

## Presenting a Model for Training Reflective Managers for Farhangian University

Mohammad Ahmadi Beni<sup>1</sup> , Masoumeh Oladian<sup>2</sup> , Mahmoud Safari<sup>3</sup> 

1. Ph.D. student of Educational Management, Islamic Azad University, Damavand Branch, Damavand, Iran
2. Assistant Professor, Islamic Azad University, Damavand Branch (Tehran), Department of Educational Sciences, Tehran, Iran, [m.oladian@yahoo.com](mailto:m.oladian@yahoo.com)
3. Assistant Professor, Islamic Azad University, Damavand Branch (Tehran), Department of Educational Sciences, Tehran, Iran

### Article Info

#### Article type:

Research Article

#### Article history:

Received 7 Jun. 2023

Received in revised form 14

Aug. 2023

Accepted 12 Dec. 2023

Published online 01 Jun. 2024

#### Keywords:

Manager training,  
Reflective thinking,  
Farhangian University,  
Reflective managers

### ABSTRACT

**Objective:** In contemporary academia, a significant number of higher education institutions have increasingly focused on the training and development of their managerial personnel to effectively address their administrative requirements. Given that the leaders and managers serve as both the driving force and guiding mechanism of universities, enhancing and fostering the behavioral and specialized competencies of these managers profoundly influences their overall performance. The objective of the present investigation is to propose a framework for the cultivation of reflective managers specifically for Farhangian University.

**Methods:** This research is categorized as applied in terms of its objectives and employs Grounded Theory as its methodological approach. The data collection process involved semi-structured interviews conducted with fifteen professors and administrators from Farhangian University, who were selected through purposive sampling techniques. The analysis of the research data was conducted utilizing a database theory approach, which included open, axial, and selective coding, facilitated by MAXQDA software.

**Results:** The resultant paradigm model, centered on the phenomenon of reflective thinking development, serves to assist managers in enhancing their reflective thinking attributes. Furthermore, the proposed model encompasses strategies for the advancement of reflective managers influenced by causal factors (such as educational influences, development opportunities, critical reflective thinking, and the personality traits and skills of managers), contextual factors (which include access to university infrastructure, the cultural milieu of the university, and support from higher-level organizations), as well as various intervening variables. These intervening variables consist of managers' knowledge, self-awareness, and critical understanding.

**Conclusions:** These empirical results have the potential to guide the formulation and execution of methodologies designed for the training of reflective managers.

**Cite this article:** Ahmadi Beni, M., Oladian, M. & Safari, M. (2024). Presenting a model for training reflective managers for Farhangian University. *Iranian Journal of Educational Research*, 3 (3), 29-49.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.22034/3.3.29>



© The Author(s).

Publisher: University of Hormozgan.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.22034/3.3.29>

## Introduction

Globalization has compelled organizations to seek methodologies for enhancing their competitive efficacy on an international scale. Obsolete business models, antiquated leadership practices, and conventional paradigms fail to prosper in a perpetually evolving and intricately convoluted transnational marketplace ([Castelli, 2016](#)). As articulated by [Waddock and McIntosh \(2009\)](#), "over-action in today's fast-paced global economy is action without thinking and with a kind of ready-to-shoot mentality." Leaders are inundated by the escalating exigencies of globalization and find themselves grappling with the realization that conventional organizational management is no longer viable. Consequently, a principled and contemplative approach to engendering substantive changes is imperative, enabling leaders to deliberate on the long-term ramifications of their actions and decisions. There exists an implicit presumption that leadership is paramount since leaders effectuate significant differences, thereby engendering beneficial outcomes for groups and organizations. Contemporary organizations necessitate leaders who can engage and galvanize individuals to act upon innovative concepts and contest traditional paradigms. Reflective thinking can substantially enhance the role of leadership within this transformative process ([Densten & Gray, 2001](#)). The paradigm of thought leadership offers a pertinent resolution for organizations by fostering thought leaders and gaining traction as entities endeavor to deepen their comprehension of the cultures and values of the populations and markets they serve. Thought leadership embodies the continual practice of reflection, which encompasses awareness of behaviors, circumstances, and outcomes, aimed at enhancing organizational performance. The notion of reflective practice exerts considerable influence across professional domains, including education, healthcare, and social work. In the educational sector, empirical evidence indicates that opportunities for reflection are held in high esteem by senior leaders, and there is a growing emphasis on establishing professional learning communities that facilitate reflective practice ([Woods & Woods, 2010](#)). However, a significant degree of conceptual and practical ambiguity persists regarding the definitions of reflective practice and reflective thinking. Reflective practice facilitates leaders in comprehending ambiguous, singular, or conflicting scenarios within the organizational context ([De Déa Roglio & Light, 2009](#)). Furthermore, reflection enhances clarity concerning one's values, identity, emotions, motivations, and objectives, culminating in the refinement of cognitive processes, information acquisition, goal formulation, and the visualization of success, thereby

leading to enhanced leadership behaviors and outcomes ([McDaniel & DiBella-McCarthy, 2012](#)). By envisioning various outcomes, novel insights may be uncovered. Hence, the process of reflection enables the identification of the optimal course of action for an organization prior to the execution of a potentially flawed strategy. As workplace dynamics continue to grow in complexity and multiculturalism, the demand for effective leadership has led to the increased prominence of leadership studies within academic programs. At present, higher education institutions, akin to other organizations and enterprises, require effective leaders and thought leaders more than at any previous time. [Popescu et al. \(2020\)](#) posited that higher education necessitates administrators who possess the requisite skills and competencies to effectively manage the university. The lack of adequate training for managers may result in the squandering of human resources. Consequently, in numerous developed nations, university administrators are equipped with the competencies, qualifications, and reflective thinking necessary to fulfill the mission and vision of their institutions. This is critical as thought leaders within the university setting can significantly contribute to the advancement of higher education ([Liu et al., 2020](#)). In this context, the objective of this research is to develop a model for the training of reflective managers at Farhangian University. It is anticipated that the findings of this study will be instrumental in furthering the mission of Farhangian University.

