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Internal Evaluation report

LEAD2 Young Academic Leadership Blended training
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LEAD2 project partners

1. Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB), Belgium – Coordinator
2. UNIVERSIDADE NOVA DE LISBOA (NOVA), Portugal
3. University of Vienna (UniVie), Austria
4. Aarhus University (AU), Denmark
5. Middle East Technical University (METU), Turkey
6. Silesian University of Technology (SUT), Poland
7. National Academy of Education Administration (NAEA), Beijing, China
8. Tongji University (TJU), Shanghai, China
9. Beijing Normal University (BNU), Beijing, China
10. Yunnan Normal University (YNNU), Kunming, China
11. China University of Geosciences (CUG), Wuhan, China
12. Guangxi Normal University (GXNU), Guilin, China

I. INTRODUCTION

The Blended training program on Young Academic Leadership took place from 4 October 2021 to 17 December 2021, aiming at Young Academic Leaders in Chinese higher education institutions (YAL Autumn 2021 Class). There were 131 Registered training participants. This training program is jointly organized by the 12 LEAD2 project partners. This blended training program includes online lecture sessions, MOOC learning, and F2F exchange and peer learning sessions.

The Young Academic Leadership Blended training program included key topics that are important for the academic leadership development. The main topics include: a). the need for university governance and academic leadership; b). leadership theories, leadership styles and their applications; c). university governance convergence and the development of university governance structural models and changes in higher education; d). the qualities and competencies of Young Academic Leadership; e). cases related to academic leadership in international cooperation; f). challenges and strategies for young academic leadership in cross-cultural cooperation; g). differences and challenges among European and Chinese researchers and students in the area of teaching and research; h). main factors related to mid-level leadership development of ‘famous’ academic leaders; i). senior academic leaders’ experiences and reflections about academic leadership development; j). importance of how to balance the academic roles and the management roles of academic leaders; k). guidance with peer-to-peer

coaching regarding academic leadership growth paths & exchanges; I). academic leadership in internationalization and virtual internationalization.

The training program includes 9 sessions of online lectures and 2 sessions of face-to-face (F2F) workshops and exchanges of experiences among Chinese young academic leaders. The training program members were divided into 6 training discussion groups to facilitate group discussions during each session. This training went in parallel to the LEAD2 MOOC Series Leadership Development for Young Academic Leaders. In this way, the participants followed both the online and face-to-face sessions of the training program, as well as the MOOC course.

In order to evaluate the quality of the training, participants were invited to fill in the evaluation forms after they finished the training course. The survey consists of closed and open-ended questions. In addition, the participants completed a self-report covering their learning experiences and gains from this blended training program. Through utilizing a five-point scale, close-ended and open-ended questions queried participants' level of agreement on the overall quality of the events and each specific section as well as the contribution to the knowledge, the opportunities to learn from other participants and expectations met. Furthermore, data analysis has been set up: descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviations, and frequencies) have been calculated for the close-ended questions, while the qualitative approach has been applied for the open-ended questions.

To that end, the report presents the results of this evaluation as follow: session 2.1 presents the demographic characteristics of the respondents, session 2.2 performs an assessment based on close-ended questions, session 2.3 carries out an evaluation based on open-ended questions.

This evaluation survey and the evaluation report is part of the internal quality assurance (WP3) of the LEAD2 project.

II. RESULTS

2.1. Demographic characteristics of the respondents

As can be seen in Figure 1, participants from YAL Blended training course were predominantly Female (58%). The mean age was 35 (M=34,84, SD= 9.14).

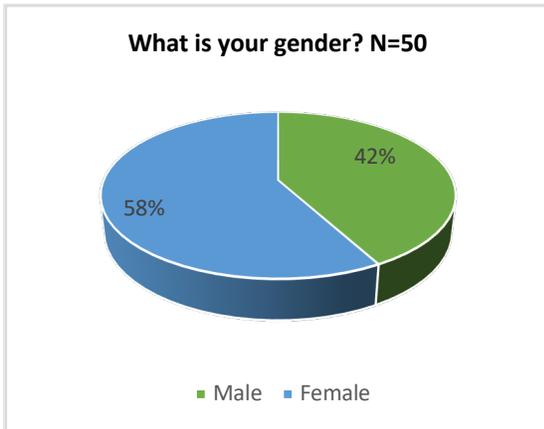


Figure 1. Gender

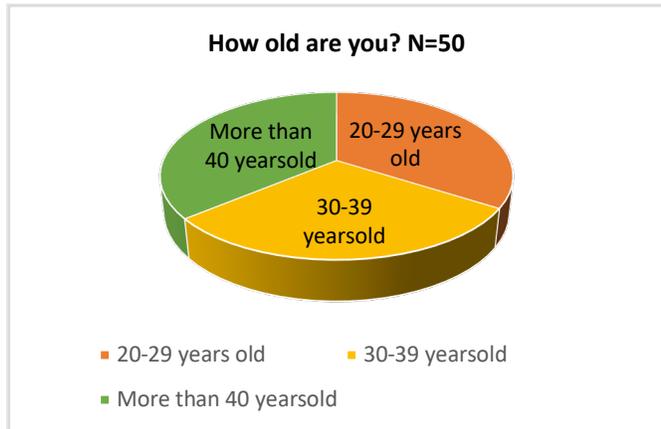


Figure 2. Age

When participants' education levels were asked, 62% reported having a PhD's degree or equivalent, and 32% reported having a Master's degree or equivalent, and only 6% reported having a Bachelor's degree or equivalent.

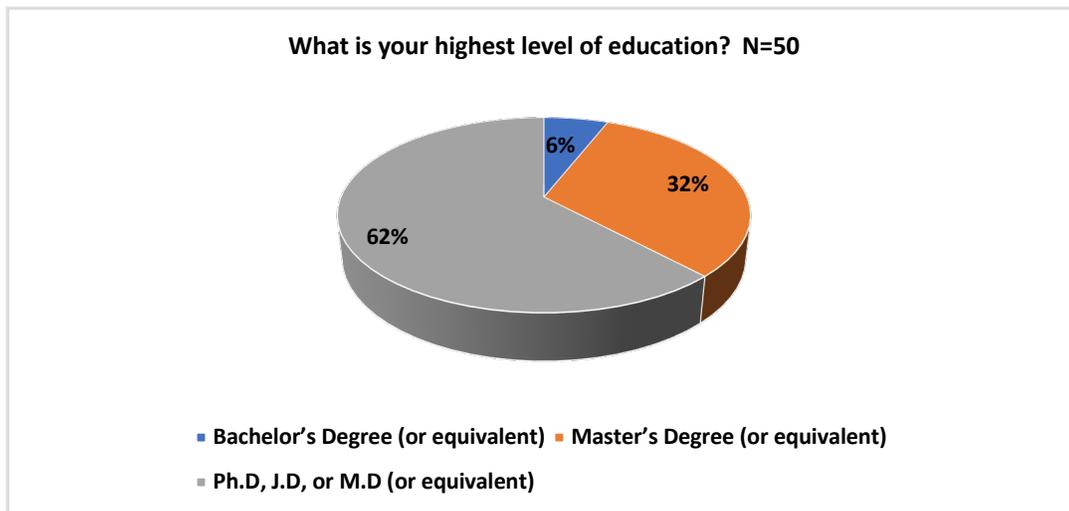


Figure 3. Educational attainment

Regarding the current academic roles (**Figure 4**), a majority of participants reported holding academic positions including head of department, dean or vice-dean in their institutions (52%), 48% of the participants reported not holding academic positions. Concerning leadership experience, a majority of the participants reported having less than 5 years of leadership experience while 22% of the attendees reported having more than 5 years of leadership experience.

