



A Study on the Construction of Competency Model for Student Cadres in Chinese Private Universities

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Abstract

Background and Aim: The rapid development of private higher education in China has led to the establishment of 3,072 higher education institutions nationwide as of June 15, 2023, with 785 private institutions, accounting for 27.84% of all regular higher education institutions. Private universities in China generally face a shortage of counselors, making them heavily reliant on the management assistance of student cadres. However, students in private universities differ significantly from those in public universities in terms of learning ability and family background, making it especially important to enhance the competencies of student cadres. A review of existing research reveals a significant gap in studies focused on the competencies of student cadres in private universities. This study aims to construct a competency model for student cadres in private universities, providing theoretical and practical guidance for their selection, training, and development.

Materials and Methods: The study employs methods such as literature analysis, behavioral event interviews, Delphi expert consultation, and questionnaire surveys. Through literature and comparative analysis, the research examines competency theory and the research findings on student cadre competencies. Thirty student cadres were interviewed using the behavioral event interview method, and consultations were conducted with 12 experts in private education student affairs to identify and categorize competency elements and dimensions. The constructed model was then validated through a survey of 302 questionnaires.

Results: Four main dimensions were identified: political integrity, working attitude, working ability, and personality trait, with a total of 17 specific elements. A layered and dynamic "compass-shaped" competency model was constructed, illustrating the composition of student cadre competencies.

Conclusion: From a theoretical perspective, this model not only provides new insights into the theory of student cadre competencies but also integrates the study of student cadre competencies with ideological and political education in higher education institutions, fostering theoretical innovation and development in both areas. From a practical standpoint, the model offers a scientific basis for the selection, training, and evaluation of student cadres, contributing to the enhancement of their overall quality and working ability.

Keywords: Private Colleges and Universities; Student Cadres; Competency; Model Construction

Introduction

China's higher education business has various components, and private higher education is an important part of it. The development of private higher education in China has been guided by the following square: active encouragement, strong support, correct guidance, and management by the law. In October 2022, the state emphasized the need to guide and regulate the development of private education and to give full play to its important role in the education business. In addition, the State has formulated the Outline of the Strategic Plan for Expanding Domestic Demand (2022-2035), which explicitly states that social forces should be encouraged to provide diversified educational services and that the development of private education should be supported and regulated.

In China's education system, private colleges and universities occupy a pivotal position. The level of quality of their operation has a far-reaching impact on the future development of national higher education. Therefore, private colleges and universities should center on the core idea of talent cultivation in their teaching activities, and carry out education and teaching, academic research, volunteer service, and student management. The effective implementation of these activities will play a very important role in improving the comprehensive quality of students.

With the rapid development of China's private colleges and universities, society's demand for talent cultivation in private colleges and universities is increasing. Under such circumstances, it is particularly important to improve the competence of student cadres in private colleges and universities. As an important



part of the ideological and political education workforce in colleges and universities, student cadres, through certain organizational forms and methods, influence, lead, and coordinate the majority of students to serve the realization of the school's goal of educating people. Therefore, it is of great practical significance and value to carry out special research on "competency enhancement of student cadres in private colleges and universities", which will help to promote the high-quality development of student cadres in private colleges and universities, promote the synergistic effect of all-member, all-process, and all-round education, and help students grow up and become successful as well as the educational reform of private colleges and universities.

Given the specificity and importance of talent cultivation in private colleges and universities, integrating the theories of pedagogy, management, psychology, and other multidisciplinary disciplines to improve the competence of student cadres in private colleges and universities has become an important research topic in the construction of student cadres in private colleges and universities.

The theory of "competency" has been developing in full swing in the field of management and has been widely applied. Chinese scholars have conducted research on competency in the field of management earlier and intensively, while the research in the field of education started later and was not much in number, mainly exploring the elements of competency of various groups of teachers and the composition and measurement of the competency model. However, the number of theoretical studies on the competence of student cadres in private colleges and universities in the existing research results is relatively small, and there are even fewer studies that specifically focus on the competence of student cadres in private colleges and universities. As of January 4, 2023, a search of the "China Knowledge Network" database showed that only 46 studies were focusing on "competence of student cadres", of which only 2 studies focused on "competence of student cadres in private colleges and universities". Only two of them focused on the "competency of student cadres in private colleges and universities".

