



Article

Educational Leadership in Arts Teacher Training: Cultural Preservation and Managerial Competencies in Vietnam

Ha Thanh Huong¹, Nguyen Quoc Tri², and Tran Huu Hoan¹

¹National Academy of Education Management, Hanoi city, Vietnam, and ²Hanoi National University of Education, Hanoi city, Vietnam

Correspondence: Tring@hnue.edu.vn

Abstract

This study examines educational leadership in arts teacher training in Vietnam, with a focus on cultural preservation and managerial competencies in higher education institutions. Using a mixed-methods approach, the research combined surveys with 85 participants and semi-structured interviews with 20 leaders and managers from three universities specializing in arts education, supplemented by document analysis of institutional policies and national regulations. Findings reveal that participants demonstrated strength in strategic planning, human resource management, and academic leadership, but faced persistent challenges in financial management and digital-cultural transformation. Qualitative insights emphasized the tension between preserving Vietnamese artistic traditions and embracing modernization, as well as the lack of systematic professional development for managerial staff. The study argues that effective leadership in arts teacher education requires an integrated framework that combines transformational and distributed leadership theories, competency-based models, and cultural preservation approaches. Recommendations include enhancing professional development programs, strengthening digital leadership, and embedding cultural stewardship into institutional strategies to ensure sustainable and competitive arts teacher education.

Keywords: Educational leadership; Arts teacher training; Managerial competencies; Cultural preservation; Digital transformation.

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Introduction

Higher education in Vietnam is transforming significantly due to globalization, digitalization, and the growing demand for high-quality teacher training. Within this context, universities offering arts teacher education occupy a distinctive position. These institutions are tasked with equipping future educators with pedagogical skills and cultivating creativity, critical thinking, and a strong sense of cultural identity (Frascara, 2017; Kenny et al., 2015). The role of educational leadership in such settings is particularly vital because arts education requires the sensitive integration of cultural preservation with innovative teaching methods, ensuring that traditional values are honored. At the same time, new approaches are embraced (Byrnes, 2022).

Leadership and managerial competencies are increasingly recognized as essential to the success of higher education institutions. Global scholarship highlights that university leaders today must navigate governance reforms, market competition, and international integration challenges while safeguarding their educational mission (Chow & Leung, 2018; Jing et al., 2025). In Vietnam, policy reforms such as the Ministry of Education and Training's Circular No. 12/2024 underscore the importance of strengthening managerial systems to guarantee quality, accountability, and sustainability. These reforms create new opportunities for universities and intensify the need for leaders who can manage change in dynamic and uncertain environments (MOET, 2024).

At the same time, the rapid diffusion of digital technologies is reshaping the landscape of teacher education. Arts universities are increasingly adopting online and blended learning models, digital archives, immersive media, and virtual reality in their training programs (Burke, 2020, 2021; Gonzalez-Zamar & Abad-Segura, 2020; Serna-Mendiburu & Guerra-Tamez, 2024). Such innovations expand the horizons of teaching and learning but also demand that managers acquire new forms of digital literacy and strategic leadership skills (Kamran, 2025; Yadav, 2025). Therefore, a key challenge for educational leadership in arts teacher training is to balance tradition with innovation, ensuring cultural preservation while fostering institutional competitiveness in the global academic arena (Lehrman, 2025).

The theoretical foundations of managerial development in arts education also emphasize the importance of participatory leadership and professional growth. Engagement-based approaches (Rachmad, 2022) suggest that empowering managers and teachers through meaningful professional development can enhance institutional resilience, while collaborative models in STEAM education demonstrate the value of interdisciplinary cooperation in building capacity (Boice et al., 2021). In the arts context, effective leadership must extend beyond administration, including facilitating

creative pedagogies, promoting curriculum innovation, and enabling international collaboration (Ewing et al., 2018; Dinham, 2024).