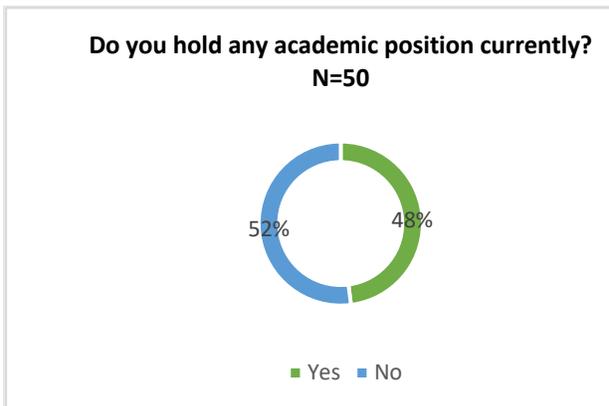


Figure 4. Academic position

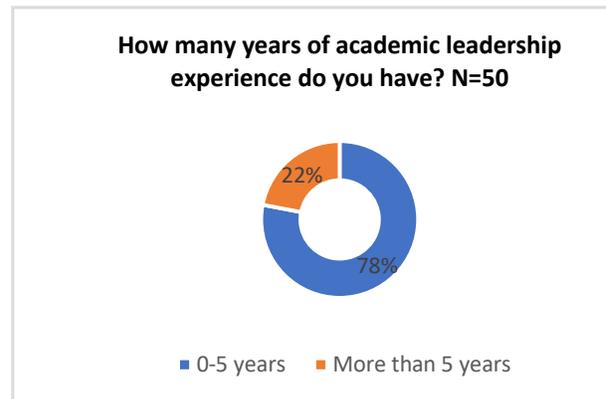


Figure 5. Leadership experience

2.2. Results for the close-ended questions

The survey used to collect data on learners' perceptions towards outcomes and effectiveness of the blended training course. To be specific, participants were asked about the overall quality of the blended training course, the extent to which the training program enriches their knowledge on university governance and academic leadership and fulfils their expectations. The survey was sent to all of the participants after the blended training program finished in December 2021. For all closed-ended questions, the higher scores received implied the higher quality perceived by the participants. The results are presented below.

2.2.1. Satisfaction with the training courses

Satisfaction with the training courses perceived by participants is complemented by three main components: overall experience, achieved goals obtained after the training course, and whether the participants recommend the Blended training course to friends/ colleagues.

Concerning overall experience, participants were asked to what extent they were satisfied with the Blended training course. As shown in **Figure 6**, the findings revealed that most of the participants were satisfied with the training course. To be more specific, 82% of the respondents reported "very satisfied" or "extremely satisfied" with the overall experience, while 14 % of the participants reported, "satisfied". Only 2 % of the attendees reported "slightly satisfied" or "not satisfied" with the overall experience.

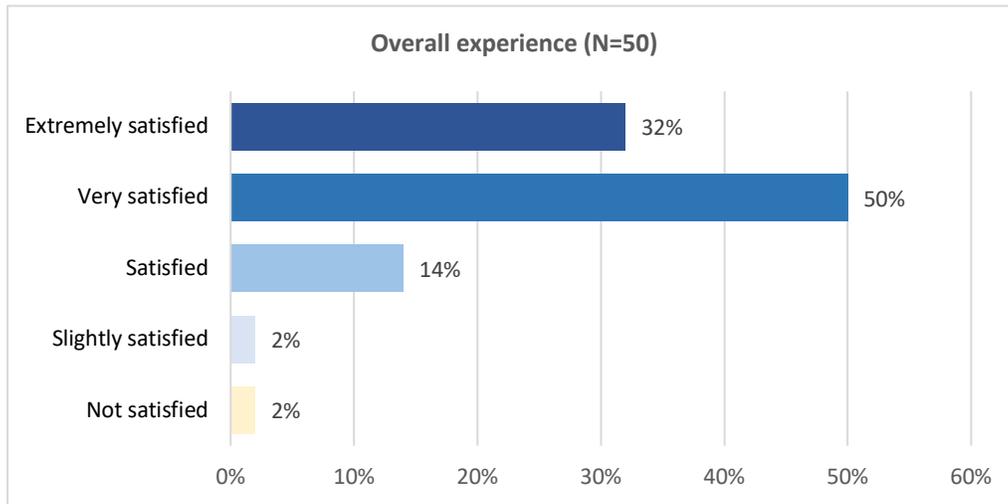


Figure 6. Overall satisfaction with the Blended Training course

Regarding the personal goals obtained after the training course, participants were asked whether they achieved their goals after finishing the training course. As shown in **Figure 7**, the most frequently selected options are “very satisfied” and “extremely satisfied” (40% and 34%, respectively). There was only 1 participant who reported “slightly satisfied” and two survey participants reported “not satisfied” with this aspect.

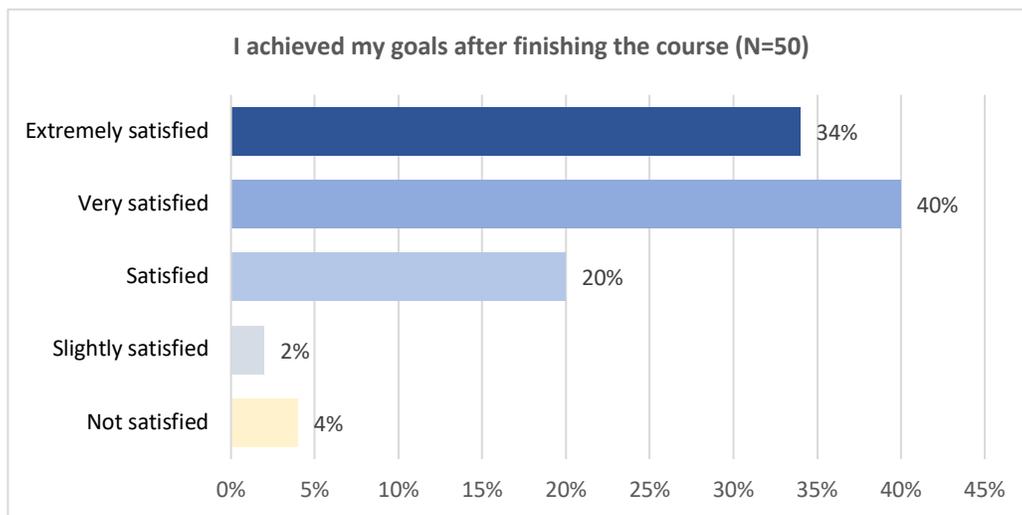


Figure 7. Achieved goals after finishing the Blended Training course

Regarding the last aspect of satisfaction, participants were asked whether they would recommend this course to their friends/ colleagues (**Figure 8**). The results indicated that the highest option of “strongly agree” is the most frequently selected (42%), followed by the option

“very agree” (36%). 20% of the participants reported “agree” to recommend the training course to their friends/ colleagues. Although no participant in the sample rated the sessions as “slightly agree” in terms of recommendation, there were one participant who selected the “disagree” options