Based on the current research findings, Zhou & Zhou (2005) focus more on the capabilities of student cadres without delving into their intrinsic qualities. Similarly, Ma (2010) understands competency from the perspective of abilities and skills. In contrast, Li (2007) and Wu et al (2013) approach competency from multiple dimensions, including both demonstrated abilities and inherent qualities.

Overall, combining the Iceberg Model theory to explore competency is a more scientific approach. However, existing studies have not adequately addressed the characteristics of students in private universities, whose distinct differences from public university students are shaped by factors such as admissions methods, tuition fees, and curriculum design.

This study employs a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods, including interviews and surveys with student cadres in private universities, to explore the connotations and model of student cadre competencies in these institutions. This approach not only provides new insights into the theory of student cadre competencies but also organically integrates the study of these competencies with ideological and political education in higher education, fostering theoretical innovation and development in both fields. The findings of this research will offer a scientific basis for enhancing the competencies of student cadres in private universities and will lay the foundation for their training and development.

Objectives

Given the real challenges faced by student cadres in private universities during their practical work, along with the fundamental tasks of fostering virtue and the pressing need for student growth and success, it is imperative to research the competencies of student cadres in private universities. This research will not only supplement theoretical studies on private university students but also provide valuable insights and guidance for the development of student cadre teams in private education. Effective team building among student cadres is essential for comprehensively improving the educational quality of private universities.

This study aims to explore the competency characteristics and their connotations that student cadres in private colleges and universities should have and to construct a scientific competency model through systematic analysis and generalization, to provide the theoretical basis and practical guidance for the



selection, training, and development of student cadres in colleges and universities. The specific research objectives are as follows:

1. Analyzing the connotation and characteristics of student cadre competence in private colleges and universities:

Through literature analysis and comparative analysis methods, the existing theories and practices on the competence of student cadres are studied in depth to analyze the specific connotations and characteristics of the competence that student cadres in private colleges and universities should have.

2. To summarize the elements of student cadre competence in private colleges and universities, to specify their dimensions, and to construct a model:

Using the behavioral event interview method and the "Delphi" expert consulting method, we collected and analyzed relevant data to summarize the core elements of the competency of student cadres in private colleges and universities and to clarify the dimensions of their competency.

A systematic competency model is constructed to provide theoretical support and operational guidelines for colleges and universities in selecting and training student leaders.

Through this study, we aim to provide a scientific basis and specific guidance for private colleges and universities in the process of selection, training, evaluation, and development of student cadres, to improve the comprehensive quality and working ability of student cadres and promote the overall improvement of the level of student work in colleges and universities.

Literature review

Competence, known as competence abroad, has been the subject of several studies since McClelland proposed the concept, and has been defined in a variety of ways by scholars. According to McClelland, competence refers to knowledge, skills, abilities, traits, or motivations that are directly related to job performance or other important outcomes in life, emphasizing the strong connection between competence and actual outcomes. Spencer further expands on this concept by arguing that competencies include five dimensions of knowledge, skills, self-concept, traits, and motivation, which are characteristics of an individual that are capable of leading to effective or excellent job performance.

In the 1970s, the theory of "competency" was introduced into school management in the U.S.A., and the behavioral and competency traits necessary for good school administrators were proposed (Gao, 2015). In 2003, the Australian government developed a clear indicator system for the leadership competency of primary and secondary school principals. Dineke E. H proposed teaching competency traits for college and university teachers (Dineke E. H, 2004). These studies provide theoretical guidance and practical reference for school management.

In China, scholars have studied competency in education in a broader context. The research covers the teaching force as a whole, special groups such as early childhood teachers and college teachers, as well as school administrators and other teaching and support staff. The vast majority of studies focus on different educational contexts in primary, secondary, and university schools, based on literature analysis, through empirical research, using behavioral event interviews or questionnaires, to explore the elements of competency in the teacher community and construct a teacher competency model to provide theoretical basis and practical guidance for the construction and management of the teaching force.

In addition to the teacher group, there are also studies focusing on the student group. For example, drawing on competency theory and methodology, we analyze the competency quality characteristics of student cadres in colleges and universities, construct a competency model for student cadres, and apply gray correlation analysis to evaluate the competency of student cadres in a certain college or university, to improve the efficiency of student cadre selection. In addition, it also focuses on graduate competency given the difficult employment problem of college students.