Despite the rising importance of these issues, research on leadership and managerial competencies in Vietnamese universities offering arts teacher training remains scarce. Much of the existing literature focuses on general higher education management, often overlooking the unique challenges of integrating cultural heritage, creativity, and modern governance in the arts. This article seeks to fill that gap by analyzing the current state of educational leadership and managerial capacity in Vietnamese arts teacher education, identifying key challenges, and proposing strategies for development. The study aims to generate theoretical insights and practical recommendations to guide policymakers, institutional leaders, and international partners in strengthening the cultural and managerial foundations of arts teacher training in Vietnam.

Literature Review

Educational Leadership in Higher Education

Educational leadership in higher education has been widely studied as a cornerstone for institutional development and academic quality. It goes beyond the administrative domain, requiring vision, strategic foresight, and the ability to inspire and mobilize faculty and students. Leadership theories such as transformational leadership stress the importance of motivating others through a shared vision, while distributed leadership highlights collaboration and shared responsibility across organizational levels (Chow & Leung, 2018). These perspectives emphasize that leadership is not confined to the actions of a single individual but is cultivated within the collective practices of an institution.

Effective leadership plays an even greater role in teaching education because it directly influences future educators' preparation. Leaders are expected to guide curriculum development, maintain academic integrity, and foster environments where innovative pedagogical models can thrive. Research shows that leaders who adopt participatory and inclusive approaches can enhance faculty engagement, improve student outcomes, and sustain long-term institutional resilience (Dinham, 2024). The educational engagement theory further reinforces this view by underlining that leadership involves building professional communities and empowering stakeholders to co-create growth pathways (Rachmad, 2022). Thus, leadership in higher education, especially within arts teacher training, is multidimensional: it requires administrative acumen, visionary capacity, and the ability to nurture cultures of creativity and inclusion.

Managerial Competencies in Arts Teacher Training

Managerial competencies form the operational backbone of higher education governance. These competencies include technical skills such as financial planning, resource allocation, quality assurance, and strategic skills supporting adaptability, cultural sensitivity, and pedagogical innovation. In arts teaching, managerial roles are even more complex. They demand that managers act simultaneously as administrators and cultural facilitators, capable of aligning institutional goals with the broader mission of preserving and promoting cultural identity (Byrnes, 2022).

Earlier models of management tended to emphasize regulatory compliance and administrative efficiency. However, the current educational landscape demands a competency-based orientation prioritizing adaptability, innovation, and problem-solving. Yadav (2025) points out that bridging gaps in digital competencies and leadership skills has become essential for higher education institutions to remain competitive in a globalized environment. For arts education managers, this means integrating professional development programs that equip staff with administrative efficiency and the ability to navigate cross-cultural contexts, lead interdisciplinary initiatives, and promote creative pedagogies (Kamran, 2025). Consequently, managerial development in this field must be understood as a dynamic and continuous process that links institutional effectiveness with cultural stewardship and educational transformation.

Cultural Preservation and Arts Education

Arts education is inherently tied to the preservation and transmission of cultural values. Scholars argue that teaching the arts is not limited to technical mastery but extends to nurturing creativity, identity, and cultural consciousness among learners (Frascara, 2017; Burke, 2021). In many countries, particularly those with rich artistic traditions such as Vietnam, arts universities safeguard heritage while enabling students to adapt to modern educational and artistic trends. Vietnamese traditional art forms, including music, theatre, ceramics, and visual arts, are deeply interwoven with the nation's history and identity. Teacher education programs in these fields thus serve a dual role: training competent educators and ensuring the continuity of intangible cultural heritage.

For educational leaders and managers, cultural preservation is not an option but a strategic priority. UNESCO (2023) stresses that embedding cultural heritage in educational practices enhances student engagement and builds stronger connections between education and society. It requires managers to implement policies integrating

heritage into curricula, providing resources for traditional art practices, and encouraging international collaborations highlighting cultural diversity. In doing so, managers in arts teacher education act as cultural custodians who bridge the past with the future, ensuring that global integration does not come at the expense of cultural identity (Kenny et al., 2015; Dinham, 2024).

Digital Transformation and Arts Teacher Education

The digital revolution is profoundly reshaping higher education and presenting new opportunities for innovation in arts teacher training. Virtual reality, immersive media, and digital archives transform how artistic knowledge is taught and experienced (Gonzalez-Zamar & Abad-Segura, 2020; Serna-Mendiburu & Guerra-Tamez, 2024). For instance, digital platforms allow students to interact with virtual exhibitions or participate in collaborative projects across borders, significantly broadening their exposure and creative horizons.