In the existing literature, leadership is characterized by numerous theories that endeavor to elucidate leadership from diverse perspectives. Nevertheless, the complexities of the real world defy simplistic categorizations. This reality is often the initial realization for leaders upon engaging in professional activities. This concern becomes particularly pronounced when established theories fail to address the demands of practical application. How can leaders achieve effectiveness in environments that starkly contrast with theoretical representations? The resolution to this inquiry constitutes a challenge that many, if not all, leaders have endeavored to confront. Thought leadership remains elusive to those within the leadership domain who have not yet developed a robust conceptual understanding ([Göker & Bozkuş, 2017](#)). Reflective thinking transcends mere internal processes; it also encompasses external processes that enhance critical thinking capabilities and foster self-awareness as an essential mechanism of internal development, thereby generating energy applicable to external endeavors. Such cognitive engagement is vital for understanding the significance of one's role both personally and within the broader context of the

organization or practice. Being cognizant of one's own cognitive processes is paramount to making judicious and rational choices in collaborative settings. Consequently, taking into account the emotions, thoughts, and actions of others enhances the capacity to attain organizational and professional objectives. This investigation centers on the concept of thought leadership as a mechanism for developing oneself into a thought leader. Accordingly, managers may augment their consciousness of their latent leadership potential. Thought leaders conceptualize learning as an enduring endeavor and typically strive to equilibrate the act of "telling" with "asking," often relying on the collective intellectual capacity of the teams constituted within their organizations. Instead of operating "in judgment," these leaders apply "judgment" when confronted with critical decisions. They frequently make it a practice to extricate themselves from their customary environments to contemplate, investigate, and acquire knowledge. As the business landscape has evolved into one that is increasingly intricate, volatile, and rapid, leaders exhibit a growing propensity to embrace an "action bias"; however, effective leaders meticulously review their historical experiences and seek pertinent and diverse insights prior to engaging in the decision-making process. Thought leadership may be construed as a methodology for approaching the responsibilities inherent in leadership by embodying a life characterized by personal presence and mastery. In other words, it necessitates cultivating the ability to be present, conscious, and observant of one's interactions with individuals in quotidian life, thereby framing leadership through the lens of human experience. In light of the principles of phenomenology, self-awareness and contemplation of one's own experiences alongside those of others serves as the foundational premise for the practice of reflective leadership, which ultimately aspires to enhance transformative leadership performance through improved communication ([Göker & Bozkuş, 2017](#)).

To elucidate reflective thinking within the domain of leadership, the leadership process is articulated through the framework of open systems theory ([Stoeckel & Davies, 2007](#)). Open systems encompass inputs and outputs, processes confined within system boundaries, and the contextual environment in which the system functions. Feedback constitutes a reflexive mechanism that facilitates system adjustment. Figure 1 serves as a depiction of leadership conceptualized as an open system. In this paradigm, the attributes or characteristics of the leader represent the system inputs. The leader's engagement with followers constitutes the fundamental

processes and actions of individuals or organizations that culminate in outputs as results. This framework delineates context, resources, objectives, and constraints. Open systems are not intrinsically stable. The system is typically scrutinized and modified to counterbalance disturbances or instabilities. Within a general open system, feedback can derive from the observed characteristics of the context, inputs, processes, or outputs. This feedback is subsequently employed to recalibrate the system. Depending on the specific system and the prevailing circumstances, it is feasible to reconfigure inputs, processes, or even contexts.

For effective leadership, feedback is articulated as the process of rigorously evaluating the leader's style and performance. In other terms, a leader who engages in critical thinking will possess an acute awareness of his personal objectives, contextual factors, individual characteristics, actions, and their subsequent impact on the behaviors of individuals or the outcomes of organizations. The analytical reflection of the leader contributes significantly to personal development and enhancement. The concept of reflective thinking has traditionally been regarded as a pivotal element in the evolution of leadership capabilities. Within the framework of leadership, [Wu and Crocco \(2019\)](#) assert that learning transpires through the cultivation of cognitive habits. Such habits encompass leaders' tendencies to venture beyond their comfort zones, engage in humble self-reflection, solicit insights from others, actively listen, and embrace innovative ideas, all of which are indicative of contemplative leaders. The realization of these cognitive habits necessitates reflective thinking, both directly and indirectly ([Yakavets, 2017](#)). [Densten and Gray \(2001\)](#) investigated the correlation between leadership development and reflective thinking, grounding their discourse in Dewey's definition of reflective thinking as the active, persistent, and meticulous examination of any belief or hypothesized form of knowledge in consideration of the supporting reasons. The resulting conclusions that align with this examination constitute reflective thinking ([Sullivan & Wiessner, 2010](#)). Reflective thinking also represents a significant dimension for academic leaders. [Knight and Trowler \(2001\)](#) identified seven primary categories of knowledge essential for leaders in higher education:

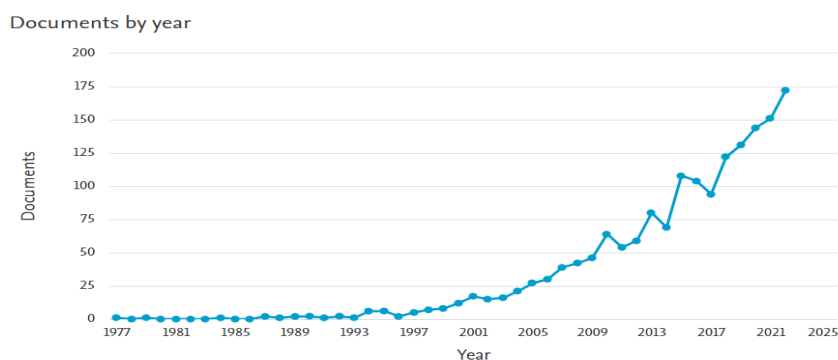
- Knowledge of control: This is defined as self-awareness derived through various reflective practices.