In China, many scholars have also studied the competency qualities of student cadres. Zhang (1998) believes that student cadres in colleges and universities should have the ability to self-management and education, emphasizing that student cadres need to be self-disciplined and have the ability to self-educate



and manage (Zhang, 1998). Scholars such as Zhou & Zhou (2005) believed that organizational and coordinating ability, professional knowledge level, publicity and encouragement, and decision-making power are the basic abilities that student cadres in colleges and universities should have (Zhou & Zhou, 2005). Scholars such as Xue & Zhu (2005) analyzed the personality traits of college student cadres, including competence, conscientiousness, emotional stability, openness, agreeableness, morality, extroversion, and aggressiveness, by conducting an open-ended questionnaire survey on 650 college students in Nanjing (Xue & Zhu, 2005). Li (2007) suggested that the competence of student cadres in higher education should include four dimensions: personal traits, knowledge level, technical ability, and motivation level (Li, 2007).

Fu (2014) pointed out in the Research on Competent Characteristics of Student Cadres in Colleges and Universities that the competent characteristics of student cadres in colleges and universities include five factors: communication and coordination, personal traits, professional skills, self-management, and achievement orientation (Fu, 2014). In the Research on the Competency Characteristics Model of Student Cadres in Colleges and Universities, Ma Yue argued that the competency characteristics model of student cadres in colleges and universities should include communication skills, personal traits, achievement orientation, a sense of teamwork and interpersonal insight (Ma, 2010). Wu Fan et al. studied student cadres in 10 universities in Guangzhou using mathematical modeling and divided the student cadre competency model into three dimensions: leadership traits, personal skills, and moral cultivation (Wu et al (2013). Chen Xiuchun believes that building a training system for student cadres in private colleges and universities should include three parts: theoretical knowledge training, skills and techniques training, and quality development training (Chen, 2016). Han Hongzheng et al. believe that the competency model of student cadre cadres in colleges and universities should contain seven dimensions: knowledge learning, communication ability, political thought, interpersonal skills, task management, leadership ability, and problem-solving ability (Han & Xie, 2012).

Existing research on the competencies of student cadres can generally be divided into two main types: one focuses on the necessary skills and abilities, while the other takes a broader approach to competency, encompassing abilities, skills, and intrinsic qualities. Given the characteristics of students in private universities—who often have more diverse values, a greater tendency toward utilitarianism, and generally better family backgrounds—research on the competencies of student cadres in private universities must integrate the Iceberg Model theory. This approach should consider various aspects, including skills, abilities, values, and intrinsic traits.

Since there are very few studies specifically targeting student cadres in private universities, this research should carefully consider the fundamental attributes of private universities in both the study's focus and expert consultations.

Although scholars have different understandings of student cadre competencies and employ various research methods, common approaches include the Behavioral Event Interview (BEI) method and the Job Analysis method. The BEI method involves student cadres recounting successful and unsuccessful events, from which researchers extract competency characteristics and analyze the differences in competencies between high performers and average performers to construct a competency model. The Job Analysis method systematically and comprehensively examines the work content, responsibilities, and methods of specific positions to identify the required competency elements. However, both the BEI and Job Analysis methods have certain limitations, with the conclusions drawn being relatively subjective. Therefore, this study also employs the Delphi expert consultation method and the questionnaire survey method to ensure the universality and scientific validity of the resulting model.

Overall, scholars have reached a certain consensus on the connotation of student cadre competencies: first, student cadre competencies have general applicability, encompassing three dimensions—knowledge, skills, and personality traits; second, these competencies are situational, meaning that the requirements of the position can influence an individual's competencies; and third, student cadre competencies are

predictive, meaning they can be used to forecast future job performance and are useful in the recruitment, appointment, and evaluation of student cadres. These research conclusions provide a theoretical foundation and important reference for the development of this study.

Conceptual Framework

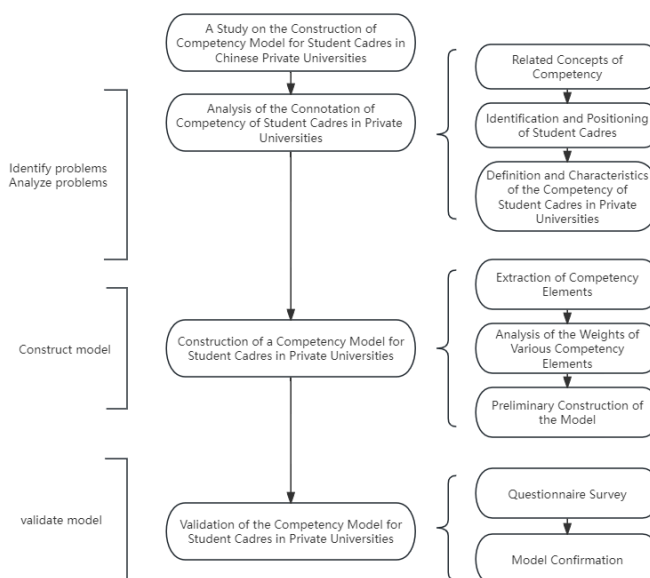


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework
Note: Constructed by the researcher