However, digital transformation also introduces new challenges. Managers must secure resources for digital infrastructure, train faculty to use new technologies effectively, and align technological innovation with pedagogical objectives (Lehrman, 2025). In arts education, this balancing act is particularly delicate because traditional studio practices and hands-on creative methods remain central to learning. Burke (2020) notes that the challenge for leaders is not merely adopting digital tools but ensuring they complement rather than displace cultural and artistic values. The global movement toward interdisciplinary STEAM education also places new demands on managers to foster collaboration between arts and sciences, further expanding the role of leadership in integrating technology, creativity, and cultural preservation (Boice et al., 2021). Therefore, effective leadership in this digital era requires managers to combine technical literacy with strategic foresight, ensuring that arts teacher education institutions remain innovative and culturally grounded.

Research Gaps in the Vietnamese Context

Although international studies provide valuable frameworks for understanding educational leadership and managerial development, research on Vietnamese arts teacher education remains limited. Existing literature on Vietnam's higher education broadly addresses governance reforms, accreditation processes, and quality assurance systems (MOET, 2024). However, these studies often overlook the unique challenges of managing arts institutions, such as balancing creative pedagogies with formal academic standards, preserving cultural identity in a globalized context, and integrating digital technologies without diluting traditional practices.

This gap underscores the need for research that captures the complexity of leadership and management in Vietnamese arts teacher education. Few studies have systematically examined how managerial staff develop competencies that integrate cultural stewardship with innovation, or how educational leadership can ensure that arts training remains relevant nationally and internationally. Given Vietnam's current emphasis on educational reform and global integration, exploring these issues is timely and significant. Filling this gap would provide practical insights for policymakers, institutional leaders, and international partners while contributing to the global discourse on educational leadership in arts teacher training.

Theoretical Framework

Leadership Theories Relevant to Higher Education

Educational leadership in higher education is explained through various theoretical perspectives, each offering different insights into how leaders shape institutional performance. Transformational leadership theory emphasizes vision, motivation, and the capacity to inspire collective change (Chow & Leung, 2018). Leaders are expected to articulate compelling goals, foster innovation, and encourage personal growth among staff and students. In teacher education, this means going beyond maintaining academic standards to actively nurturing creativity, problem-solving, and cultural awareness.

Distributed leadership theory highlights that leadership should be shared across organizational levels, with decision-making distributed among administrators, faculty, and professional staff (Jing et al., 2025). It is especially relevant in arts teacher education, where collaboration across disciplines and stakeholder engagement is critical. For example, a distributed model allows music, fine arts, and design faculty to contribute jointly to curricular innovation while aligning with institutional objectives.

Participatory and engagement-based theories stress inclusiveness, stakeholder participation, and the empowerment of faculty and staff (Rachmad, 2022). These models promote transparent decision-making and create opportunities for professional development, which are essential in fostering institutional resilience. In the Vietnamese context, where universities are navigating reforms and greater autonomy, adopting participatory leadership can help bridge the gap between top-down policy frameworks and grassroots educational innovation.

Managerial Competency Frameworks

Managerial development is often approached through competency-based frameworks, which identify the integrated knowledge, skills, and attitudes required

for effective performance in higher education (Kamran, 2025; Yadav, 2025). Core competencies include strategic planning, financial and human resource management, communication, and quality assurance. In the arts teacher training context, however, these competencies must incorporate cultural stewardship, creative facilitation, and interdisciplinary coordination (Byrnes, 2022; Dinham, 2024).

For example, managers must be able to support studio-based pedagogies and project-based learning environments that are resource-intensive and highly experiential (Burke, 2020). They must also develop international collaboration initiatives that expose students and faculty to global artistic practices while maintaining Vietnamese cultural identity. Notably, the rapid digitalization of higher education requires leaders to acquire new competencies in digital literacy, data-informed decision-making, and virtual communication (Lehrman, 2025). A competency framework thus provides a structured way to assess managerial preparedness gaps and design training programs tailored to the arts education sector.