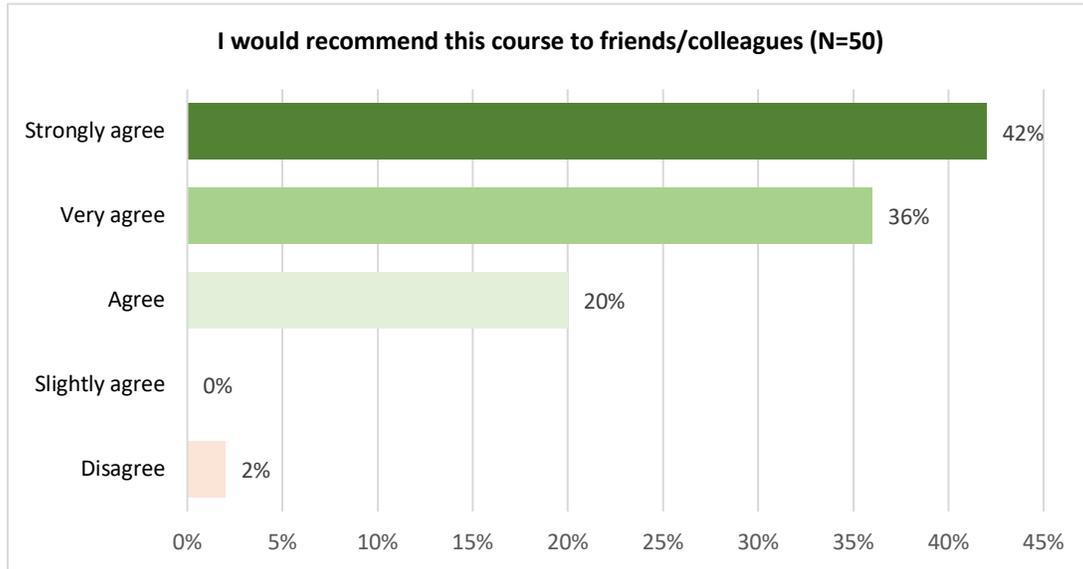


Figure 8. Recommend the course to friends/colleagues

Consistent with the frequency analysis, the descriptive analysis indicated that a majority of the participants reported highly satisfied with the training course. Shown in table 1, the mean scores were high to be considered as the sign of high satisfaction perceived for each scale item with the lowest mean of $M= 4.00$ ($SD= .87$) achieved for the achieved goals obtained after the training course.

Table 1. Mean and standard deviations for satisfaction with the blended training course

Specific items	M	SD
Overall experience	4.08	.85
Achieved goals obtained after the training course.	4.00	.87
Recommend the course to friends/ colleagues	4.16	.88

2.2.2. Quality of the course content

Figure 9, Figure 10, and Figure 11 illustrate the perception of the course content. In general, most of the participants agree on the high quality of the course content.

Concerning the challenging aspect of the course content, participants were asked to what extent the course effectively challenged them to think. The results showed that the most frequently selected options are “strongly agree” and “very agree” (46% and 44%, respectively). There were 8% of the participants selected the “agree” option. While no participant chose the “slightly agree” option, there was 1 participant who reported “disagree” with the statement.

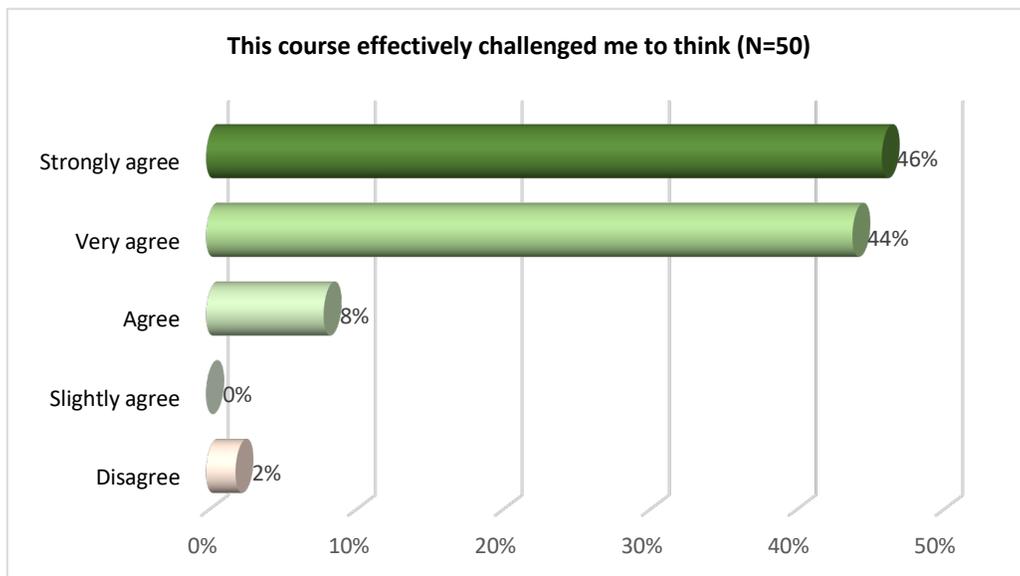


Figure 9. Perceived outcomes towards the challenging aspect

Regarding the course assignment, participants were asked whether the course assignments were interesting and stimulating. As shown in **Figure 10**, the highest option of “strongly agree” is the most frequently selected one (50%), followed by the option of “very agree” (36%). 12% of the participants agreed that the course assignments were interesting and stimulating. Although no participant in the sample rated the session as “slightly agree”, one respondent selected the “disagree” option.

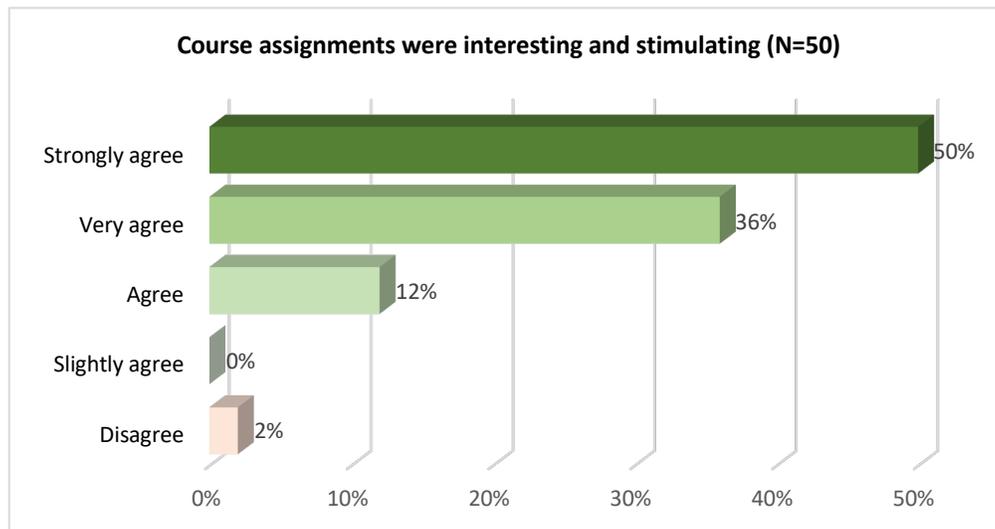


Figure 10. Perceived outcomes of the course assignments

As for the last aspect of the course content, survey participants were asked to what extent the course is up to date with developments in the field. As can be seen in **Figure 11**, a majority of the participants selected the two highest options, “strongly agree” or “very agree” (42% and 38%, respectively). There were 14% of the respondents who slightly agreed with the statement. Two participants selected the “slightly agree” option, and one respondent selected the option of “disagree”.