Methodology

1. Behavioral Event Interview

The Behavioral Event Interview (BEI) method is a commonly used qualitative research approach designed to uncover the underlying factors behind the most successful and least successful events in the interviewees' work experiences. Before conducting the interviews, a structured outline is prepared, but during the interview, the focus is on allowing the interviewees to freely describe their experiences, minimizing the researcher's guidance or intervention. After the interviews, the researcher employs thematic analysis and coding techniques to distill the key factors that led to success or failure. The strength of this method lies in its rigorous logic, which allows researchers to capture the interviewees' true states through face-to-face interviews, providing comprehensive, objective, and detailed information that helps to effectively reveal competency elements. However, this method is time-consuming and requires the interviewer to be highly skilled in overcoming subjective biases.

In this study, the selection criteria for high-performing and average-performing student cadres will be established based on the interview objectives. A sample of 30 student cadres from private universities in Jiangsu Province will be selected for interviews. Using Nvivo software and grounded theory, the data will undergo three levels of coding to extract the competency elements of student cadres in private universities, laying a solid research foundation for the construction of a student cadre competency model.

2. Comparative Analysis

The comparative analysis method involves examining the similarities and differences between objects or individuals to provide a basis for further research judgments. This study employs this method in the following ways:



Evaluation of Different Scholars' Research Findings: By analyzing and evaluating the research outcomes of various scholars, this study draws insights that inform its direction.

Comparison of Student Cadre Competencies and Qualities: The study compares the competencies and qualities of student cadres to clarify the connotation of student cadre competencies.

Comparison of Competency Models: The study compares the constructed competency model for student cadres in private universities with that of student cadres in public universities.

3. Delphi Expert Consultation

The Delphi expert consultation method is a technique that systematically collects and integrates expert opinions through multiple rounds of anonymous questionnaires. The goal is to achieve consensus or compile comprehensive and objective viewpoints and recommendations through iterative feedback and adjustments. In this study, 12 experts in the field of student affairs at private universities were invited to conduct multiple rounds of comparative analysis on the identified competency elements. The experts included two directors of student affairs from private universities in Jiangsu Province, four Youth League Committee secretaries, four deputy deans in charge of student affairs, and two award-winning full-time counselors from the Counselor Professional Competence Contest. Throughout three rounds of consultations, the competency elements were refined through processes of elimination, merging, or addition. This approach ensured the scientific, rigorous, and comprehensive nature of the data sources, with each round of consultation undergoing thorough review by the experts, resulting in well-informed and detailed insights.

4. Questionnaire Survey

The questionnaire survey method involves designing and compiling questionnaires to gather information or solicit opinions from respondents based on the research objectives. In this study, this method will be used to develop the "Competency Assessment Questionnaire for Student Cadres in Private Universities." Initially, 109 pilot questionnaires were collected from students at the researcher's institution to explore the preliminary competency model for student cadres in private universities. Through basic data analysis, reliability analysis, and validity analysis, the classification and naming of the model were optimized. Subsequently, 350 questionnaires were distributed to private universities nationwide, with 302 valid questionnaires returned. The final validation of the competency model for student cadres in private universities was completed through data analysis, reliability analysis, exploratory factor analysis, and confirmatory factor analysis.

Results

1. Connotation and Characteristics of Competency of Student Cadres in Private Universities

Chinese scholars have reached consensus on several points regarding the "competency of university student cadres":

1.1 Competency is related to job performance: Competency is considered closely related to organizational environment and job requirements, jointly influencing job performance. This means that the competency of student cadres in universities is not only related to individual abilities but also closely linked to the organizational environment and specific job requirements.

1.2 Multidimensional nature of competency: The competency of student cadres includes not only knowledge and skills but also emotional, attitudinal, value-based, personality, and motivational characteristics. These traits are important for student cadres to effectively perform their duties.