- People's knowledge: Referred to as "people's wisdom," which necessitates interpersonal intelligence.
- Knowledge of educational practice
- Conceptual knowledge: Understanding of management and leadership theories and research
- Process knowledge: Knowledge pertaining to leadership and management processes
- Situational knowledge: Comprehension of the contingencies that define the institution and influence its potential evolution.
- Tacit knowledge: This integrates other forms of knowledge into practical application.

This framework implies that a specific mode of reflection and reflective thinking, grounded in knowledge acquisition across diverse contexts, is essential for academic leaders to exercise effective leadership. University administrators are tasked with guiding their institutions through increasingly complex futures. Existing research has focused on the attributes of higher education managers; however, there is a paucity of studies that investigate reflective thinking among university administrators ([Stoeckel & Davies, 2007](#)).

In the contemporary literature, the subject of training of reflective managers has been recurrently examined by scholars since 2001. The subsequent chart illustrates the status of published works related to the training of reflective managers by researchers spanning from 1977 to 2022.

In the following chart, the status of terminology utilized in connection with the development of reflective managers by researchers from 1977 to 2022 is presented.



**Chart 1.** The number of documents published in the world in the field of "Education of Reflective Managers" taken from the Scopus



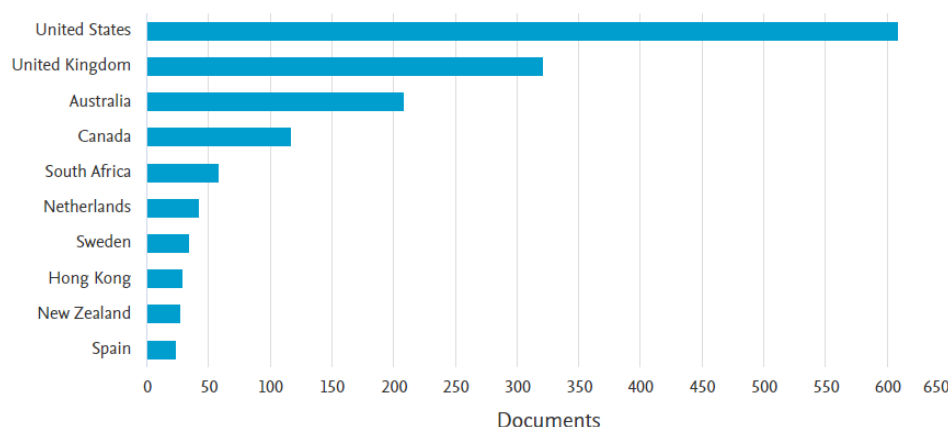
[Downloaded from ijer.hormozgan.ac.ir on 2025-07-06]



As is evident in this illustration, the terms leadership, learning, reflection, education, management, and organization, characterized by their larger circumferences, indeed exhibit the highest frequency of occurrence within the corpus of documents disseminated in this scholarly domain. Subsequently, as delineated in chart 3, the nations of the United States of America, Great Britain, and Australia occupy the foremost positions in this ranking.

### Documents by country or territory

Compare the document counts for up to 15 countries/territories.



**Chart 3.** The countries with the most degrees published in the world in the field of "Education of Reflective Managers"

**Table 1.** A summary of the background of the researches conducted on the training of reflective managers

| Authors                                  | Title  | Summary of findings   |
|--|--|---|
| Harry-Nana and Bush (2020)               | "A framework to strengthen the design of learning interventions for the development of thought leadership" | Reflective learning adds value to participants during leadership development, and life stories or autobiographical reflections are the most popular types of intervention.  |
| Reardon, Fitt, Boone and Sullivan (2019) | "Critical reflective leadership: defining successful growth"   | The main findings emphasize the importance of capturing students' prior reflective experiences, preparation, and learning preferences when including reflective learning in leadership development interventions.   |
| Gubna 2017                               | "The attitude of school managers, supervisors and trainers towards action research as reflective methods"  | These findings guide the development of a framework to enhance the design of thought leadership development learning interventions. Such a framework can be used by higher education administrators in their efforts to cultivate reflective skills in leaders.   |
| Gouker, et al 2017                       | "Leadership of thought: learning management and leadership of human organizations"                         | In order to become effective leaders, the authors suggest using reflective thinking in practice to facilitate emerging leaders in facing challenging situations. The practical application of this information is to help those who mentor leaders and emerging leaders to develop the reflective practices and insightful dispositions necessary to navigate the complex situations encountered in today's daily interactive environments.   |
| Gouker, et al 2017                       | "How to become an inspirational leader and what to avoid?"   | The findings of this study showed that the statistically significant difference between the results is due to the lack of innovative methods, lack of teaching materials and lack of commitment from professors and attitude towards action research as reflective practices in the case of Hirayama cluster center. Therefore, managers and supervisors of the executive unit of the system must act morally, practically, professionally, ethically, responsibly and critically to meet the professional needs of the nation to create behavioral changes and quality education for Ethiopian children. |
| Bonao, S. (2017)                         | "Reflective leadership skills of managers"   | Reflective leadership (thought) bridges the gap between theory and practice, enabling leaders to construct their theories of action during, after, and even before their actions. This kind of thinking teaches them to fish instead of giving them fish. It is a self-improvement tool and requires little mastery to use.   |
| Arsuzello, A. (2016)                     | "Examination of reflective leadership: a framework for improving organizational performance"               | Studies have shown that inspirational leadership is particularly relevant for managers. Inspirational leadership is defined in the context of other leadership theories, with special emphasis on the perspective that is fundamental to inspirational leadership.  |
| Castelli, PA (2016).                     | "The influence of stakeholders on the reflective practice of school"                                       | Effective leadership behavior contrasts with managerial actions, so that the main areas on which leaders should focus are then.   |