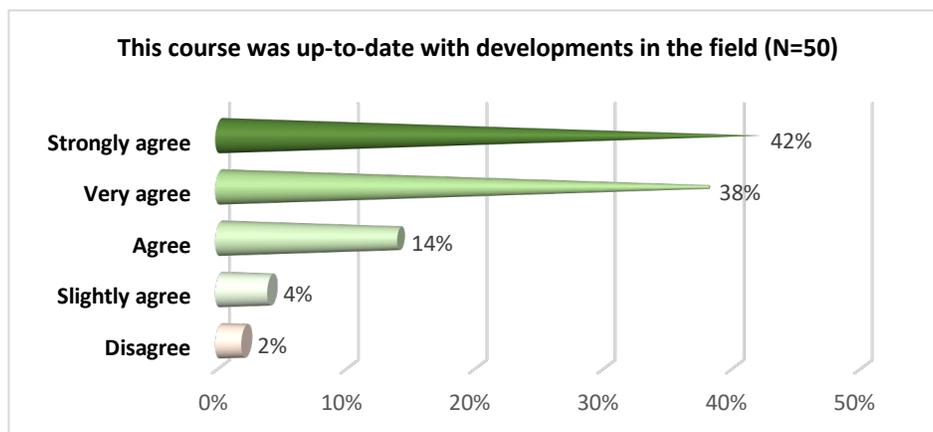


Figure 11. Perceived outcome towards updating developments in the field

In line with the results of the previous questions, the high mean scores for three items illustrated strong evidence that the contents of the training course were relevant and practically significant. Further details are found in **Table 2**.

Table 2. Mean and standard deviations for quality of the course content

<i>Specific items</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Perceived outcomes towards the challenging aspect	4.32	.79
Perceived outcomes of the course assignments	4.32	.84
Perceived outcome towards updating developments in the field	4.14	.94

2.2.3. Perceived knowledge obtained after the blended training course

The perceived effectiveness of the blended training course in terms of knowledge obtained was evaluated on four main aspects, including an understanding of old and new challenges for HE in different contexts, understanding of ongoing challenges academic leaders are facing, knowledge of different leadership approaches, and awareness of the roles of leaders for educational innovation and internationalisation. Overall, most of the participants agreed that the course effectively helped them to enhance knowledge in academic leadership and university governance.

Concerning the first aspect of perceived knowledge obtained, participants were asked to what extent the course helps them to gain a better understanding of old and new challenges for HE in different contexts. The frequency analysis results showed that a substantial majority of attendees expressed a high level of knowledge enhancement. As shown in **Figure 12**, the most frequently selected options are between “very agree” and “strongly agree” (60% and 34%, respectively). While 4% of the respondents reported “agree” with the statement, one respondent reported “slightly agree”. No participant selected the “disagree” option.

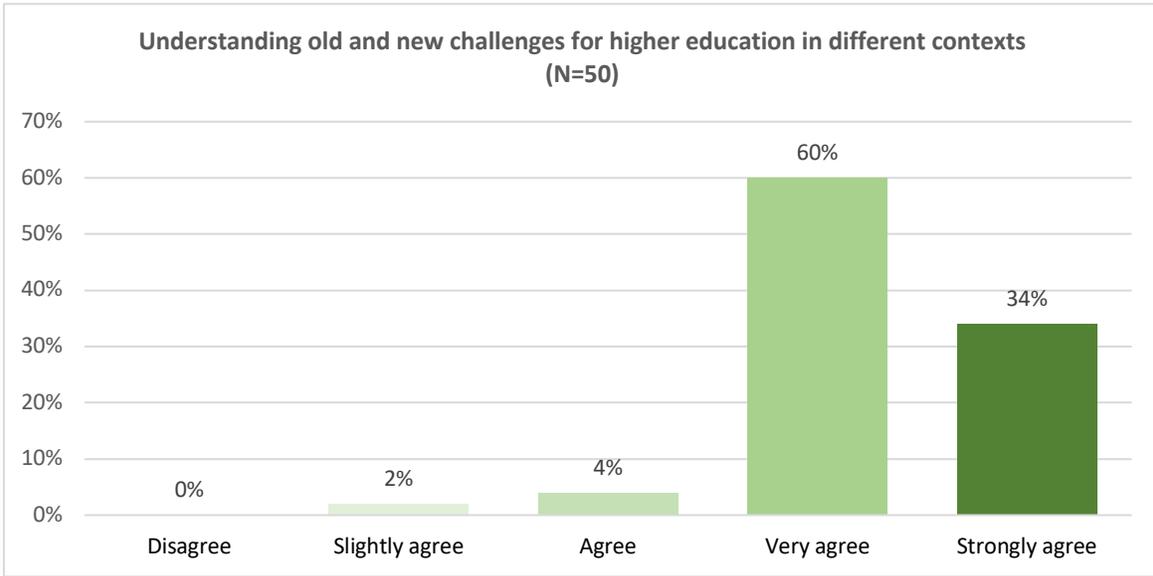


Figure 12. Perceived knowledge of understanding old and new challenges for HE in different contexts

Participants were asked to what extent the blended training course helped them better understand the ongoing challenges academic leaders are facing. As illustrated in **Figure 13**, a majority of the participants selected the highest options of “very agree” or “strongly agree” (52% and 36%, respectively). While 10% of the attendees selected the “agree” option, no attendee selected the “slightly agree” option. There was only one participant who selected the “disagree” option.

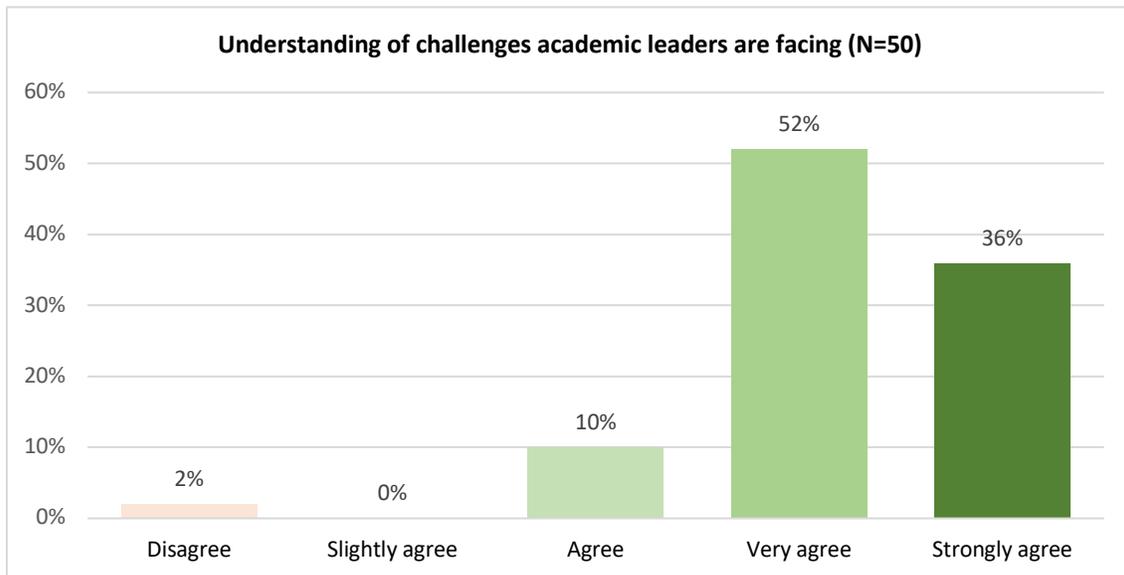


Figure 13. Perceived knowledge of understanding challenges academic leaders are facing

Concerning perceived knowledge of leadership approaches, the findings showed that the respondents highly agreed with the statement. As illustrated in **Figure 14**, more than 90% of the participants selected “very agree” or “strongly agree” options. In addition, 4% of the attendees reported “agree”, and 2% of the respondents reported “slightly agree”. No participant selected the “disagree” option.