1.3 Evaluation and predictive role of competency: Competency is seen as an important tool for evaluating and predicting student cadre performance. It can be applied in the selection, assessment, and evaluation processes of student cadres, helping universities more accurately identify and cultivate outstanding student cadres.

1.4 Consensus on competency elements: Although different studies may derive varying competency elements due to differences in sample groups, quantities, methods, and perspectives, Chinese scholars generally recognize several key competency elements for university student cadres, including



verbal expression ability, interpersonal communication skills, psychological resilience, political literacy, self-confidence, organizational coordination ability, and conflict resolution skills. These elements are widely considered essential competencies for student cadres to perform their duties and achieve excellent performance.

From a multidimensional perspective, the competency of student cadres in private universities can be defined as a series of excellent individual characteristics that can be measured or observed, including knowledge, skills, attitudes, emotions, and values. These characteristics help students achieve self-management, and healthy growth, and contribute to the goals of talent cultivation in universities.

The characteristics of student cadre competency in private universities mainly reflect comprehensiveness, distinction, quantifiability, and development:

Comprehensiveness: Competency includes explicit parts such as knowledge and skills, as well as implicit parts like emotional responses, work attitudes, values, internal motivations, and personal traits. These factors collectively determine the performance and effectiveness of student cadres.

Distinction: Competency effectively predicts job performance. Outstanding student cadres set examples through excellent work and influencing other students, and performance differences reflect competency variations, forming the basis for building the student cadre team.

Quantifiability: Explicit elements such as knowledge and skills can be evaluated through tests, while implicit parts like attitudes, emotions, and motivations can be quantified through long-term observation, psychological questionnaires, and behavioral interviews.

Development: Competency includes innate qualities and acquired skills through education and training. It is closely related to the growth environment, organizational environment, work situation, and job requirements. Student cadres need to continuously adjust themselves to adapt to role requirements, and organizations should explore effective management mechanisms to select and train outstanding student cadres, enhancing their competency.

2. Construction of Competency Model for Student Cadres in Private Universities

2.1 Competency Elements of Student Cadres in Private Universities

Based on the results of behavioral event interviews, the study, utilizing grounded theory and referencing documents like the "Self-Discipline Convention for Student Union Cadres" and "Regulations on Improving Work Style and Serving Students by Student Union Staff", combined with expert verification and questionnaire validation, categorizes the competency elements of student cadres in private universities into four dimensions: political literacy, work attitude, workability, and personal traits, encompassing 17 specific elements as follows:

Table 1 Competency Elements of Student Cadres in Private Universities

Factor	Key element
political integrity	1. Political beliefs
	2. Political quality
	3. Friendship with classmates
	4. Awareness of role models
working attitude	5. Identity
	6. Awareness of responsibility
	7. Expressive language skills
	8. Communication and coordination skills
working ability	9. Problem-solving capacity
	10. Counseling capacity
	11. Learning capacity
	12. Organizational management capacity



Factor	Key element
personality trait	13. Time management skills
	14. Innovative capacity
	15. Moral Characteristics
	16. Emotional Traits
	17. Character Traits

2.2 Competency Classification of Student Leaders in Private Colleges and Universities

In the competency model of student cadres in private colleges and universities, although each factor has its unique connotation and attributes, they are not independent of each other. These factors are interconnected and interdependent, and together they constitute a complete competency system, complementing each other and jointly influencing the overall performance and work effectiveness of student cadres.

Concerning the theory of the "iceberg model", the competence of student cadres in private colleges and universities can be divided into two categories: "benchmark competence" and "discriminating competence". Among them, workability belongs to "benchmark competence", which is the basic ability of student cadres to be competent in their work. This kind of competence is explicit quality, which can be observed or measured, and can be improved through training and learning, and is closely related to work experience. On the other hand, political character, personality traits, and work attitude belong to "discriminating competence", which is the key ability to distinguish the performance of student cadres. These abilities are hidden qualities that cannot be easily assessed quantitatively but need to be evaluated in combination with qualitative assessment. This categorization helps to fully understand and improve the comprehensive abilities of student leaders.