|                             |    |   |  |
|-----------------------------|----|---|--|
|                             |    | principals: the practices of Istanbul and Copenhagen"   |  |
| Dalgić and Bakiooglu (2016) |    | "Leadership Development: An Applied Comparison of Gibbs' Reflective Cycle Theory and Scharmer's U Theory" | Reflective leadership plays a key role in maintaining successful operations in organizations and achieving their near and far goals. To create this success in school organizations, each of the school staff must work for the development and effective functioning of the school organization.  |
| Potter, (2015).             | C. | "Leadership Development: An Applied Comparison of Gibbs' Reflective Cycle Theory and Scharmer's U Theory" | This article provides useful insights into the practical application of reflective practice and Scharmer's U Theory, which will help inform others seeking to develop as leaders.  |
| Peterson, 2016              | E. | "What are leaders' experiences of reflective thinking?"   | This study showed that the quality reflective thinking described by the example is ultimately a creative process and a creative act that releases potential and gives birth to new possibilities for themselves, others and throughout their business.   |
| Barnett and O'Mahony (2006) |    | "Development of reflective culture"   | Being more reflective about their own performance is an important way for educational leaders to uncover their assumptions and make more informed decisions. This study expands our understanding of the power of reflection by demonstrating the principles and practices associated with creating a culture of reflection that facilitates school improvement. |

## Material and Methods

This investigation is pragmatic from the perspective of its objectives and pertains to the compilation of qualitative data within the framework of database theory. Through this methodology, scholars aim to formulate their own theoretical constructs rather than depending on pre-existing theories via inductive and exploratory techniques. In light of this, the study seeks to address the inquiry: what constitutes the training model for reflective managers at Farhangian University? Within this research, the objectivist (systematic) data theory posited by [Strauss and Corbin \(1998\)](#) was employed to facilitate data analysis. The statistical population for this investigation encompasses the faculty and administrative leaders of Farhangian University. These specialists are required to possess a comprehensive understanding and awareness regarding the training of managers and the advancement of managerial competencies. The sampling technique employed was a purposeful snowball approach, which persisted until theoretical saturation was attained to ensure data sufficiency. Consequently, following the fifteenth interview and the confirmation of the homogeneity of the amassed data and concepts, the researchers established data adequacy. Furthermore, in this study, semi-structured interview inquiries were formulated utilizing the *5W1h* framework. The *5W1h* methodology addresses the following questions: What is the intended outcome and what are its parameters? Where: In what location did this event transpire? When: At what time did this occurrence take place? Who: Who or which individuals were instrumental in facilitating this event? Why: What are the underlying reasons and origins of this phenomenon? How: In what manner and under what circumstances did this event unfold?

(Jang et al., 2005). Subsequent to the data collection via interviews, the verbal accounts containing pertinent information were discerned, and each concept articulated in the extracted sentences was selected and analyzed as a code using the MAXQDA software version 2020. To verify validity, the extracted codes were presented to five experts within the statistical community, and all factors were corroborated through a reciprocal process of dialogue among the experts, culminating in a consensus. Additionally, to ascertain the reliability of the interview protocol, the percent agreement method between two coders was utilized. A research assistant was solicited to recode three interviews drawn from the overall interview results. In this manner, the percentage of intra-subject agreement was computed. The reliability coefficient for the interview protocol was determined to be 0.86. This figure is deemed satisfactory from the researchers' standpoint, given that the minimum acceptable threshold for the reliability coefficient is 0.60.

## Results

### A) Demographic description

The demographic information of the interviewees is given in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Demographic information of interviewees

| ID             | Age | Gender | Education level |
|----------------|-----|--------|-----------------|
| Interviewee 1  | 45  | Female | Master          |
| Interviewee 2  | 48  | Male   | Ph.D.           |
| Interviewee 3  | 38  | Female | Ph.D.           |
| Interviewee 4  | 53  | Female | Ph.D.           |
| Interviewee 5  | 46  | Male   | Ph.D.           |
| Interviewee 6  | 63  | Female | Master          |
| Interviewee 7  | 38  | Male   | Ph.D.           |
| Interviewee 8  | 40  | Male   | Ph.D.           |
| Interviewee 9  | 47  | Male   | Ph.D.           |
| Interviewee 10 | 56  | Male   | Master          |
| Interviewee 11 | 41  | Male   | Ph.D.           |
| Interviewee 12 | 51  | Female | Ph.D.           |
| Interviewee 13 | 32  | Male   | Ph.D.           |
| Interviewee 14 | 41  | Male   | Ph.D.           |
| Interviewee 15 | 41  | Male   | Ph.D.           |

### B) Qualitative findings

After conducting a comprehensive review of the existing scholarly literature pertaining to leadership and reflective cognition, and subsequently engaging in qualitative interviews with subject matter experts, data were systematically gathered from these qualitative interviews.

Following this, the verbal constructs and propositions derived from the two coding stages—encompassing open coding, classification-based coding, and phenomenon-based coding—were analyzed to identify causal factors, contextual factors, intervening factors, strategies, and consequences from the principal categories. Ultimately, through selective coding, the interrelations between the central phenomenon and ancillary categories were delineated.

**Open coding:** In this initial phase, codes that shared semantic meaning were aggregated into a singular category, thereby facilitating the formation of the primary categories pertinent to the study. The concepts derived from both the literature review and the conducted interviews were systematically categorized to elucidate the dimensions and components underlying the training model designed for managerial professionals. The resultant concepts comprised a total of 118 distinct constructs.