Models of Cultural Preservation in Education

Cultural preservation theory emphasizes that education is about transmitting knowledge and sustaining cultural identity and heritage. Heritage-based education models stress embedding local traditions, practices, and values into curricula (Frascara, 2017; UNESCO, 2023). It ensures students develop a sense of cultural belonging while acquiring professional skills. Cultural sustainability models further frame education as a mechanism to safeguard traditions across generations, linking institutions to their communities and societies (Burke, 2021).

In arts teacher education, this perspective positions managers as cultural custodians. They are responsible for ensuring that institutions replicate Western artistic pedagogies and nurture indigenous practices such as Vietnamese music, theatre, or ceramics. At the same time, managers must create pathways for innovation, international collaboration, and digital engagement without compromising authenticity (Kenny et al., 2015). This dual responsibility requires leadership styles that are visionary and context-sensitive.

Digital Transformation and Leadership in Arts Teacher Training

The digital era introduces new dimensions to both leadership and managerial competencies. Technologies such as immersive media, online learning platforms, and virtual reality expand teaching and learning opportunities in arts education (Gonzalez-Zamar & Abad-Segura, 2020; Serna-Mendiburu & Guerra-Tamez, 2024). However, their integration requires careful leadership to align digital adoption with

pedagogical objectives. Burke (2020) argues that arts education leaders must avoid a purely technological determinist approach and instead view digital tools as complements to hands-on artistic practice.

For Vietnam, where universities are increasingly pressured to internationalize and digitize, educational leadership must balance innovation with cultural preservation. Leaders must ensure equitable access to technology, provide faculty training, and develop strategies for sustaining traditional artistic values in digital spaces (Lehrman, 2025; Kamran, 2025). Digital leadership competencies thus form a critical component of the theoretical framework, enabling managers to guide institutions through technological disruption while maintaining their cultural mission.

Integrated Theoretical Model

This study adopts an integrated framework that combines leadership theories, competency-based models, and cultural preservation perspectives. Transformational and distributed leadership provides insights into how vision, collaboration, and empowerment can drive institutional success. Competency frameworks identify the practical managerial skills required in the evolving global and digital higher education landscape. Cultural preservation theories ensure that leadership and management are grounded in safeguarding heritage and identity while embracing innovation.

Together, these theories form a holistic foundation for examining educational leadership development and managerial competencies in Vietnamese arts teacher training. They provide a lens to analyze how managers can balance the competing demands of globalization, digital transformation, and cultural sustainability, ensuring that arts teacher education remains relevant, competitive, and culturally authentic.

Research Methodology

Research Design

This study adopts a mixed-methods design, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to comprehensively understand educational leadership, managerial competencies, and cultural preservation in arts teacher education. The quantitative component offers measurable insights into the current leadership and managerial skills of participants, as well as their professional development needs. The qualitative component enriches this by capturing in-depth perspectives, contextual experiences, and cultural considerations that numerical data cannot fully explain. This design ensures both breadth and depth in analyzing how universities in Vietnam

address the dual responsibility of leadership and cultural stewardship in arts teacher training.

Participants and Sampling

The research was conducted between March and July 2024 across three key higher education institutions in Vietnam specializing in arts teacher education: the Military University of Culture and Arts, the Hanoi National University of Education, and the National University of Arts Education. A purposive sampling strategy targeted participants directly involved in educational leadership and managerial responsibilities.

One hundred twenty participants participated in the study, including 85 respondents in the quantitative survey and 35 in the qualitative component. Participants represented diverse roles such as deans, deputy deans, department heads, program coordinators, and administrative leaders responsible for arts teacher training. The sample was balanced across gender, age groups, years of service, and fields of responsibility, ensuring sufficient variation to capture different perspectives on leadership, management, and cultural preservation.

Data Collection Methods

Three complementary methods were employed:

Survey: A structured questionnaire was distributed to 85 participants. The instrument measured perceptions of leadership effectiveness, managerial competencies, and challenges in implementing arts teacher education. Items were rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from very low to very high.