2.3 Competency Model for Student Leaders in Private Colleges and Universities

During the process of model construction and validation, the researcher analyzed the collected questionnaires. Based on the 4 dimensions and 17 elements, each element was specifically elaborated, resulting in a questionnaire comprising 50 questions. After optimizing the model's classification and naming through reliability and validity analyses, the formal questionnaires were further analyzed. The reliability analysis indicated that the data had high reliability and quality. The exploratory factor analysis confirmed that the data were suitable for extraction and that the questionnaire had a good structure. The confirmatory factor analysis also demonstrated that the model had a high level of fit.

Table 2 Basic Statistics of the Formal Questionnaire

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage(%)
Gender	Male	166	54.97
	Female	136	45.03
Type of College	Private vocational college	126	41.72
	Private university	176	58.28

Table 3 Consistency Reliability Analysis of the Formal Questionnaire

Dimension	Item	Corrected Item-Total Correlation, Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted	Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient
political integrity	Q1	0.721	0.926
	Q2	0.751	



Dimension	Item	Corrected Item-Total Correlation, Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted	Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient
working attitude	Q3	0.743	0.916
	Q4	0.770	0.914
	Q15	0.771	0.914
	Q16	0.748	0.916
	Q18	0.724	0.918
	Q37	0.750	0.916
	Q7	0.771	0.926
	Q8	0.761	0.926
	Q9	0.780	0.925
	Q10	0.773	0.925
	Q11	0.718	0.929
	Q12	0.793	0.924
	Q13	0.782	0.925
	Q14	0.780	0.925
	Q19	0.782	0.973
working ability	Q20	0.782	0.973
	Q21	0.782	0.973
	Q22	0.804	0.973
	Q23	0.816	0.973
	Q24	0.806	0.973
	Q25	0.801	0.973
	Q26	0.793	0.973
	Q27	0.778	0.973
	Q28	0.784	0.973
	Q29	0.756	0.973
	Q30	0.782	0.973
	Q31	0.814	0.973
	Q32	0.806	0.973
	Q33	0.800	0.973



Dimension	Item	Corrected Item-Total Correlation, Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted	Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient
		CITC	
	Q34	0.786	0.973
	Q35	0.816	0.973
	Q36	0.794	0.973
	Q38	0.771	0.973
	Q39	0.813	0.973
	Q40	0.765	0.973
	Q41	0.768	0.933
	Q42	0.767	0.933
	Q43	0.742	0.934
	Q44	0.804	0.931
personality trait	Q46	0.766	0.933
	Q47	0.750	0.934
	Q48	0.796	0.931
	Q49	0.777	0.932
	Q50	0.754	0.934
Total			0.964

In constructing a competency model for student cadres in private universities, this study combines the multiple identities of student cadres and proposes a "compass-type" competency model with rich levels and dynamic changes. The model is constructed from two perspectives: meso (dimensions) and micro (components), showing a structure from the outside to the inside:

Multi-level structure: the model is arranged in order from outer to inner levels, covering four dimensions: workability, political character, work attitude, and personality traits. Each dimension contains specific competency elements, totaling 17 elements, which constitute the key competencies of student leaders. Workability, as an outer dimension, is easier to assess and cultivate, while personality traits, as an inner dimension, are more difficult to evaluate and acquire.

Dimension weight difference: by the size of the sector area, the model reflects the relative importance of each dimension in the overall competency, based on the importance (weight) of each dimension. This helps student leaders to target individual competencies according to their situation. However, the current modeling study is limited to the division of dimension weights and has not yet delved into the differences in the importance of each competency element, and future research needs to be further improved.

Development and change: The model is designed as a compass, and its "rotatable" visual effect symbolizes the development and change of each dimension and element. The current model is based on extensive research and expert evidence and is adapted to the needs of the professional competence of student leaders in private universities in China at this stage. With the development of the times and education, the



requirements of student leaders' competence are also developing and changing, so the four dimensions and 17 elements in the model need to be constantly updated and adjusted to meet the needs of the times.

In summary, through the multi-level structure, dimensional weighting differences, and developmental variability, the compass-type competency model comprehensively and systematically demonstrates the competency composition of student cadres. The model not only adapts to the current educational environment but also provides an important reference for future research and practice.

Discussion

Although "competency" is not a brand new concept, and many scholars have studied the issue of student cadre competency and constructed different student cadre competency models, the research focusing on "student cadre competency in private colleges and universities" is still relatively limited. Private colleges and universities differ significantly from ordinary colleges and universities in terms of talent cultivation goals, curriculum, organizer's or investor's internal preferences, school culture construction, and the level of the student population, etc. Therefore, we cannot simply compare private colleges and universities with ordinary colleges and universities in terms of student cadre competency. Therefore, it is not possible to simply apply the research results on the competence of student leaders in ordinary universities to private universities.

