



# Research on the Leadership Meta-ability-Based Development Model for Cadets

HaiYu Zhang, Tao Hu, and ChunHui Yang(✉)

Department of Management Engineering and Equipment Economics, Naval University of Engineering, Wuhan 430030, Hubei, China  
yangch@nudt.edu.cn

**Abstract.** Leadership meta-ability-based development model for cadets has been proposed as there are currently some dilemmas in the leadership development model for cadets. This model takes leadership meta-ability as its objective, and puts experiential class as its core. It has set a leadership development model that integrates six leadership meta-abilities, including attitude and habits, goal planning, time management, interpersonal communication, team leadership, and military characteristics into theoretical learning, experiential class, practical exercises and feedback evaluation. Ultimately it has achieved the goal of improving leadership.

**Keywords:** leadership meta-ability · cadets · leadership · experiential class

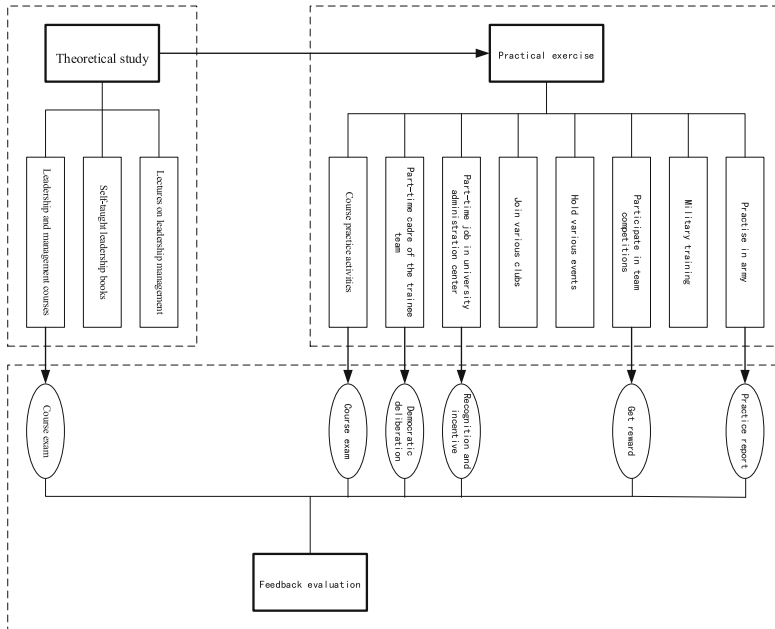
## 1 Introduction

Xi Jinping proposed that the way to strengthen the army lies in people-oriented. Leadership is an important quality for cadets. Leadership meta-ability-based development model for cadets has been proposed as there are currently some problems for our development of leadership, which includes unclear concept definition of leadership and plain knowledge of leadership.

## 2 Situation Analysis of Leadership Development Model for Cadets

### 2.1 The Current Framework of the Leadership Development Model for Cadets

The current methods mostly adopt the model of “theoretical learning + practical training → feedback evaluation” based on the experience of the U.S. military and solving the present problems. For theoretical learning, students learn leadership and management related courses, and participate in relevant lectures irregularly according to the development plan; for practical exercise, students can practice their leadership by taking part in the practice activities, clubs, and military training, as well as serving as part-time cadre [1] (Fig. 1).



**Fig. 1.** The current leadership development model for cadets (self-drawn)

## 2.2 The Current Difficulties and Deficiencies of the Leadership Development Model for Cadets

In recent years, although universities have begun to pay attention to the leadership development for cadets, it still lacks scientific three-dimensional top-level design mode due to insufficient analysis and research on the concept of leadership. It is the same with our school. These problems and deficiencies are analyzed from the following four aspects:

### 1. Development goals

As both leaders and cadets lack a systematic and in-depth understanding of the concept of leadership, they are confused about how to develop and where to start [2]. In practice, there is often a lack of clear development goals and targeted development plan. They adopt the way of theoretical teaching and practical exercise, for which students take the attitude of negative involvement. In this situation, the effect of leadership development needs to be improved in the following three aspects: Firstly, the leadership development for cadets focuses on meeting the needs of the army's first position, thereby ignoring exploring the cadets' potential. Secondly, the cadets trained under the current training model often lack individuality. Thirdly, the cadets lack the awareness and ability of self-development due to insufficient scientific guidance.