**Axial Coding:** This phase involves elucidating the interrelationships among the categories to establish connections. Consequently, at this juncture, the data theorist selects a category from the open coding phase and positions it at the center of the investigative process (designated as the primary phenomenon), subsequently correlating other categories to it. These additional categories encompass causal conditions (elements that exert influence on the primary phenomenon), strategies (actions undertaken in response to the primary phenomenon), contextual and intervening conditions (both general and specific situational factors that affect strategies), and consequences (the outcomes resultant from the application of strategies). This phase necessitates the construction of a coding diagram, which graphically represents the relationships among causal conditions, strategies, contextual and intervening conditions, and outcomes ([Creswell & Báez, 2020](#)).

**Central phenomenon:** development of reflective thinking: Based on the insights garnered from interviews with research experts, it was ascertained that the predominant phenomenon is the "development of reflective thinking." Managers who engage in reflective thinking exhibit characteristics such as embracing risks beyond their comfort zones, engaging in humble self-reflection, aggregating information from diverse sources, actively listening to others while being receptive to novel ideas, maintaining openness to alternative viewpoints, and assuming accountability through proactive truth-seeking. Moreover, they demonstrate a profound commitment to the learning processes inherent within academic institutions, critically evaluating the ramifications of their actions, exhibiting curiosity regarding their professional responsibilities,

challenging their idealized self-perceptions, and displaying a willingness to contemplate various situations.

**Causal conditions:** These conditions serve to instigate the emergence and evolution of the central phenomenon under investigation. Among the identified categories, educational factors, developmental aspects, critical thinking, personality traits, and the competencies of managers were discerned. In the table 3, the concepts extracted for each of the identified components are presented:

**Table 3.** Concepts and components of causal conditions

| Dimension         | Component              | Concept  |
|-------------------|------------------------|--|
| Causal conditions | Educational factors    | Playing the role of facilitation and exploration by managers in providing information to students                              |
|                   |                        | Applying the approach of cooperation and mutual participation in interaction with students                                     |
|                   |                        | Having an accurate view of students  |
|                   |                        | Holistic attitude towards educational issues in Farhangian University  |
|                   |                        | The use of students' attitudes in education at Farhangian University   |
|                   |                        | Providing an open perspective to students in classroom management  |
|                   |                        | Create a positive mood   |
|                   |                        | Development of research and research activities related to educational issues  |
|                   |                        | Welcoming the teaching and training of professional qualifications in students and managers inside the university              |
|                   |                        | Continuous revision of the university curriculum in line with the development of self-confidence and initiative among students |
|                   |                        | Welcoming discussions on issues related to students  |
|                   | Developmentalism       | Self-study   |
|                   |                        | Study and pay attention to personal development  |
|                   |                        | Attention to research achievements   |
|                   |                        | Create a context for interaction with students   |
|                   |                        | Responsiveness without prejudice   |
|                   |                        | Development of teams in the university   |
|                   |                        | Using reflective and thinking methods in a collective and collaborative way  |
|                   |                        | Creating an environment for self-expression in the university  |
|                   |                        | Adopting optional approaches to define the strengths of students in the university   |
|                   |                        | Reflective learning  |
|                   | Personality characters | Create context for interaction with other managers   |
|                   |                        | Flexibility of managers  |
|                   |                        | Innovativeness of managers   |
|                   |                        | Managers' confidence   |
|                   |                        | The courage of managers  |
|                   |                        | Allowing university administrators to test different propositions and inquire about strengths in each decision situation       |
|                   |                        | Questioning spirit of managers   |
|                   |                        | Creativity of managers   |
|                   |                        | Collaboration between managers and students  |
|                   |                        | Managers' freedom of thought   |

|  |                 |  |
|--|-----------------|--|
|  | Managers skills | Believing in the efficiency and necessity of including reflective thinking in interactions with students and university staff  |
|  |                 | Attention to others  |
|  |                 | self-awareness   |
|  |                 | Being open to the experiences of others in making decisions  |
|  |                 | Attention to verbal and non-verbal communication in interaction with students in the university  |
|  |                 | self-education   |
|  |                 | Openness to feedback   |
|  |                 | Cultural intelligence of Farhangian University administrators  |
|  |                 | Empathy with students and university staff   |
|  |                 | Organizing issues based on situations  |
|  |                 | Being independent learners   |
|  |                 | High self-efficacy   |
|  |                 | Feeling confident  |
|  |                 | Using an external perspective to evaluate the problems in the university   |
|  |                 | Finding new and new solutions  |
|  |                 | Description of experiences and interactions  |
|  |                 | Having a researcher approach   |
|  |                 | Evaluate your experiences  |
|  |                 | Using the experiences of managers of different departments of the university   |
|  |                 | Managers' interaction with internal stakeholders inside the university and external stakeholders outside the university, such as the Ministry of Science, other universities, etc. |
|  |                 | Networking ability of university administrators  |

**Action and reaction strategies:** These strategies are adopted in response to the central phenomenon and under the influence of intervening conditions, which include strengthening the culture of clarifying values in the university in order to support reflective thinking among managers, using the power of the media to create communication channels with managers, creating a practical platform for exchanging the experiences of Farhangian University managers together, developing a comprehensive program to develop the self-regulation skills and rethinking of Farhangian University managers. In the table 4, the concepts extracted for each of the identified components are given.

