking right establishment, Diversified communication strategy, International academic network extension, Global influence of Academic achievement, Global educational policy influence, Morality innovation and foresight, Morality cultural global spread, Reply ability of morality risk, Cross-country execution ability, Realizing continuous developing goal, Long-term strategic coordination, Global education policy participation, Global educational trend reply ability, Global management of cross-culture team, Decisive ability of complex system, Global collaboration decisive ability, Adaptive ability in decision process.



Figure 4.1 The future wheel of dean's educational leadership in 21<sup>st</sup> century in colleges in Anyang under Henan Province (within five years)



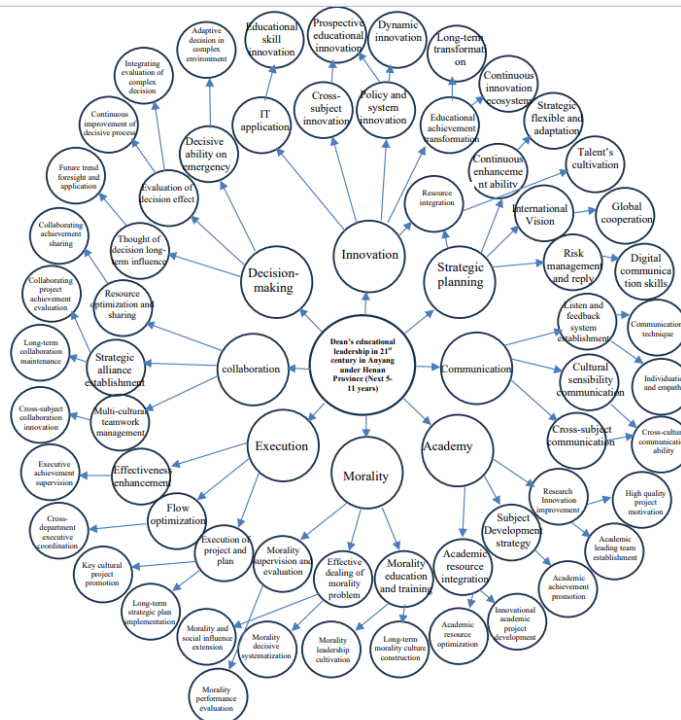


Figure 4.2 The future wheel of dean's educational leadership in 21st century in colleges in Anyang under Henan Province (5-11 years)

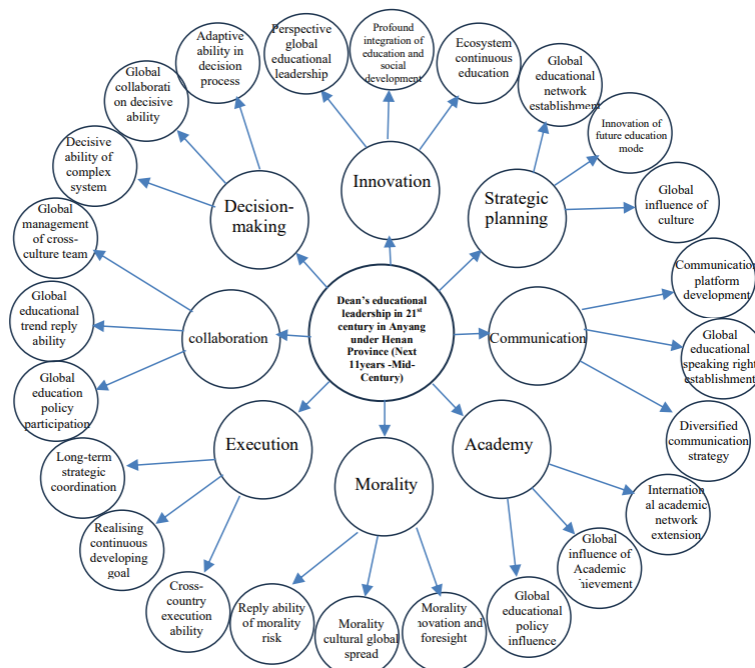


Figure 4.3 The future wheel of dean's educational leadership in 21<sup>st</sup> century in colleges in Anyang under Henan Province (Next 11 years -Mid-Century)

## Discussion

1. Dimensions of dean's educational leadership in 21<sup>st</sup> century in colleges in Anyang under Henan Province found that there were eight dimensions: innovation, strategic planning, communication, academy, morality, execution, collaboration and decision-making which reflects the results consistent with the conclusion developed from the review of literature.