### 2. Theoretical study

The leadership theory course under the current curriculum system mainly teaches the genre, development and representative viewpoints of leadership management

theory. But it lacks practical and situational lectures on how to apply it, so cadets lack sense of experience, which results in their understanding of knowledge and skills only at the theoretical level of textbooks. Besides, it is difficult for the cadets to connect them with practical problems in real life, and to solve problems in life by using theoretical knowledge flexibly.

### 3. Practical exercise

Firstly, due to the limited opportunities to practice leadership, not all cadets have the chances to serve as part-time cadre, organize activities or be the team captains. A considerable number of cadets do not have the opportunity to practice leadership, so the theoretical knowledge of leadership they have learned is difficult to apply and internalize. Secondly, a lack of professional and prompt guidance. In most cases, the majority of cadets learn experience from the leaders, seniors, or classmates around them in practice by way of observation and imitation. However, different people have different levels of leadership, which is not conducive to the formation of cadets' systematic leadership thinking. Thirdly, practical activities are not very directional and purposeful for leadership development. Cadets do not clearly know about what kind of abilities can be improved by participating in a certain practical activity, which is not conducive to the self-cultivation of cadets' leadership.

### 4. Feedback and evaluation

A three-dimensional and effective feedback evaluation model has not been established. Theoretical courses is mostly evaluated by written examinations, which focus on the memory of knowledge rather than the application of knowledge and skills and the actual improvement of leadership. Students only treat leadership and management courses as equal to other courses, and lack the emphasis on the application of their knowledge. Cadets can improve their leadership when participating in practical activities, but due to the lack of a clear and prompt leadership evaluation feedback model, it is difficult to improve the quality and effectiveness of leadership development.

## 3 Leadership Meta-ability-Based Development Model for Cadets

### 3.1 Analysis on the Characteristics of Leadership Development Needs for Cadets

Most of the cadets are in the role of being managed during their study in the military school and only a small number of cadets serve as part-time cadre. However, most of the cadets who lack the opportunity to experience the leadership role will become the grass-roots officers who lead troops after graduation. Therefore, leadership development which is considered as a "required course" for each cadets cannot only be targeted to a small number of cadets. Based on the characteristics of the cadets in the military school, the following two points should be paid attention to when conducting leadership development.

Firstly, in the past, scholars have decomposed leadership into decision-making, charisma, and control power from the structural level of leadership itself. However, leadership at this level is the ability that a successful leader should have, or the necessary abilities in leadership and management positions. These abilities can only be

well displayed and developed by leaders in leadership and management positions. For most cadets, it is difficult to exercise these leadership abilities in leadership positions. Therefore, from the perspective of the leadership structure itself, it is difficult to propose targeted development measures for leadership at the level of decision-making and control power.

Secondly, the leadership of cadets is not unique to cadets in leadership and management positions, instead, every cadet has leadership potential, which can be completely improved through effective development. Moreover, the development of leadership is, to some extent, the improvement of cadets' self-management awareness and ability. Cadets can improve their own ability and quality by using a series of resources and environments around them. The leadership of the cadets in the military school is a step-by-step development process. By stimulating their leadership awareness and subjective initiative, the cadets can truly play the role of a leader in their own growth. That is to say, the cadets must first learn to lead themselves before they learn to lead others. Zhu Zhenhui from National Defense University of Science and Technology proposed that the leadership development of cadets is divided into two skills: self-leadership and social leadership. The former includes self-awareness, mentality, time management, meta-learning, etc. The latter includes planning, communication, motivation, empowerment, etc. [1].

Based on the above two points, the paper proposes the concept of leadership meta-ability. Meta, one meaning is basic, and also means head, head, beginning. Leadership meta-ability is the basic ability to serve future leadership positions formed and developed by the students' subjective will through targeted training measures at the military academy stage. Leadership meta-competence has the following three characteristics: (1) Leadership meta-competence is formed through various targeted measures in the military academy stage and under the subjective will of the students; (2) Leadership meta-competence is a kind of ability that enables cadets to quickly adapt to the environment and positions and rapidly develop their leadership after taking up leadership positions; (3) Leadership meta-competence is the core ability to improve the overall quality of the cadets, and it is the basic ability to become a qualified leader. In the military academy stage, the goal and starting point is to cultivate the leadership meta-ability of the growing officer cadets. By focusing on improving the leadership meta-ability, it lays the foundation for the formation of leadership after serving in the army, and finally achieves the purpose of improving leadership.