**Table 4.** Concepts and components of action and reaction strategies

| Dimension  | Component   | Concept  |
|------------|---|--|
| Strategies | Strengthening the culture of clarifying values in the university in order to support thoughtful thinking among managers | Developing reflective learning thinking values in university social media  |
|            |   | Holding seminars in order to develop a culture of reflective thinking among university administrators                              |
|            |   | Applying managerial coaching in the university   |
|            |   | Inviting mentors and coaches in order to spread the culture of interactive and thoughtful learning among university administrators |
|            | Using the power of the media to create communication channels with managers   | Strengthening the position of the director of reflective through direct and indirect advertising of the university media           |
|            |   | Applying an intellectual approach in local media and publications (developing self-awareness among managers)                       |

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <div> <p>Creating a practical platform for the managers of Farhangian University to exchange experiences with each other</p> <p>Development of a comprehensive program to develop self-regulation and rethinking skills of Farhangian University managers</p> </div> | Changing the university's attitude towards the necessity of educating Faqor managers in order to raise reflective teachers for the society  |
|  | Creating interactive learning opportunities for university administrators through formal and informal learning environments and experiences |
|  | Applying the approach of mutual participation of managers in the design of university programs  |
|  | Welcoming research and research programs and activities related to educational issues in the online platforms of the university             |
|  | Training administrators to include reflective thinking in interactions with students and university staff                                   |
|  | Conducting training and cultural intelligence development courses for managers of Farhangian University                                     |
|  | Developing a research approach among managers   |
|  | Developing courses to train and strengthen self-regulation skills and self-efficacy of university managers                                  |

**Contextual conditions:** Special conditions that affect action and response strategies, which in this study include access to university infrastructure, the cultural environment of the university, and the support of upstream organizations. In the table 5, the concepts extracted for each of the identified components are given.

**Table 5.** Concepts and components of contextual conditions

| Dimension             | Component                                       | Concept   |
|-----------------------|---|---|
| Contextual conditions | Access to information technology infrastructure | Equipment at the disposal of managers and employees from the perspective of educational facilities and environmental conditions |
|                       |   | Appropriate access to information technology  |
|                       |   | Development of information technology in the university   |
|                       |   | Applying information technology in managers' interactions   |
|                       | The cultural environment of the university      | Creating a culture of taking risks outside the safe zone among managers   |
|                       |   | Cultivating about reflecting on your life in a humble way   |
|                       |   | Cultivation in relation to collecting information from other people   |
|                       |   | Building a culture of listening to others and welcoming new ideas   |
|                       |   | Cultivation in relation to open attitude towards alternative views  |
|                       |   | Cultivation of accountability through active search for truth   |
|                       |   | Cultivation in relation to your heart's commitment to the learning processes in the university                                  |
|                       |   | Building a culture of questioning the consequences of one's actions   |
|                       |   | Cultivation in relation to curiosity about job duties   |
|                       |   | Cultivation in relation to challenging self-perceptions   |
|                       |   | Cultivation in relation to seeing different situations and willingness to think   |
|                       |   | The culture of welcoming new ideas in Farhangian University   |
|                       |   | Innovative culture in the university  |
|                       |   | Belief in central mission among managers  |
|                       | Support of upstream organizations               | Ministry of Science support Farhangian University   |
|                       |   | The possibility of cooperation with other universities  |

**Intervening factors:** Factors that have an effect on the development of thought managers in Farhangian University. These factors in the present study, which play a facilitating role in the



development of thinking managers in Farhangian University, are: knowledge of managers, self-knowledge of managers and critical knowledge of managers. In the table 6, the concepts extracted for each of the identified components are given.

**Table 6.** Concepts and components of intervening conditions

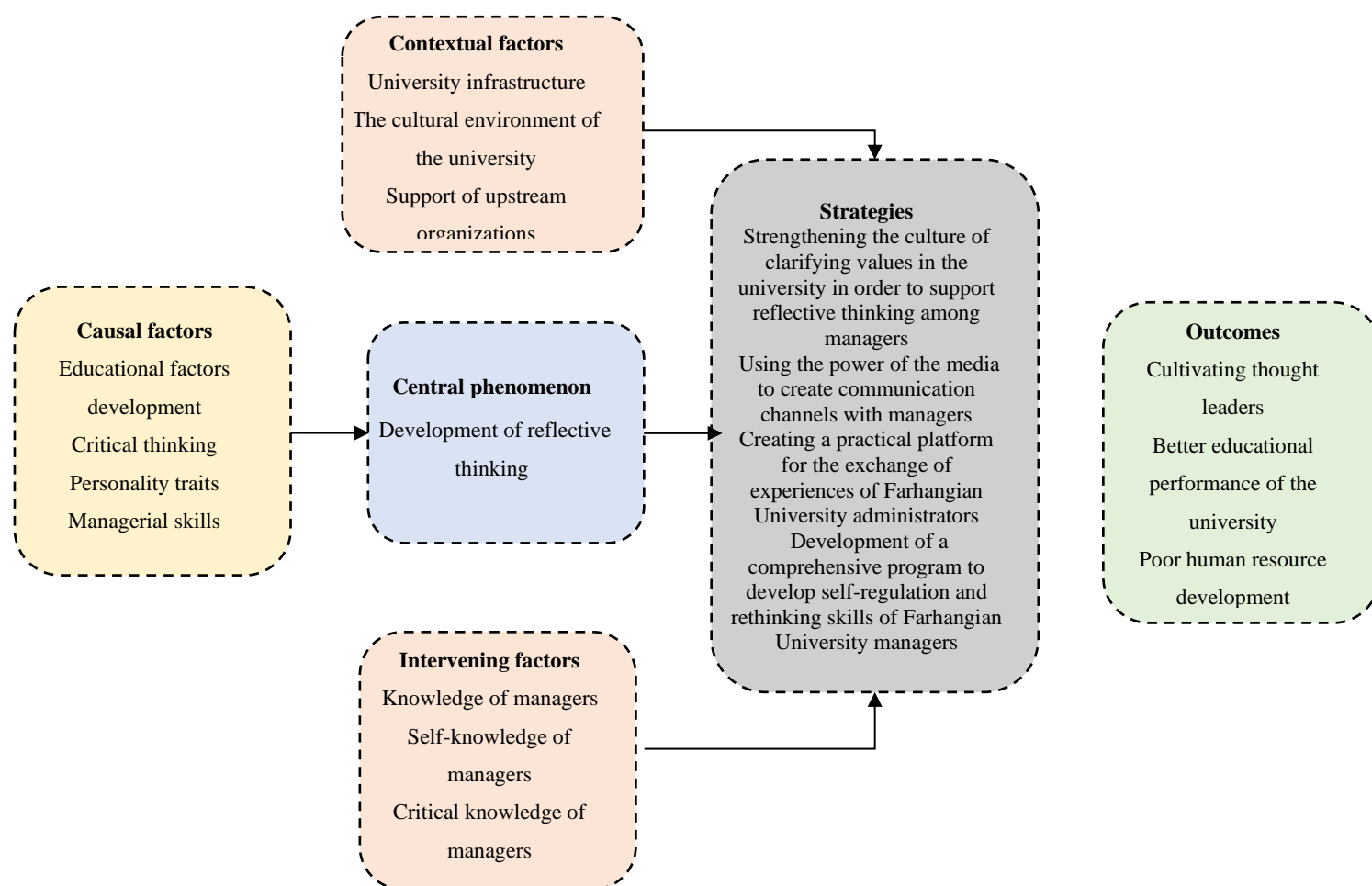
| Dimension              | Component                                | Concept  |
|------------------------|--|--|
| Intervening conditions | Critical thinking of university managers | Critical sense in learning   |
|                        |  | Intellectual discipline in presenting opinions   |
|                        |  | Managers' awareness of their thoughts in making logical decisions  |
|                        |  | Considering students' feelings, thoughts and behaviors in decision making  |
|                        |  | Dependence on the capacity of collective intelligence in the university  |
|                        |  | Using students' opinions in important decisions  |
|                        |  | Examining different insights and past experiences in the decision making process   |
|                        | Knowledge of managers                    | Knowledge of exchanging ideas with others  |
|                        |  | Knowledge of practicing reflective thinking through the cycle of action, reexamining action, awareness of essential dimensions, creating alternatives to action and experimenting. |
|                        |  | Knowledge of using reflective tools such as peer reflection  |
|                        |  | Knowledge of using intuition in making decisions and dealing with others   |
|                        |  | Knowledge of educational performance   |
|                        |  | Knowledge of leadership and management processes   |
|                        |  | Situational knowledge (understanding the contingencies that make the college what it is and influence what it might be)  |
|                        | Self-awareness of managers               | Recognize your feelings  |
|                        |  | Knowledge of personality strengths and weaknesses  |