Interviews: Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 20 participants, including institutional leaders and mid-level managers. These interviews explored participants' experiences balancing tradition and innovation, strategies for preserving cultural heritage, barriers to professional growth, and visions for future leadership development. Each interview lasted approximately 45–60 minutes.

Document Analysis: Relevant institutional and policy documents were reviewed, including training programs, internal guidelines on staff development, cultural preservation initiatives, and official circulars from the Ministry of Education and Training (such as Circular No. 12/2024). It helped contextualize survey and

interview data and assess alignment between institutional practices and national education policies.

Data Analysis Techniques

Quantitative survey data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations) to map existing leadership and managerial competencies. Comparative tests, including t-tests and ANOVA, were applied to identify significant differences in competencies across demographic variables such as years of service, position, and institutional affiliation. It enabled the study to pinpoint areas of strength and areas requiring development.

Qualitative data from interviews and documents were examined through thematic analysis. Transcripts were coded inductively to identify recurring themes related to leadership practices, managerial challenges, cultural preservation strategies, and visions for innovation. Coding reliability was ensured by having two independent researchers cross-check the categories, with discrepancies resolved through consensus.

Research Findings

Quantitative Findings

General Overview of Responses

From the survey administered to 85 participants across the Military University of Culture and Arts, the Hanoi National University of Education, and the National University of Arts Education, responses were collected on five domains: strategic planning, human resource management, financial management, academic leadership, and digital-cultural transformation. A five-point Likert scale (1 = very low, 5 = very high) allowed for nuanced assessment of leadership and managerial competencies.

The results showed clear contrasts. Strategic planning achieved the highest mean score ($M = 3.82$, $SD = 0.64$), suggesting that most respondents feel confident in setting objectives, defining priorities, and aligning unit-level plans with institutional visions. Academic leadership ($M = 3.51$, $SD = 0.79$) and human resource management ($M = 3.53$, $SD = 0.77$) were moderately strong, indicating reasonable capability in guiding teaching staff and fostering collaborative learning environments. In contrast, financial management scored lower ($M = 3.36$, $SD = 0.81$), reflecting persistent challenges related to limited financial autonomy in Vietnamese higher education. Most notably, digital-cultural transformation received the lowest mean score ($M = 3.05$, SD

= 0.71), highlighting a gap between traditional management strengths and the emerging digitalization and cultural innovation demands.

Distribution of Responses

As shown in Table 1, nearly half of the respondents (49.4%) rated their strategic planning skills as high, while fewer than 10% rated themselves as very high in digital-cultural transformation. Moreover, 16.5% admitted their digital competencies were low, confirming this as the most urgent area for development.

Table 1. Survey Results on Leadership and Managerial Competencies (N = 85)

Competency Domain	Very Low (1)	Low (2)	Moderate (3)	High (4)	Very High (5)	Mean	SD
Strategic Planning	2 (2.4%)	6 (7.1%)	22 (25.9%)	42 (49.4%)	13 (15.3%)	3.82	0.64
Human Resource Management	3 (3.5%)	8 (9.4%)	27 (31.8%)	35 (41.2%)	12 (14.1%)	3.53	0.77
Financial Management	5 (5.9%)	11 (12.9%)	28 (32.9%)	31 (36.5%)	10 (11.8%)	3.36	0.81
Academic Leadership	4 (4.7%)	9 (10.6%)	25 (29.4%)	34 (40.0%)	13 (15.3%)	3.51	0.79
Digital-Cultural Transformation	6 (7.1%)	14 (16.5%)	31 (36.5%)	26 (30.6%)	8 (9.4%)	3.05	0.71

Comparisons Across Institutions

A one-way ANOVA revealed significant differences in digital-cultural transformation competencies ($F(2, 82) = 4.21, p < .05$). Post hoc Tukey tests indicated that participants at the National University of Arts Education reported higher levels of digital readiness ($M = 3.25$) compared to those at the Military University of Culture and Arts ($M = 2.88$). The Hanoi National University of Education ($M = 3.09$) was positioned between the two. No significant differences were observed across institutions in strategic planning, financial management, or academic leadership ($p > .05$).