In dean's educational leadership, innovation, communication and collaboration were the working style of deans. Post (2017) 'Leadership in educational institutions: Reflections of a law school dean' reported that among the four dimensions of leadership competency, only self-mastery serves as a significant predictor of job, career, and innovation performance. Alpert (2023) 'Preparing educational leaders through action research' pointed out that these courses are designed with a scaffolded approach that progressively builds on and extends Action Research methods, fostering change agency, inclusivity, and social justice.

Baker (2022) 'To Dean, or Not to Dean?' pointed out that success depends on a number of variables such as clear, effective communication among leaders within organizations. T. Kilag (2024) 'Preferred Educational Leaders: Character and Skills' revealed that effective communication skills, emotional intelligence, vision and strategic planning, and passion for education were the four main themes identified by the participants as crucial characteristics and skills of educational leaders.

Fernande (2020) 'Academic leadership in a time of crisis: The Coronavirus and COVID-19' pointed out that firstly, by utilizing a type of servant leadership, that emphasizes empowerment, involvement, and collaboration, academic leaders with emotional. Zheng Yueyan (2024) 'The Leadership of University Presidents and Its Cultivation Path: A Case Study of President Compton and Susan of MIT' pointed out the leadership of Presidents Compton and Susan has played an important role in building collaborative mechanisms, connecting social capital, shaping school culture, and strengthening disciplines in the short period of time that MIT has achieved so much.

At the same time, academy and morality were the fundamental important components of dean's educational leadership. Cai (2016) 'The constitution of educational leadership and its realization path' pointed out that the educational leadership of educational leaders or principals consists of five elements, such as school-running philosophy, personality charm, educational vision, humanistic feelings and scientific research consciousness. Wang (2019) 'Function · Leadership · Role Orientation: Modern University and University President' pointed out that the two scholars further pointed out that teacher leadership includes four dimensions: administrative leadership, professional leadership, interpersonal leadership and self-leadership. Liu (2019) 'The Role Expectations of University Presidents from the Perspective of Transformational Leadership' pointed out that use first-class educational concepts and academic foresight, broad international vision and global strategic vision, and firmly promote and integrate the implementation The ability of coordination, noble moral cultivation and personality charm lead the school to become "first-class ", and become a politically knowledgeable educator with political wisdom, rational judgment, academic foresight, management ability, global vision and noble sentiment. Chen (2019) 'Research on University Transformation Development and President's Leadership.' pointed out that the problem of quality management should be viewed as "culture" rather than "management". Yang (2019) 'Function · Leadership · Role Orientation: Modern University and University President' pointed out that use first-class educational concepts and academic foresight, broad international vision and global strategic vision, and firmly promote and integrate the

implementation The ability of coordination, noble moral cultivation and personality charm lead the school to become "first-class ", and become a politically knowledgeable educator with political wisdom, rational judgment, academic foresight, management ability, global vision and noble sentiment.

In dean's educational leadership, strategic planning, execution and decision-making were the working style of leaders which were also very important. Yang (2019) 'Research on the Difference of University Presidents' Leadership Cognition under the Background of First-class University Construction -- Based on the Questionnaire Survey of "Project 211" Universities' pointed out that the findings for this research implicate that academic leaders should possess self-mastery to increase the job, innovation and career performances of the subordinates. Ren (2006) 'A New Approach to Leadership Development: "Coaching" and "Mentoring"' pointed out that the way to realize the leadership of presidents can be to respect talents and create a good academic environment; Practice, seek truth from facts; Clear school-running objectives; Unique personality appeal, as well as the courage to be the first to reform and establish rules and systems to safeguard leadership. Luo (2024) 'The role of President's Leadership in University Development Planning' pointed out that Action Research methods in ways that promote change agency, inclusivity, and social justice. T. Kilag (2024) 'Preferred Educational Leaders: Character and Skills' pointed out that effective communication skills, emotional intelligence, vision and strategic planning, and passion for education were the four main themes identified by the participants as crucial characteristics and skills of educational leaders.