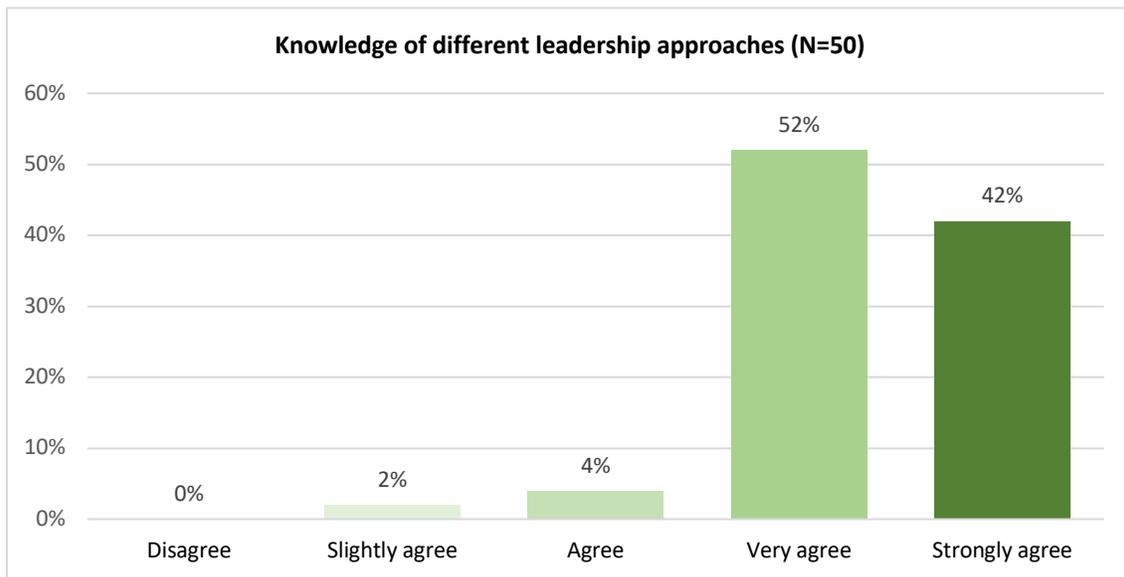


Figure 14. Perceived knowledge of different leadership approaches

The last aspect of perceived knowledge obtained was about the awareness of the roles of academic leaders for educational innovation and internationalisation. As shown in **Figure 15**, a majority of the respondents selected options of “very agree” or “strongly agree” (60% and 32%, respectively). However, while 6% of the respondents selected the “agree” option, no participant selected the “slightly agree” option. There was only one participant who selected the “disagree” option.

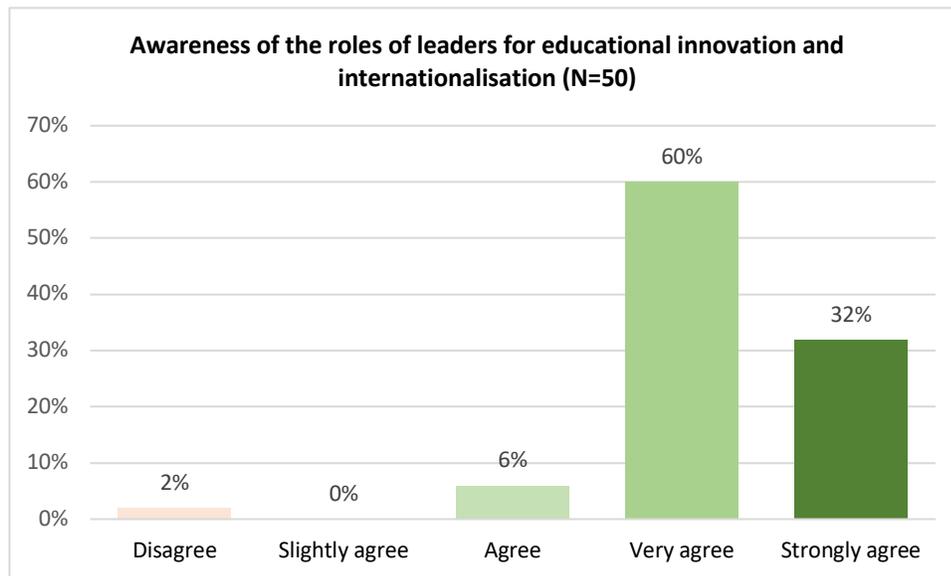


Figure 15. Awareness of the roles of leaders for educational innovation and internationalisation

Consistent with the frequency analysis, the descriptive analysis indicated that the blended training course was highly effective on improving attendees’ knowledge of academic leadership and university governance (**Table 3**). Interestingly, the most highly rated item was “understanding of different leadership approaches with a mean of $M= 4.34$ ($SD= .65$) while the two items “Understanding challenges academic leaders are facing” and “Awareness of the roles of leaders for educational innovation and internationalization” got the lowest mean of $M= 4.20$ ($SD= .78$) and $M= 4.20$ ($SD= .72$).

Table 3. Mean and standard deviations for perceived knowledge obtained after the training course

<i>Specific items</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Understanding of old and new challenges for HE in different contexts	4.26	.63
Understanding challenges academic leaders are facing	4.20	.78
Understanding of different leadership approaches	4.34	.65
Awareness of the roles of leaders for educational innovation and internationalisation	4.20	.72

2.2.4. Perceived skills obtained after the blended training course

Four items were asked to evaluate perceived skills obtained after the blended training course, including skills to address the challenges within the institution, sharpening academic leadership skills, having more skills and strategies in developing personal leadership styles, and confidence towards engagement with colleagues to achieve academic visions. All of these aspects were predominantly evaluated with the “very agree” and “strongly agree” options.

Concerning the first aspect of the perceived skills, participants were asked to what extent the blended training course enhanced skills in addressing challenges within institutions. It is significant from **Figure 16** a substantial majority of attendees expressed a high level of skill developed. To be specific, the most frequently selected options are “very agree” and “strongly agree” (44% and 30%, respectively). While 18% of the attendees selected the “agree” option, 6% of the respondents selected the “slightly agree” option. There was only one survey respondent who selected the “disagree” option.

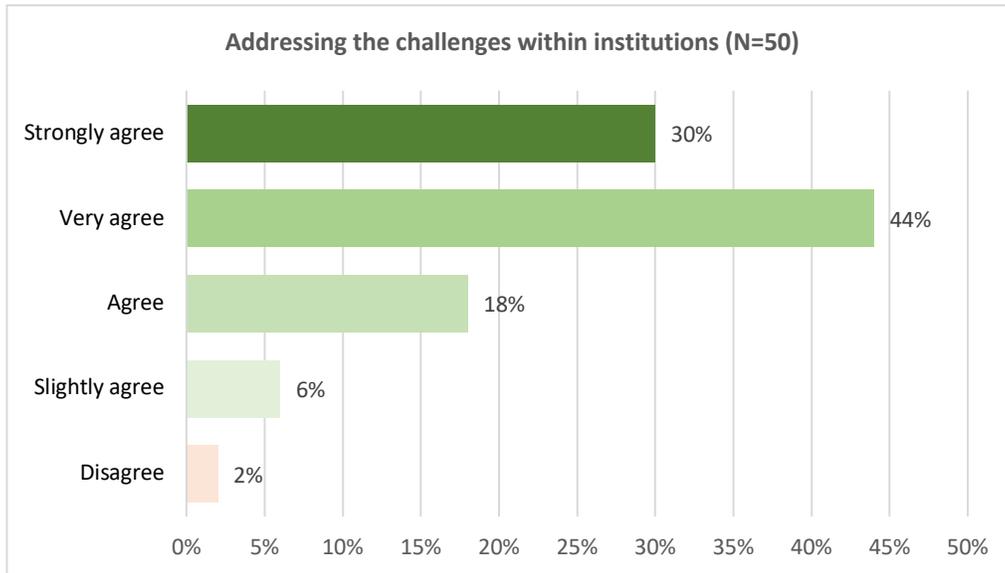


Figure 16. Developed skills in addressing challenges within institutions

Survey participants were asked to assess how the course contributed to sharpening academic skills as an academic leader. As can be seen in **Figure 17**, most of the participants selected “very agree” or “strongly agree” options (42% and 36%, respectively). While 14% of the respondent chose the “agree” option, 4% of the attendees selected the “slightly agree” option, and 4% reported “disagree”.