Interpretation of Quantitative Results

The survey findings suggest that managerial staff demonstrate considerable strength in traditional competencies such as planning, academic leadership, and human resource management. However, they remain underprepared for challenges related to financial management and particularly digital-cultural transformation, an area that is increasingly central to sustaining cultural heritage while innovating in

pedagogy. These results underscore the urgency of capacity-building programs that integrate cultural preservation with digital governance and leadership development.

Qualitative Findings

The qualitative phase included 20 semi-structured interviews and document analysis of institutional policies, training reports, and official guidelines. Thematic analysis revealed five major themes that expanded on the survey findings.

Strength in Strategic Planning

Interviewees consistently expressed confidence in strategic planning. They attributed this strength to established annual planning processes guided by MOET

policies. Document analysis confirmed the presence of systematic planning reports and goal-setting procedures. One manager explained:

"We are used to working with annual planning cycles. The real challenge is not making the plan but finding ways to adapt it when financial and human resources are limited."

Digital Transformation as a Persistent Gap

Participants acknowledged digital transformation as their weakest competency. At the Military University of Culture and Arts, respondents reported outdated infrastructure and minimal training opportunities. A respondent remarked:

"We know digital transformation is crucial, but our facilities are basic, and professional training in digital leadership is still very rare."

Institutional documents revealed that digital strategies existed but were broad and lacked actionable implementation frameworks.

Financial Constraints in Arts Education

Financial management challenges were repeatedly mentioned. Participants highlighted the high costs of maintaining studios, performance halls, and specialized equipment, while budgets often failed to reflect these needs. One interviewee noted:

"Arts education requires significant investment, yet our financial autonomy is limited. Without adequate funding, it is difficult to sustain quality."

Balancing Tradition and Innovation

The tension between preserving Vietnamese artistic traditions and adopting modern pedagogies was a recurring concern. At the National University of Arts Education, participants described this dual mission:

"We must preserve our artistic identity, but at the same time we cannot ignore digital tools and global trends."

This tension reflects the dual responsibility of educational leadership in arts teacher training: serving as cultural guardians while ensuring innovation and international relevance.

Professional Development Needs

Across all three institutions, participants emphasized the lack of systematic training for managerial staff. Many reported relying on informal, "on-the-job" learning rather than structured programs. Interviewees expressed a clear need for leadership workshops, mentoring systems, and opportunities for international collaboration. Document analysis supported these concerns, showing few institutional programs

explicitly designed to enhance leadership and managerial competencies in arts teacher education.

Interpretation of Qualitative Findings

The qualitative data provided richer insights into the human dimensions of educational leadership in arts teacher training. While managers are competent in planning and academic leadership, they face structural challenges in financial autonomy, limited digital readiness, and the dual responsibility of preserving cultural traditions while innovating. The findings also highlight the pressing need for systematic professional development to strengthen managerial competencies and leadership capacities in Vietnam's arts teacher education institutions.

Discussion

The findings of this study provide a complex yet informative portrait of educational leadership and managerial competencies in Vietnamese universities offering arts teacher training. The quantitative data confirmed that managers are relatively strong in strategic planning, human resource management, and academic leadership. At the same time, the qualitative results revealed that well-established planning mechanisms and guidance from the Ministry of Education and Training largely support these strengths. Managers are confident in aligning their departmental goals with institutional missions, reflecting the influence of transformational leadership principles emphasizing vision, organizational alignment, and collective goal setting. However, interview data also showed that while the ability to design plans is strong, the capacity to implement them effectively remains constrained by limited resources and structural barriers. It suggests that Vietnamese educational leaders require planning skills and adaptive leadership capacities to navigate uncertainty and scarcity in the higher education system.

One of the most striking findings concerns the low scores for digital-cultural transformation, which emerged as a critical gap across the institutions. Managers consistently reported insufficient infrastructure, limited training opportunities, and a lack of actionable strategies to integrate digital technologies into teaching and management. This weakness mirrors global concerns about the urgency of digital leadership in higher education, particularly in societies undergoing rapid technological change. In the arts teacher education context, digital transformation has unique implications because it intersects directly with cultural preservation. Technologies such as immersive media and virtual reality provide opportunities for innovation, yet they also risk undermining traditional practices if not carefully

managed. The challenge, therefore, is not only technical but also cultural: educational leaders must learn to employ digital tools in ways that complement, rather than replace, artistic traditions.