### 3.2 Leadership Meta-ability Model

Leadership meta-ability is the front-end element module that affects the generation of leadership. During the military school, starting from the leadership meta-ability, it lays the foundation for building the leadership of cadets after them serving in the army by improving their leadership meta-abilities. And ultimately, their leadership has been improved. On the basis of the relevant research results of the "Leadership Training Camp" by National University of Defense Technology, it combines the ability characteristics of cadets and the practicability and evaluability of personnel training. The leadership meta-ability of the cadets can be divided into six element modules, which includes attitude habits, goal planning, time management, interpersonal communication, team leadership, military characteristics.

From the perspective of individual leadership development, leadership meta-ability includes three modules: attitude habits, goal planning, and time management, which are the basic modules in the leadership meta-ability model. Leaders should also have the ability to deal with emergencies in groups, including two modules: interpersonal communication and team leadership, which are the advanced level of leadership meta-ability development. These five modules are the composition of the general model of leadership meta-ability. For the group of cadets in the military school, the leadership meta-ability development should also include military characteristics, the element that reflects group characteristics.

The formation of leadership is the result of the comprehensive action of many elements. Only by aligning the overall development of cadets' own abilities with leadership development, can the development potential of cadets' leadership be continuously enhanced. The elements of six leadership meta-abilities interact with each other, promote each other, and synergistically play a positive role in the generation and improvement of leadership. It is worth noting that the six leadership meta-abilities do not mean that leadership is decomposed from the conceptual and structural levels and the sum of the six leadership meta-abilities equals leadership, instead, it proposes six elements that have a positive role in promoting leadership development from the perspective of operability and implementation of the leadership development of cadets. It proposes targeted development measures to develop the cadets' leadership potential and improve their leadership aiming at the six leadership meta-abilities.

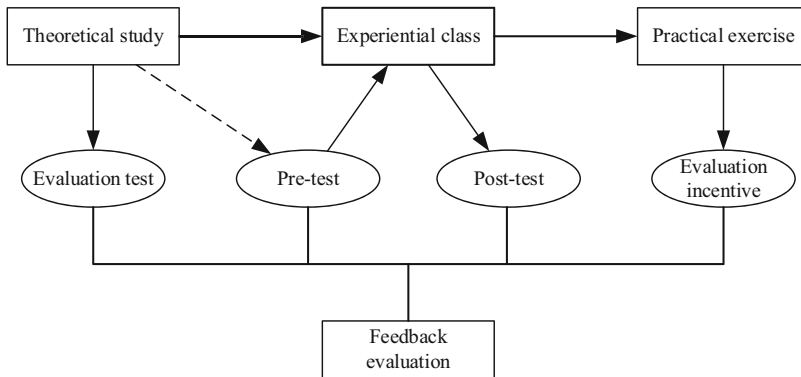
## **4 Leadership Meta-ability-Based Development Model for Cadets in the Military School**

### **4.1 Constructing Leadership Meta-ability-Based Development Model for Cadets in the Military School**

Leadership development model for cadets in the military school takes leadership meta-ability as its objective, and puts experiential class as its core. It has set a leadership development model that integrates six leadership meta-abilities, including attitude and habits, goal planning, time management, interpersonal communication, team leadership, and military characteristics into theoretical learning, experiential class, practical exercises and feedback evaluation. Ultimately it has achieved the goal of improving leadership. In this leadership development model, six leadership meta-abilities which are considered as the core development goals are implemented in four development paths (Fig. 2).

Firstly, improving the construction of the theoretical curriculum system. By traditional classrooms, MOOCs or self-learning textbooks, cadets can learn the basic knowledge related to leadership meta-ability, which lays a solid theoretical foundation for leadership meta-ability development.