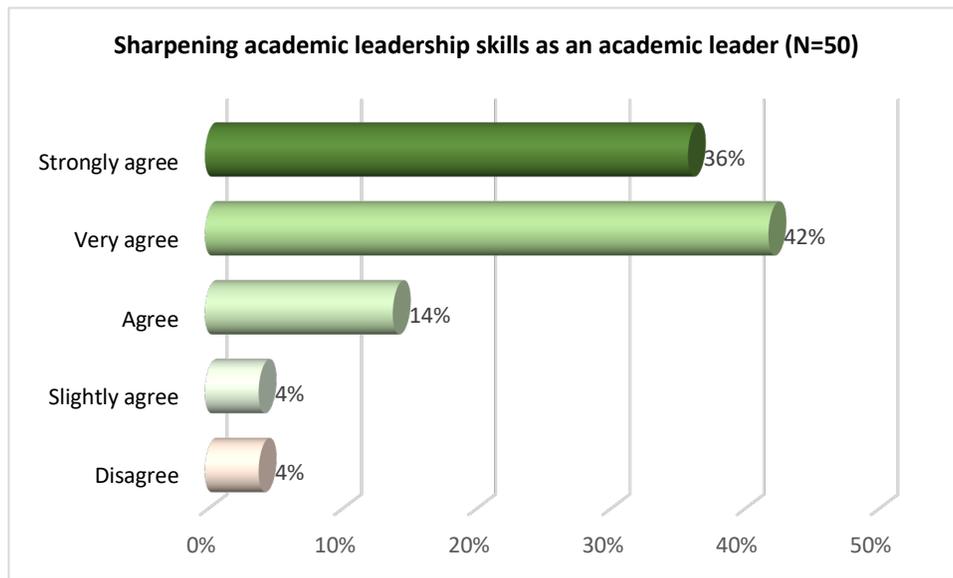


Figure 17. Sharpening academic skills as an academic leader

Participants were asked to evaluate the practical significance of the course in terms of skills and strategies in developing personal leadership styles. The results are displayed in **Figure 18**. Significantly, the majority of the participants very agreed or strongly agreed that the course contributed to enhancing more skills and strategies in developing personal leadership styles (86%). In addition, 12% of the respondents selected the “agree” option. While no participant in the sample selected the “slightly agree” option, there was 1 respondent who selected the “disagree” option.

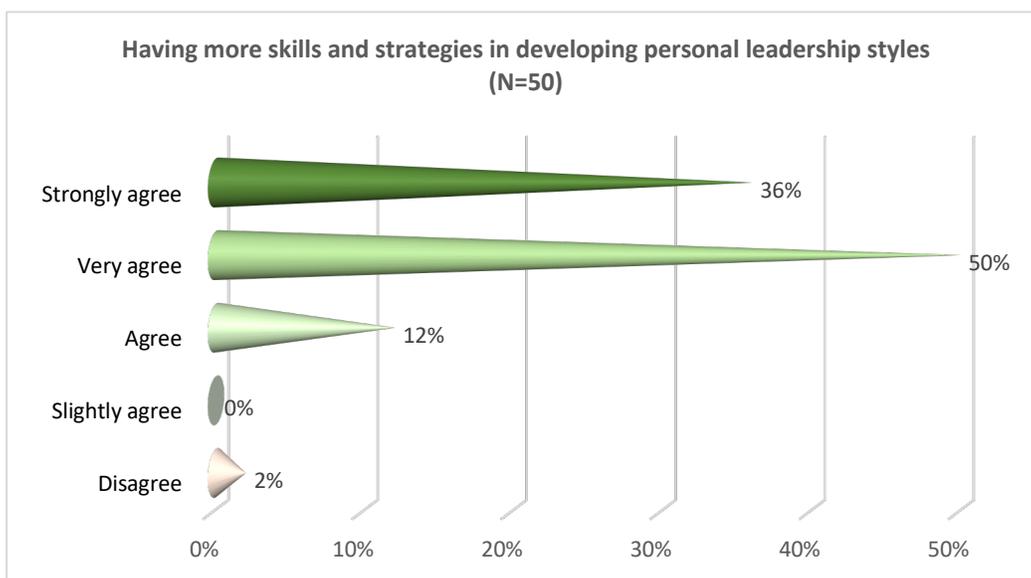


Figure 18. Having more skills and strategies in developing personal leadership styles

Concerning the last aspect, participants were asked to what extent the course helped them be more confident about engaging colleagues to develop and achieve academic vision within the institution/ faculty. Figure 19 indicates that 50% of the attendees reported “very agree”, 32% of the attendees reported “strongly agree”, and 14% of the attendees reported “agree”. One participant in the sample selected the “slightly agree” option, and one participant selected the “disagree” option.

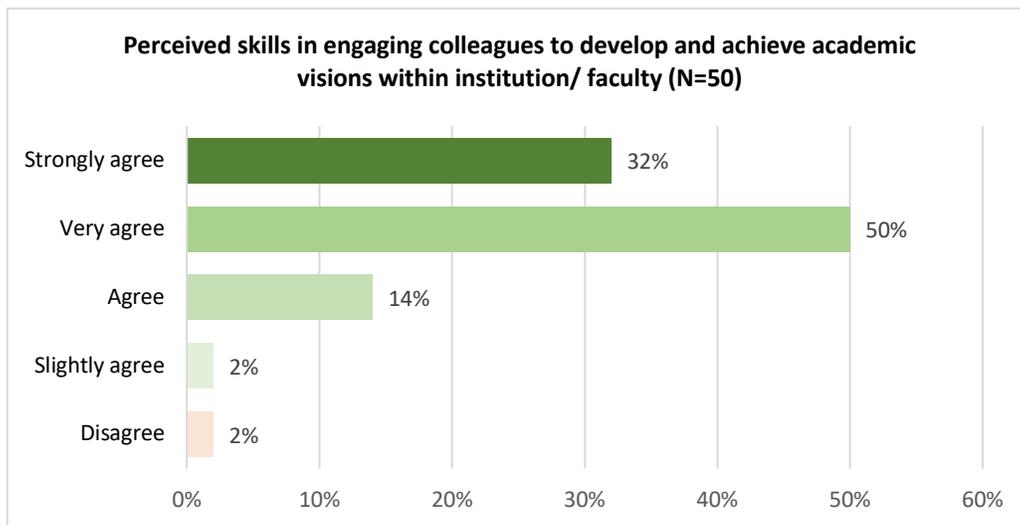


Figure 19. Perceived skills in engaging colleagues to develop and achieve academic vision within institution/faculty

Accordingly, the descriptive analysis indicates similar result as the mean scores were high to be considered as the sign of high agreement perceived for each item with the lowest mean of $M= 4.00$ ($SD= .95$) achieved for “Developed skills in addressing challenges within institutions”.