Carrying out research oriented to the competence of student cadres in private colleges and universities is both urgent in practice and innovative in research. This study not only broadens the breadth of the study horizontally and promotes the extension of the study, but also analyzes the issue of competency of student cadres in private colleges and universities vertically and accumulates the depth of the study.

Compared to previous research results and the competency models of student cadres in public universities, this study has the following key differences and innovations:

1. Clustering of Competency Elements: In the competency models for student cadres in public universities, political integrity is often mentioned as an important aspect; however, it is usually classified as a secondary category and not directly highlighted as a primary category in the overall structure. In contrast, the competency model for student cadres in private universities constructed in this study elevates political integrity to a primary category. This represents a significant difference from most competency models for student cadres in public universities. This difference arises from specific reasons, including the diverse student backgrounds, family characteristics, and the challenges of diverse value systems faced by private universities, which necessitate placing greater emphasis on political integrity in the competency model.

2. Structural Innovation of the Competency Model: The competency models for student cadres in public universities typically use a two-tier or three-tier hierarchical structure, where the various competency elements are arranged in layers, forming a top-down classification system. In contrast, the competency model for student cadres in private universities constructed in this study adopts a compass-like, onion-layered structure. In this model, personality traits are placed at the innermost layer, representing the core component, which reflects the foundational role of this dimension in the overall competency of student cadres. The middle layer consists of political integrity and working attitude, which are both manifestations of the intrinsic qualities of student cadres and drivers of their external behavior. The outermost layer represents working ability, directly reflecting the student cadres' performance in their practical work, which is the most observable and assessable aspect for external parties. This onion-like structure not only clearly illustrates the hierarchical relationships between the dimensions but also allows for targeted evaluation of the visibility and difficulty of improvement of each dimension. This well-defined, interconnected structure provides a more systematic and precise pathway for the assessment and enhancement of competencies.

3. Innovation in Research Methods: This study employs a comprehensive research approach, recognizing that the competencies required of student cadres in private universities are highly dependent on the context, including the specific period, functions, and regional differences. As such, these competencies may vary across different periods and locations. To address this, the study draws on existing



research and combines qualitative and quantitative methods. In addition to using the Behavioral Event Interview method and grounded theory to develop an initial model, the study also applies the Delphi expert consultation method and questionnaire surveys to refine and validate the model, ultimately constructing a competency model that is well-suited to the specific needs of student cadres in private universities.

The construction of the competency model for student cadres in private colleges and universities still has the following problems that need to be further improved:

First, there are geographical limitations. This study constructs a competency model based on the "behavioral event interview method", focusing specifically on student leaders in private universities in Jiangsu Province. Although these interviewees provided a wealth of case stories that demonstrated a deep understanding of the competency of student leaders, there are inevitably questions about whether the job competency reflected in these interview stories is affected by factors such as the culture of a particular region and the level of economic development. Although this study was verified through questionnaires, first, the number of questionnaires is only 302, and second, the questionnaire fillers will be affected by the content of the questionnaire itself constructed, and still, there may be some regional limitations.

Secondly, it fails to take into account the diversity of student leaders' positions. There is diversity in the positions of student cadres, such as the secretariat of the Student Union, which requires more written work, and the Volunteer Association, which requires more organization of volunteer activities, and there is a difference in the competency model corresponding to different positions, and the competency model of their instructors is also different. Although it is possible to select and cultivate students according to their positions in specific management, further thinking is needed on how to face such differences in the group competency model.

Conclusion

This study first explored the identification of competency, competency model, and competency model for student cadres through literature analysis method and comparative analysis method, clarified the connotation of competency of student cadres in private colleges and universities, and laid the theoretical foundation of the study.

Subsequently, the competency model of student cadres in private colleges and universities was preliminarily constructed based on the rooted theory by using the behavioral event interview method and optimized and weighted in different dimensions through the "Delphi" expert consulting method. Based on this preliminary model, the study further adopted the questionnaire method and quantitative analysis method for verification and finally established the competency model of student cadres in private colleges and universities. The model consists of four dimensions, namely, political integrity, work attitude, workability, and personal attributes, and 17 elements, presenting a rich and dynamically changing "compass-type" competency model. The model is constructed from two perspectives: meso (dimensions) and micro (components), presenting a structure from the outside to the inside. The competency model is characterized by a multi-level structure, differences in dimensional weights, and developmental changes, which comprehensively and systematically demonstrate the competency composition of student cadres.