Secondly, setting up periodic experiential classes is the key work of this development model. It aims to let cadets experience leadership management by creating a simulated environment implementing and using leadership meta-abilities through various scenarios. We use thematic experiential behavioral training, that is, with practice



**Fig. 2.** Leadership meta-ability-based development model for cadets in the military school (self-drawn)

as its purpose, it advocates people-oriented, self-discovery, and the unity of knowledge and action. The teaching forms of the course are rich and varied, with logical coherence and obvious goal orientation. The course also includes story introduction, case analysis, video appreciation, brainstorming, seminar sharing, personal practice training, scenario simulation, etc., so that cadets can gradually realize the importance of leadership in multiple forms of experiential learning. We also scene typical problems in work and life, aiming to apply the theoretical knowledge and skills learned to solve practical problems. Through experience, inspiration, learning and reflection in the simulated environment, cadets can change their thinking habits and behaviors, and gradually learn to adjust their attitudes and habits, formulate reasonable goals and plans, do a good job in time management, master interpersonal communication skills. By doing so, cadets can be competent team leaders. By continuous improvement, cadets' leadership development potential are developed.

Thirdly, internalizing leadership through practice. Experience and apply leadership meta-ability knowledge and skills in daily life, team building, competitions, activities, military training, and on-the-job practice. Cadets need to focus on self-development to improve their leadership, which means understand it well, and apply it in practice.

Fourthly, establishing a three-dimensional assessment and evaluation model for the whole process. Leadership tests evaluated by regularly conducted element modules of leadership meta-abilities should be added to feedback evaluation, so as to make up for the incomplete feedback evaluation path under the existing model. According to the pre-test results, the cadets will be taught in groups in accordance with their aptitude. Priority is given to the development of the relatively weak leadership meta-ability modules. And personalized development plans are customized for the cadets. According to the post-test results, targeted development suggestions are given to each cadet, who are reminded of the leadership meta-ability elements that still need to be improved. By doing so, self-development can be targeted and purposeful.

## 4.2 The Characteristics of Leadership Meta-ability-Based Development Model for Cadets in the Military School

Due to the different conceptual frameworks and path methods adopted by the traditional development model and leadership meta-ability-based development model, the effects on the leadership development for cadets are different. The traditional leadership development model has the dilemma that “knowledge” and “action” are difficult to integrate in the operation, and cadets get few benefit from it. Conforming to scientific laws and realistic characteristics, leadership meta-ability-based development model can improve the leadership of cadets more effectively.

Firstly, the leadership development model focusing on the experiential class is an improvement and enrichment of the traditional development model, as well as a bold attempt and innovation. It meets the requirements of the educational reform and development of military school. This development model does not advocate instilling skills and knowledge, but advocates self-comprehension and improvement in experience and practice. It changes cadets’ attitudes, habits and inherent thinking patterns, enabling that cadets have a deeper understanding of leadership and a deeper development of leadership. It is beneficial to stimulate the cadets’ inner motivation and potential. The development path of adding experiential class to theoretical learning and practical exercise promotes the mutual transformation between theory and practice, and accelerates the spiral of cadets’ leadership [4].

Secondly, the leadership development model with the goal of improving leadership meta-ability focuses on the improvement of cadets’ personal ability and quality, and the discovery and reserve of leadership. Everyone learns to master the knowledge and skills of leadership meta-ability, pay attention to self-cultivation in daily activities, and realize the practice and understanding of effective leadership. By doing so, leadership will be scientifically improved in the three-dimensional development path.

Thirdly, a scientific and three-dimensional leadership evaluation model has been formed. Cadets can get prompt and effective feedback and evaluation after theoretical learning, experiential classes, and practical exercises. Based on this, cadets can address gaps while the training unit can also teach cadets in accordance with their aptitude based on the evaluation results, give cadets prompt guidance and incentives, and improve their training methods.

## 5 Summary and Prospect

The paper conducts an in-depth and systematic research on the leadership development of the cadets in the military school. The conclusions are as follows: First, unlike the previous research, which decomposes leadership into various elements from the composition of leadership itself, instead, it introduces the concept of leadership meta-ability, and proposes a structural model of leadership meta-ability from the perspective of developing leadership potential, which is an innovation of research perspective. Second, in order to solve the problem that “knowledge” and “action” are difficult to combine in leadership development, the paper proposes to add the central development path of experiential class to the previous development model of “theoretical learning + practical exercise →

feedback evaluation”. Moreover, it optimizes the leadership meta-ability-based feedback evaluation method, which is an innovation of the development path.

The decisive factor in the future battlefield is people, with leadership as its core. How to produce cadets with strong leadership requires strategic planning, innovative ideas and pragmatic measures. The above-mentioned theories and development models still need to be tested and explored in practice, so as to continuously promote the personnel training of our military.

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