**Outcomes:** Cultivation of reflective managers in Farhangian University: In the present study, the central phenomenon leads to consequences such as the cultivation of reflective managers, better educational performance of the university and the development of reflective human resources. In the table 7, the concepts extracted for each of the identified components are given.

**Table 7.** Concepts and components of outcomes

| Dimension | Component                                    | Concept   |
|-----------|--|---|
| Outcomes  | Reflective managers training                 | Better communication between managers   |
|           |  | Development of interactions and exchange of views between administrators and students           |
|           |  | Better communication between administrators and students  |
|           |  | Having the intellectual discipline to express opinions from university administrators and staff |
|           |  | Development of metacognitive attitudes among managers   |
|           | Enhanced educational outcomes of university. | University management in a targeted manner  |
|           |  | Increasing students' and administrators' passion for innovation                                 |
|           |  | Improving studies and research achievements in the university                                   |

**Selective coding:** The final process of coding is selective coding and it actually requires the design of the researcher's theory. This process involves linking the categories of the axial coding paradigm. This work may require refining the model of the axial coding paradigm and presenting it in the form of a model or theory about a process. This theory generation process can lead to the formulation of propositions that provide testable ideas for further research. Therefore, the researcher can present his theory in the form of a set of statements or sub-statements ([Creswell & Báez, 2020](#)). At this stage, the researcher, according to his understanding of the text of the phenomenon under study, either presents the framework of the paradigm model in a narrative form or breaks down the paradigm model and shows the final theory in a diagrammatic form ([Danaeifard & Emami, 2007](#)). In diagram 1, the relationships between the identified categories are shown in the form of a paradigm model.



**Diagram 1.** The final model

## Discussion

Various studies show that there are important differences between the development of leaders and the development of leadership. Leader development involves actions related to developing leaders at the individual level while leadership development focuses on the overall process that necessarily involves more than one individual ([Day et al., 2014](#)). In this study, the development of leaders as thought leaders with reflective thinking was considered because reflective thinking is examined through intrapersonal and interpersonal lenses in the literature. Reflective thinking is of key importance for effective leadership, especially in organizations known as learning communities ([Woods & Woods, 2010](#)). Identifying the dimensions of the training model for managers in Farhangian University is very important. Based on this, this research has sought to provide a model for the training of reflective managers in Farhangian University. In this study, the data was collected with the qualitative method and the grounded theory approach and using the semi-structured interview tool from the experts of Farhangian University. The central phenomenon of this study was the development of reflective thinking among the administrators of Farhangian University, which is actually a lever to achieve the main mission of Farhangian University, which seeks to educate and cultivate teachers with reflective thinking. The development of reflective thinking among managers will be the best approach in order to spread this thinking among teachers as the outputs of Farhangian University. The results of the research showed that the development of reflective thinking means strengthening characteristics such as taking risks outside the safe zone, reflecting on one's life in a humble way, gathering information from other people, listening to others, welcoming new ideas and open attitude towards perspectives. The alternative is to take responsibility through an active search for truth, a heartfelt commitment to the learning process at university, questioning the consequences of one's actions, curiosity about job duties, challenging one's preferred self-perceptions, and seeing different situations and being willing to think.

Among the important preconditions in the development of reflective thinking among managers of Farhangian University, we can mention educational factors, development, critical thinking,

personality traits and skills of managers. Educational factors in this study included concepts such as managers' behavioral approach in dealing with students, managers' structural approach in dealing with students, metacognitive knowledge of managers in dealing with students, and cognitive approach of managers in dealing with students. Developmentalism included concepts such as self-learning, study and attention to personal development, attention to research achievements, creating an environment for interaction with students, being responsive without prejudice, reflective learning and creating an environment for interaction with other managers. Critical sense in learning and intellectual discipline in presenting opinions were two concepts related to the component of critical thinking. Personality traits included concepts such as flexibility, innovation, self-confidence, courage, questioning spirit, creativity, collaboration with students, and free-thinking. The skills of managers included concepts such as organizing problems based on situations, being independent learners, high self-efficacy, feeling confident, knowing, finding new and novel solutions, describing experiences and interactions, having a research approach and evaluating one's experiences.