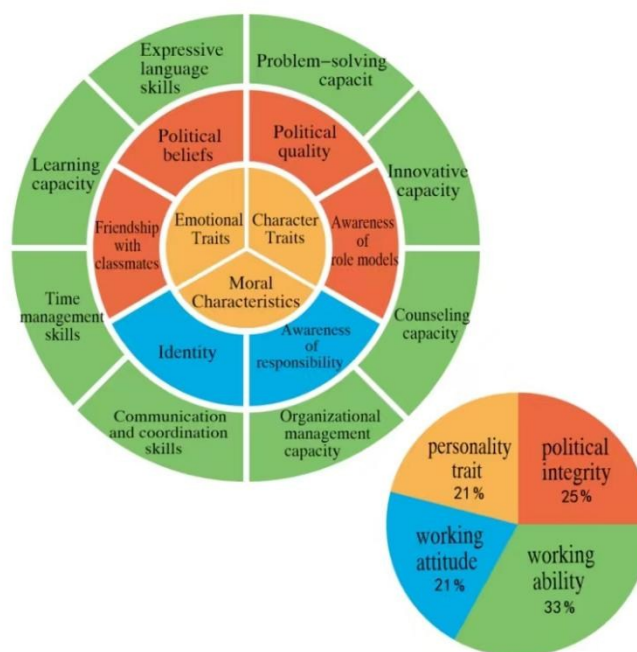


Figure 2 Competency Model of Student Cadres in Private Universities

Note: Constructed by the researcher

Recommendation

Based on the results of the study, the following recommendations are made to enhance the competency of student leaders in private colleges and universities:

First, a screening mechanism based on the competency model was established. The screening criteria are clearly defined, covering four dimensions and 17 specific elements to ensure that screening is scientific and objective. Written tests, interviews, behavioral event interviews, scenario simulations, and other diversified methods are used to comprehensively assess the competency of candidates. The screening criteria are dynamically adjusted according to the needs.

Secondly, a diversified training system has been established. Systematic training programs have been designed, covering the four areas of political quality, work attitude, workability, and personality traits. Various forms, such as lectures, case studies, group discussions, and simulation exercises, are used to improve practical skills. Combining theoretical learning and practical operation, consolidating knowledge and skills through projects and tasks. Continuous evaluation of the training effect and timely adjustment of the training content to ensure effectiveness.

Finally, the feedback and evaluation mechanism should be strengthened. An evaluation system combining quantitative and qualitative aspects has been established to scientifically assess the performance of student cadres. Regular feedback on performance is provided to provide suggestions for improvement and promote competency enhancement. Combine the evaluation results with incentives to recognize and reward outstanding student cadres and stimulate motivation. Feedback results are applied to selection, training, and promotion to improve overall quality.

Through the establishment of a screening mechanism, a diversified cultivation and training system, and a perfect feedback and evaluation mechanism, the comprehensive quality and working ability of student cadres in private colleges and universities will be upgraded to promote the improvement of school management and education quality.

Based on the results of this study, in the future, if there is a need to further increase the understanding and research on the competency of student leaders in private colleges and universities, it is possible to expand the research in the following areas:



Firstly, we can categorize the positions of student cadres and build different competency models for different categories. Through in-depth analysis of the duties and job content of different types of student leaders, more accurate competency indicators and measurement tools can be developed.

Second, the scope of the study can be expanded, in addition to increasing the sample size of questionnaires and interviews to cover more provinces and different types of private colleges and universities, a longitudinal study can be conducted on individual student cadres, combining the theories of comprehensive human development and career development, and individual tracking analysis.

Thirdly, the competency model can be used to conduct real research, study the current situation of competency, and analyze the existing problems, based on which more targeted promotion strategies can be formulated.

Fourthly, Implementation and Long-Term Follow-Up Research: Given the author's position in the core department responsible for student cadre development, the study plans to implement the strategies in the workplace. By conducting long-term follow-up, gathering feedback, and maintaining records of student cadres, the effectiveness of the enhancement strategies will be validated. Additionally, based on the feedback, the strategies will be continuously optimized to ensure ongoing improvement.

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