2. The future wheels of dean's educational leadership in 21<sup>st</sup> century in colleges in Anyang, Henan Province found that the three stages of future wheels in next 5 years to mid-century reflect that the results consistent with the conclusion developed from the following literature review.

Mao (2021) The dean's educational leadership refers to the educational action force formed by the dean on the basis of deep understanding of the nature of higher education, forming a comprehensive and thorough understanding of "who to cultivate" and guiding all the staff of the college. In short, the dean's educational leadership refers to the design of the dean based on the ideal personality, the formation of the common goal of the college, and the use of it to govern and guide the teaching, research, social service and administration of the college.

The dimension thinking model of teaching leadership should include: first, the educational view formed through the cognition of the nature of high level teaching; The second is to promote the president of the college to form a better understanding of the nature of higher education and have academic attainments; The third is the talent view formed by the design of the director's thinking personality; Fourth, it is used to guide teachers and students of the college and to form the personality charm, power view and leadership art that should be necessary for the combined force of teaching and education. The fifth is the key leading power used to govern and guide the teaching, scientific research, social service and administrative management, including the development planning power, the internal and external communication speech power, the school-running vitality and the governance and norms of the school. The direction of the development of future wheel of this research is the same as the conclusion mentioned above. So, the results of the research are more in line with the dean's educational leadership in 21<sup>st</sup> century in colleges in Anyang under Henan Province.

## Suggestion

### 1. Theoretical suggestion

First of all, the purpose of studying educational leadership is to solve the problem of improving the leadership effectiveness of educational leaders in leadership practice. If educational leadership is divorced from the basic criterion of realizing the established goals of the organization, it will lose its due significance and even have a negative impact. This is mainly reflected in strategic planning, decision-making and execution. When formulating strategic planning objectives, fully combine the vision and mission of the college to make them clear, rationally plan and allocate resources, timely respond to risks, formulate strategies, and establish implementation and monitoring mechanisms.

Secondly, the application of educational leadership cannot be separated from the principle of combining comprehensiveness and focus. It is necessary to grasp from multiple angles, aspects and objective. For example, educational leaders' communication skills, cooperation skills and innovation.

To demonstrate a strong sense of social responsibility, promote the school's active participation in social services, environmental protection and other aspects, and ensure that the school's contribution to society meets ethical standards. Finally, always maintain integrity in behaviour and decision making, serve as a moral example for the school, influence and motivate staff and students to act in a high standard of ethics.

### 2. Policy suggestions

Dean's educational leadership is a changing development process, so policies are adjusted according to the needs of the times. It needs to use dynamic consciousness to always pay attention to and understand the trend of national policies, and develop advanced policies for dean's educational leadership that are in line with national conditions and can cultivate talents conducive to the needs of national development. Policies should be standardized, rewarded and punished to promote the operation of faculties or schools into a standardized spontaneous mode. The university has a very wide organizational scope and complex structural Settings, so the formulation of standardization policies needs to consider the diversity and particularity of the college, the flexibility of the application of rules, and the establishment of long-term plans will not violate the smooth operation of the whole university and have a negative impact. College policy should be formulated within the framework of all university systems. The reward and punishment measures will help to coordinate the management of the whole university. On the one hand, to stimulate the vitality of each institution of the College, on the other hand, to prevent or eliminate negative effects such as irregularities and slowness. Therefore, the college can accurately position the direction of educational leadership and methods to solve problems and promote sustainable development in the new era of pluralistic changes.

### 3. Practical suggestions

1) Focus on digital transformation and technology leadership, focus on diversity and inclusion leadership, and study international perspectives in the context of globalization.

2) Strengthen research on leadership ethics and responsibility, explore crisis management and change promotion

3) Focus on the research of the dean's professional development path, promote the student-centred leadership model, and explore the dean's role in policy making and regional development

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