Financial management emerged as another area of concern. Although the survey results placed it at a moderate level, interviews revealed deep anxieties among participants about inadequate resources for sustaining arts education. Managers repeatedly stressed that maintaining studios, performance halls, and specialized equipment requires substantial investment, but state funding and institutional autonomy remain limited. This financial constraint affects the quality of training and places managers in a difficult position where they must reconcile ambitious strategic goals with restricted resources. From a leadership perspective, financial management in arts education cannot be reduced to routine budgeting; it requires advocacy, resource mobilization, and external collaboration to supplement traditional funding streams. Without developing broader financial leadership skills, managers will face structural limitations that hinder innovation and cultural preservation.

The delicate balance between tradition and innovation is a recurring theme across the data. Participants frequently highlighted the dual responsibility of safeguarding Vietnamese artistic heritage while ensuring that arts teacher education remains relevant in a globalized academic environment. This tension resonates with international studies, which emphasize that leaders in arts education often act simultaneously as cultural custodians and innovators. For Vietnam, this dual role is particularly significant because traditional art forms are integral to national identity. The findings suggest that leaders in arts teacher training must cultivate cultural intelligence, enabling them to design policies that embed heritage into curricula while creating space for digital innovation and international collaboration. Only through such culturally responsive leadership can Vietnamese arts universities position themselves as protectors of tradition and contributors to global knowledge exchange.

Finally, the study revealed the pressing need for structured professional development programs for managerial staff. The absence of systematic leadership training means that many managers rely heavily on learning through experience, which, while valuable, is insufficient in preparing them for emerging challenges such as digital governance, international partnerships, and financial autonomy. Participants strongly desired formal programs, including workshops, mentoring schemes, and international exchange opportunities. Document analysis confirmed that existing institutional training remains limited and rarely tailored to the specific needs of arts education. This gap reinforces the argument that professional development must be designed to reflect both global best practices and local cultural realities. Without such

investment, universities risk stagnation, with leaders unable to fully meet the demands of a rapidly changing educational landscape.

These findings demonstrate that educational leadership in Vietnamese arts teacher education is characterized by solid foundations in planning and academic leadership but is constrained by weaknesses in digital readiness, financial autonomy, and professional training. More importantly, leaders must confront the challenge of preserving cultural heritage while embracing modernization, which requires visionary leadership, cultural stewardship, and strategic competencies. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive and context-specific approach that integrates leadership theories, competency-based models, and cultural preservation frameworks, supported by targeted professional development and national policies.

Conclusions

This article has analyzed the current educational leadership and managerial competencies in Vietnamese universities offering arts teacher education. The findings highlight both strengths and weaknesses in leadership practices. On the one hand, managers demonstrate confidence in strategic planning, academic leadership, and human resource management, supported by established policy frameworks and institutional planning mechanisms. On the other hand, they face significant challenges in financial management and, most critically, in digital-cultural transformation, where infrastructure, training, and actionable strategies remain limited.

The qualitative evidence further illustrates the dual responsibility that arts education leaders must shoulder, safeguarding national cultural identity while embracing innovation and international integration. Balancing tradition and modernization require visionary leadership, cultural intelligence, and digital literacy, all of which are competencies that remain underdeveloped in the current system. The lack of structured professional development further constrains leadership growth, leaving many managers to rely on experiential learning without consistent institutional or national support.

Vietnamese arts teacher education institutions must adopt a more comprehensive approach to leadership development to move forward. It includes designing targeted training programs for managerial staff, fostering digital readiness, and embedding cultural preservation as a strategic priority in leadership frameworks. National policy support and international collaboration will be essential in creating the conditions for sustainable and competitive arts teacher education. By strengthening leadership capacity in this way, universities can ensure that future generations of teachers are equipped with pedagogical expertise and the ability to

transmit cultural heritage and engage effectively in a rapidly globalizing academic landscape.

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