Table 4. Mean and standard deviations for perceived skills developed after the training course

<i>Specific items</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Developed skills in addressing challenges within institutions	4.00	.95
Sharpening academic skills as an academic leader	4.02	.96
Having more skills and strategies in developing personal leadership styles	4.18	.80
Perceived skills in engaging colleagues to develop and achieve academic vision within institution/faculty	4.08	.85

2.3. Results from the open-ended questions and participants' self-reports (motivation, reflections, satisfaction and reported impact)

2.3.1 Motivation to join the YAL blended training

Participants were also asked about their motivations to join the training program (data obtained from the registration forms of the LEAD2 training program). Answers were variate; However, three main motivations were identified: to improve my management skill, to develop one's own career pathway, to gain leadership knowledge. Below some responses that illustrate these motivations.

Learn to understand the basic qualities and competencies of the young academic leaders, to understand the challenges of young academic leaders and new and innovative coping strategies, and be able to develop initial personal development pathways and development strategies. (37, female)

The main motivation for participating in this young academic leadership training programme is to improve my management skills as a postgraduate supervisor (36, male)

I hope to enhance my knowledge and skills through the training by improving my abilities in four main areas: self-awareness, management skills, practice and leadership. (36, female)

To enhance academic leadership, particularly curriculum leadership and management leadership. (33, female)

After being as a student and in ideological and political education, I came back to the professional team of education, but I feel that my professional knowledge is a bit weak, and I am currently a doctoral student in the academic department. In order to develop and improve academic skills, I would like to receive guidance in the training programme and find my own development path. (40, female)

As the Deputy Director of the International Department, I would like to learn about the leadership to help me do my job better; I have recently applied for a project in the area of information technology leadership for teachers and would like to learn more about leadership in a more systematic way (30, male)

2.3.2 Reflections, satisfaction and perceived impact of the YAL training

Participants' reflections of the YAL blended training & learning achievements

Participants were asked to report their reflections of the YAL blended training & learning achievements on improving their own leadership practices after the training program. The reported uniqueness and key achievements include 'the uniqueness of leadership development and academic networking', 'the achievement in personal growth', 'the connections between theories and practices', 'peer learning and contextualized professional development'. Some answers that illustrate these perspectives are shown below.

.....One of the outstanding advantages of the LEAD2 project in my opinion is grouping all the participants into several smaller groups and giving everyone a chance to speak and express. This has supported us to concentrate on the learning content, have sufficient group communications, and summary reporting. During the two-month of the YAL program, I participated in the whole process, actively spoke, and played multiple roles such as group leader, spokesperson, and note taker. This collaboration form has helped me to practice my ability of expression, communication and summarization. (the uniqueness of leadership development and academic networking) (26, male)

I have learned and gained a lot during this YAL training program. On the one hand, I got to know many young lecturers from colleges and universities all over the country through the training course, and the exchange of ideas and exchanges with them made me deeply feel that I have insufficient understanding on the issue of youth academic leadership. Especially with regard to the cognition and recognition of the identity of academic leaders, the experience sharing and exchange of opinions of many colleagues, especially several outstanding young lecturers of Tongji University, gave me a lot of tips during the training class: The conscious training of young academic leaders is a Necessary, because only consciously cultivated, it is possible to develop leadership literacy in a targeted manner from the beginning, not just an accidental phenomenon of individual ability development. (Academic networking, peer learning and contextualized professional development) (33, female)

It was a great honor to participate in the Young Academic Leadership Training Program and to take part in throughout the program as a group facilitator. This program turned out to be very impactful in many ways, allowing me to understand for the first time the differences between the academic research models in China and Europe, and also to meet many academic partners, which will be an exceptionally valuable asset in my future academic path. (The connections between theories and practices) (26, female)

One word I would like to use is "growth". I would like to share my personal academic leadership development and growth in terms of the three sections of each course: regarding knowledge section, through the online platform course, I have gained a deeper understanding of academic leadership, academic leadership theory, leadership styles, young academic leadership, globalization and internationalization, internationalization of leadership and virtual internationalization, and comparison of Chinese and foreign academic leadership; in terms of the links section, through the links section, my understanding of academic leadership and how to improve it was enriched by the knowledge sharing of professors and scholars from Chinese and foreign universities, and the links generated by the intense group discussions with the group teachers; in terms of the application section, after each session, I applied what I had learned to my actual study and working life, and constantly reflected and improved that. After the training I received from the LEAD2 project, I have gone from being a timid student to being able to speak my mind, talk freely with the teachers and leaders of the university, and to integrate the leadership knowledge I have learnt into my life. (The achievement in personal growth) (26, female)

The LEAD2 training program introduced me for the first time to the concept of academic leadership and the stories of many scholars who developed or demonstrated their academic leadership. In the speeches of many academic leaders, I perceived that interdisciplinary study experiences and different levels of academic leadership experiences are the "resources" and assets for them to become senior academic leaders, and that academics are the prerequisites for them to be recognized by their peers and supported by their colleagues as academic leaders (The connections between theories and practices).

According to their experience, shifting the focus of academic research to the applied and integrated academic field, i.e., the field that combines academic and practical management, is one of the paths to achieve academic development and leadership improvement at the same time. Certainly, I was more exposed to young academic leaders in the course of the LEAD2 program. They were either new to the workforce, facing the demands and challenges of academic publication, assessment, teaching, and time management, or current master's and doctoral students who will be entering the academic path in the near future. Interacting with them made me feel like I found a sense of belonging because I was facing the same challenges as they were, and some of the dilemmas that new faculty I was happy to learn from their experiences, as I faced the same challenges as they did. Some of the dilemmas faced by the new faculty members were able to provide me with the experience or inspiration. (The achievement in personal growth)

More importantly, the connections that the young academic leaders made with each other were a support to each other and gave us more motivation to continue on our academic path. (Peer learning and contextualized professional development) (26, female)

Participants' satisfaction with the YAL blended training

Participants were asked about their satisfaction with the training program. The satisfaction includes aspects such as the 'blended training format', 'the interactive nature of the blended training', 'the rich content and the exchanges from the experts and participants. Some answers that illustrate this perspective are shown below.