Factors such as the infrastructural capabilities of the university, the cultural milieu of the institution, and the support from external organizations can be enumerated among the contextual elements that influence the cultivation of reflective thought among administrators at Farhangian University. [Matsuo \(2016\)](#) posits that reflective thinking is shaped by a process that necessitates acquisition and practice, thereby underscoring the significance of the context within which reflective practices transpire. The domain of action and response strategies aimed at fostering reflective thought encompasses the enhancement of a culture that elucidates values within the university to bolster intellectual engagement among managers, leveraging media to establish communicative channels with managers, creating a pragmatic platform for experiential exchange among administrators of Farhangian University, and formulating a comprehensive program to advance self-regulation and critical thinking competencies among Farhangian University's administrators. Furthermore, elements such as the knowledge base of managers, their self-awareness, and their critical understanding have been instrumental in the evolution of reflective leaders at Farhangian University. Ultimately, the ramifications of cultivating intellectual thought at Farhangian University comprised the emergence of intellectual leaders, enhanced academic performance of the institution, and the advancement of human resource capabilities. Subsequently,

pragmatic and operational recommendations for the training and development of reflective leaders at Farhangian University, alongside suggestions for further research in the domain of research frameworks, have been articulated:

- It is recommended that Farhangian University, through the establishment of a suitable educational framework, strategize to facilitate the execution of reflective skills training programs for the administrators of Farhangian University.
- It is proposed to furnish adequate educational resources and infrastructure for university administrators to enhance developmental competencies, including aspects of student engagement, unbiased responsiveness, and collaborative interaction with fellow administrators.
- Additionally, it is suggested that the model delineated in the current study be examined across various universities nationwide, enabling the ranking and prioritization of each influencing factor in accordance with distinct geographical and sociocultural contexts.
- Given that the present investigation has identified the dimensions and components pertinent to the training of reflective managers, it is recommended that future research endeavors explore the effects associated with each of the identified components.

### Data availability statement

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

### Ethics statement

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by the ethics committee of the Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz. The patients/participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

### Author contributions

All authors contributed to the study conception and design, material preparation, data collection, and analysis. All authors contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

### Funding

The authors did (not) receive support from any organization for the submitted work.

### Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

## References

- Castelli, P. A. (2016). Reflective leadership review: A framework for improving organisational performance. *Journal of Management Development*, 35(2), 217-236.
- Creswell, J. W., & Báez, J. C. (2020). *30 essential skills for the qualitative researcher*. Sage Publications.
- Danaeifard, H., & Emami, S. M. (2007). Strategies of Qualitative Research: A Reflection on Grounded Theory. *Strategic Management Thought*, 1(2), 69-97.  
<https://doi.org/10.30497/smt.2007.104>
- Day, D. V., Fleenor, J. W., Atwater, L. E., Sturm, R. E., & McKee, R. A. (2014). Advances in leader and leadership development: A review of 25 years of research and theory. *The leadership quarterly*, 25(1), 63-82.
- De Déa Roglio, K., & Light, G. (2009). Executive MBA programs: The development of the reflective executive. *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, 8(2), 156-173.
- Densten, I. L., & Gray, J. H. (2001). Leadership development and reflection: what is the connection? *International Journal of Educational Management*, 15(3), 119-124.
- Göker, S. D., & Bozkuş, K. (2017). Reflective leadership: Learning to manage and lead human organizations. *Contemporary leadership challenges*, 27-45.



- Jang, S., Ko, E.-J., & Woo, W. (2005). Unified User-Centric Context: Who, Where, When, What, How and Why. *ubiPCMM*,
- Knight, P., & Trowler, P. (2001). *EBOOK: Departmental Leadership in Higher Education*. McGraw-Hill Education (UK).
- Liu, L., Hong, X., Wen, W., Xie, Z., & Coates, H. (2020). Global university president leadership characteristics and dynamics. *Studies in Higher Education*, 45(10), 2036-2044.
- Matsuo, M. (2016). Reflective leadership and team learning: an exploratory study. *Journal of workplace learning*, 28(5), 307-321.
- McDaniel, E. A., & DiBella-McCarthy, H. (2012). Reflective leaders become causal agents of change. *Journal of Management Development*, 31(7), 663-671.
- Popescu, L., Iancu, A., Avram, M., Avram, D., & Popescu, V. (2020). The role of managerial skills in the sustainable development of SMEs in Mehedinti County, Romania. *Sustainability*, 12(3), 1119.
- Stoeckel, P. R., & Davies, T. G. (2007). Reflective leadership by selected community college presidents. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 31(11), 895-912.
- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1998). Basics of qualitative research techniques.
- Sullivan, L. G., & Wiessner, C. A. (2010). Learning to be reflective leaders: A case study from the NCCHC Hispanic leadership fellows program. *New Directions for Community Colleges*, 2010(149), 41-50.
- Waddock, S., & McIntosh, M. (2009). Beyond corporate responsibility: Implications for management development. *Business and Society Review*, 114(3), 295-325.
- Woods, P. A., & Woods, G. J. (2010). The geography of reflective leadership: the inner life of democratic learning communities. *Philosophy of Management*, 9, 81-97.
- Wu, Y., & Crocco, O. (2019). Critical reflection in leadership development. *Industrial and commercial training*, 51(7/8), 409-420.
- Yakovets, N. (2017). Negotiating the principles and practice of school leadership: The Kazakhstan experience. *Educational management administration & leadership*, 45(3), 445-465.