It was a great honour for me to attend this training, where I learnt not only the theoretical knowledge of university governance and academic leadership, but also gained a lot of experience and skills in conducting academic research and applying for projects. Thanks to the LEAD2 project team for providing us with a valuable online learning platform and offline networking opportunities. (Blended training format) (31, female)

I think this project has one of the biggest characteristics, which is different from other MOOCs I have participated in. The LEAD2 YAL program combines live online lectures with the Canvas platform, classroom learning, after-class review, practices and assessments. The YAL program also has a very user-friendly discussion section on the platform, which provided a way for those who speak less in the live lectures to express themselves on the MOOC platform. Such a setting is very novel and practical. This interactive learning also has made me look forward to our live lectures every Monday during the whole process. (The interactive nature of the blended training) (26, male)

The first excellence is regarding the system set up for online teaching and exchanges sessions. Based on my previous online learning experience, online courses are often prone to insufficient flexibility and low participant motivation. However, each lecture of the LEAD2 YAL training program has arranged a group discussion session to mobilize the enthusiasm of all participants. The program has also designed functions such as group note taker, group coordinator, group speaker, and group leader according to the personal characteristics of each member. The entire virtual organization of the training program is organized very well and allows us to feel the excellent planning of the YAL program and the competences of all project coordinators. In my view, all training participants who joined the YAL program highly appreciated the organization of the training and the quality of the courses. The participants highly commented that: every discussion session is an exchange and collision of ideas, an excellent combination of theories and practices, with a lot of learning gains. The meaningfulness and effectiveness of the YAL training program is tremendous and far-reaching. (The interactive nature of the blended training) (24, female)

The LEA2 project and the YAL training program not only allowed me to get to know some lovely classmates and peers from other universities and institutions, but also supported us to established a deep friendship with the friends of our own institution through the exchange of the training courses and activities. Every member actively learns, communicates, exchanges and talks with each other, making these two months of learning and sharing much more happier and vivid! (The interactive nature of the blended training) (25, female)

Through the exchanges of each course, I have a deeper understanding of higher education, such as some promotion mechanisms in colleges and universities, the challenges and pressures faced by young teachers, and some very detailed assessment standards in the promotion or exit systems, which I did not have the knowledge before. On the one hand, these exchanges helped me understand the academic ecology of universities and deepened my understanding of the higher education sector. On the other hand, it also helped me understand what issues young scholars in universities are concerned about. This is a great learning gain for me, especially the benefits from the two offline exchange sessions. What impressed me most was that a professor at the Kunming exchange session who talked about the international communication of education. I suddenly felt that a new door was opened. I suddenly realised that my major learned at university has a great cohesion with education. (The rich content and the exchanges from the experts and participants) (25, female)

I personally feel that the learning effect of the YAL program is better than the previous online training I experienced. Why the YAL program has a better effect? The reason lies in the well-designed and well-organized management of the training program. Each learning theme and content, the design of the group discussion topics, and the consistence of the organization have brought the effectiveness.The organizers' care and dedication have brought a lot of positive influence and effect for all training participants. This experience also gave us some enlightenment and insights on how to improve the effectiveness of online training. It is not enough to simply do a good job in the design of teaching and training, integrating actively real-time communication and interactions in the training, and give clear feedback on the teaching and training content is very important, especially the one-on-one coaching sessions. These elements conveyed positive influence on the training participants. (The rich content and the exchanges from the experts and participants) (27, male)

Participants' reported impact of the YAL blended training

Participants were asked to report their perceived impact on them after the training program. The perceived impact includes for example 'increased knowledge and understanding of academic leadership', 'enhanced competences', 'broadened vision' and 'strengthened academic networks'. Some answers that illustrate the impact are shown below.

I especially have a clear definition of the core competence and literacy required by the learning theme, that is, "Youth Academic Leadership". After all, conceptual ambiguity is the main reason why academic leadership growth cannot be consciously and spontaneously undertaken in the first place. After clearly defining such a problem, I have a full understanding of the core growth points and necessary qualities of self-growth, and my future growth and development will be more targeted. This has also raised a level in my cognition. (Increased knowledge and understanding of academic leadership)

I used to be busy with specific development goals at the scientific research and teaching level, and the goal of "academic leader" gave me the opportunity to jump out of the perspective of ordinary young instructors and let me I took it to a higher level to think about my entire career path. (Broadened vision) (33, female)

I have deepened my understanding of leadership theories and styles and academic leadership qualities and competencies at the theoretical and methodological level. By studying the strengths and limitations of many different theories and styles, I have gained a fuller and more comprehensive grasp of leadership. Often my understanding of things and phenomena can be at the paranoid end of the spectrum due to the limitations of my mind and senses. During my doctoral training, I have also experienced a shift from an obsession with a particular theory or approach to a coherent understanding of multiple theories or approaches. Therefore, another reward of attending this LEAD2 training course is the extension and broadening of my knowledge system and the development of a growth mindset. (Increased knowledge and understanding of academic leadership) (31, female)

I have also given myself three goals for my future academic leadership development: first, to get down to business and do good academic research to enhance my core competencies. One of the important components of academic leadership is academic competence, so this is my most important goal at this stage. Secondly, I will continue to be open and willing to learn and communicate, participate in more academic activities and international exchanges, seek experience from the seniors, and build my own academic team. Thirdly, whether in my current capacity as a student or in my future capacity as a teacher in a university, I will make the connection between theory

and practice to facilitate the growth of my personal academic leadership. (Enhanced competences) (26, female)

I have gained the sharing of national and international experiences on young academic leadership, which has provided me with useful references for my next practice. I remember that a professor from London Business School once shared with me that he preferred the term "time leadership" to "time management", the main difference between the two is that management is about doing things right, whereas leadership is about choosing to do the right thing. I think looking back on the two months of LEAD2 training, each session has been filled with senior academics sharing their valuable experience, which has provided us young academics with a guide to action on how to better coordinate and balance life and work and other challenges from the environment and develop academic leadership. (Enhanced competences) (31, female)

The LEAD2 project gave me the opportunity to meet and know a lot of scholars and a valuable opportunity to learn from everyone and reflect on myself. This program not only gave me knowledge and expanded my academic network, but also gave me insight into the operation of European academic projects, and I saw what I should continue to learn inspired by the LEAD2 project. Once again, I would like to thank the LEAD2 project for offering me the opportunity to participate and contribute in the program. I wish the LEAD2 project a good success! (Strengthened academic networks) (26, female)

III. CONCLUSION

Taken together, the results based on close-ended questions and open-ended questions showed that the first blended training program addressed to young academic leaders was remarkable satisfactory in terms of its overall quality, contribution to the knowledge, skills developed, and the degree of fulfilling the expectations.

The findings based on close-ended questions showed high satisfaction with the training course perceived by participants. A majority of the respondents very or extremely agreed to introduce the course to their colleagues. In terms of quality of the course content, participants highly agreed that the course content effectively challenged them to think which indicates high quality of the course content. In addition, most of the participants reported that the course assignments were interesting and stimulating and the training topics were up-to-date with the developments in the field.

Concerning perceived knowledge obtained after the training course, most of the respondents very or extremely agreed that the course helped them to better understand old and new challenges for higher education in different contexts as well as gain better knowledge of challenges that academic are facing. A majority of the respondents reported that the course

equipped them with knowledge of awareness of the roles of leaders for educational innovation and internationalization. As for perceived skills, a substantial majority of attendees showed a high level of skills developed. To be more specific, the course significantly helped participants to enhance skills in addressing the challenges within the institution, sharpen academic leadership skills, have more skills and strategies in developing personal leadership styles. Most of the participants expressed a high level of being confident towards engagement with colleagues to achieve academic visions.

Responses given to the open-ended questions also indicated quite parallel results with the quantitative evaluations by yielding the results of improved knowledge and understanding and opportunities provided for exchange and collaboration. Shared by participants, the blended training course is unique in the way that it covers interesting topics on university governance and academic leadership development. The training program provided rich content and exchanges from the experts and participants. In addition, the course contributed to broadening academic networks across academic institutions. Overall, it has significant impacts on learners' personal growth and professional development.

One added value of this blended training program were networking activities provided to the participants. Another added value of this blended training program was the establishment of the class leadership mechanism which included class assistant, group leaders, recorders, speakers, etc. By doing so, participants had the opportunities to practice different leadership roles.

To conclude, the evaluation report serves as a means for internal monitoring of the quality for the implementation of the LEAD2 project. Recommendations and suggestions from the participants are essential indicators for taking into consideration for further improvement. The measures are crucial for ensuring proper quality implementation and enhancing the impact of the LEAD2 project.