

# Analysis of the Impact of Leadership on Teachers' Internal Motivation in Minority Areas in the Background of Digitalization

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**Abstract:** Against the backdrop of the deep interweaving of educational digital transformation and ethnic cultural diversity, stimulating the internal motivation of university teachers in minority areas has become a key factor in promoting teachers' professional development and high-quality educational development. Focusing on universities in Guizhou's minority areas, this paper constructs a multi-level analytical framework of "macro-medium-micro" to deeply explore the impact path of educational leadership on teachers' internal motivation in the digital context. The study points out that context-sensitive leadership can activate teachers' intrinsic motivation in digital reform through practices at different levels, prompting teachers to transform from passive recipients to active agents. This provides ideas for understanding and promoting the internal driving force of teachers' professional development under the role of educational leadership.

**Keywords:** Minority areas; Digital background; Educational leadership; University teachers; Internal motivation

**Online publication:** September 9, 2025

## 1. Introduction

With the rapid advancement of the digital age, promoting educational modernization through educational informatization and leading the high-quality development of education and teaching is a strategic development path for educational modernization<sup>[1]</sup>. As a cradle of talent cultivation and an inheritor of culture, universities' quality and level of digital educational development are determined by teachers' internal motivation—that is, teachers' willingness and ability to actively participate in professional development and engage in educational reform based on intrinsic motivation. However, universities in Guizhou's minority areas face difficulties in tapping and developing teachers' internal motivation due to inadequate digital infrastructure, obvious gaps in university teachers' digital literacy, and challenges in integrating excellent ethnic traditional culture with digital education. In view of this, the author explores the influence channels of teachers' internal motivation in the digital context from the perspective of leadership, aiming to provide references for addressing issues such as the lack of internal

motivation for the professional development of university teachers in minority areas and realizing the coordinated development of digitalization and ethnic culture <sup>[2]</sup>.

## **2. Interpretation of the connotation of leadership on teachers' internal motivation in minority areas in the background of digitalization**

### **2.1. Educational implications of digitalization in minority areas**

The informatization in ethnic minority areas within university campuses is a concept that does not rely on technology alone, but requires the synchronous development of digital thinking, university education and teaching, and ethnic minority cultures <sup>[3]</sup>. From an educational perspective, it includes, on the one hand, the development of digital classroom environments in university campuses in ethnic minority areas—namely, online teaching platforms and information-based learning classrooms tailored to the teaching characteristics of universities in these areas. On the other hand, it encompasses the development of digital educational materials incorporating ethnic minority cultural elements, such as the construction of digital resources for subject content with ethnic characteristics based on teachers and students in universities of ethnic minority areas, so as to form curriculum resource packages that embody both the educational content of universities in ethnic minority areas and contemporary educational connotations. Additionally, it involves the development of digital educational thinking in ethnic minority areas, which refers to the development of information-based teaching methods and new educational concepts by teachers in university campuses of these areas, aiming to organically integrate the teaching of ethnic minority cultures with the digitalization of university education in ethnic minority areas <sup>[4]</sup>.

### **2.2. Core orientation of teachers' internal motivation**

Intrinsic motivation refers to an active subjective behavior of teachers who, driven by internal interests, consciously explore and possess a high level of growth motivation and ability to achieve their independent professional development. In the digital environment, university teachers are no longer passively implementing reform plans; instead, they combine their own teaching practices with the realities of ethnic cultural teaching to strive for exploring new forms of digital teaching—for example, integrating their own ethnic cultural stories into classroom teaching through digital means. University teachers maintain the persistence and determination to continuously promote their personal professional development, take digital teaching reform as an opportunity to reflect on their practices, and optimize their teaching methods. While constantly strengthening their own digital teaching capabilities, they also comprehensively improve their professional competence, thereby playing their positive role and initiative in educational reform as well as in the cause of inheritance and development of ethnic cultures <sup>[5]</sup>.

## **3. The influence path of educational leadership on teachers' intrinsic motivation under a multi-level framework**

### **3.1. Macro level: Motivation foundation under policy guidance and resource coordination**

Educational leadership at the macro level, such as that of university leaders and education authorities, is primarily administered from the perspective of educational administrative departments, and its main role is to provide a premise for the exertion of university teachers' intrinsic motivation. Firstly, regarding the digital education policies formulated by the state, on the basis of respecting the particularities of universities in ethnic minority areas, further

concretization should be carried out to fully elaborate on the intentions of national and local policies, rather than mechanically adhering to the textual requirements. By considering the characteristics of universities and clarifying the positioning of reform, teachers can clearly understand the relationship between the current digital reform of universities and individuals, schools, and ethnic cultures, thereby alleviating teachers' confusion about digital reform and forming an internal driving force for teachers' reform. Secondly, educational leadership at the macro level is also reflected in the coordination of digital resources. Due to the impact of the geographical environment, digital educational resources vary greatly among different regions and universities in ethnic minority areas. Educational leadership at the macro level is mainly manifested in coordinating resources. On the basis of unified standards, it can more effectively promote the construction of digital resource libraries covering teaching, scientific research, cultural inheritance, and other aspects in universities in ethnic minority areas. For example, establishing digital resource libraries of ethnic cultural resources to provide a foundation for teachers in universities in ethnic minority areas to develop digital curriculum resources; introducing technical resources and building stable and easy-to-use digital teaching platforms to reduce the technical threshold for teachers to use digital tools <sup>[6]</sup>.

### **3.2. Meso level: Motivation activation under organizational support and cultural cultivation**

Educational leadership at the meso level, with department heads as the core, further activates teachers' intrinsic motivation through organizational promotion and cultural construction <sup>[7]</sup>. Firstly, organizational guarantee. Departments are the direct responsible units for teachers' teaching and scientific research. In terms of organizational guarantee, it is necessary to provide all-around support for teachers in accordance with the requirements of digital reform. From the perspective of working hours, optimize teaching plans and work task distribution, and provide teachers with sufficient time for digital teaching training, curriculum research and development plans, and spare time, so that teachers can complete digital teaching training within the allowable scope of work progress and pressure, and reduce teachers' psychological resistance to digital transformation. From the perspective of teacher development, build digital teaching exchange platforms, organize teachers to carry out digital teaching seminars and experience reports, and provide opportunities for teachers to learn and make progress through cooperation. From the perspective of incentive mechanisms, incorporate teachers' digital teaching reform practices into teacher performance evaluations, and provide corresponding rewards and feedback, so that teachers can recognize that their reform efforts are good and valuable, and enhance their sense of happiness and enthusiasm for digital teaching. Secondly, in terms of cultural construction, meso-level leadership fosters a departmental culture that is inclusive, innovative, and integrated with ethnic cultural characteristics. On the one hand, it supports teachers' attempts in digital teaching, tolerates reform failures, allows teachers to break free from the constraints of traditional teaching models, and explores new attempts and methods of integrating digital technology with ethnic cultural teaching. On the other hand, it organizes ethnic culture-themed activities, such as exhibitions of digital teaching cases of ethnic culture and seminars on the integration of ethnic culture and digital technology, to enhance teachers' awareness of ethnic culture and make them understand their responsibilities in ethnic cultural inheritance. Only then will teachers consciously or unconsciously integrate ethnic culture into the development and application of digital teaching resources, enabling them to have initiative derived from the responsibility of cultural inheritance, thus transforming teachers' passive "being asked to reform" into active "wanting to reform" <sup>[8]</sup>.

### **3.3. Micro level: Deepening momentum through individual empowerment and motivation stimulation**

Educational leadership at the micro level mainly refers to teaching and research section directors, discipline leaders, and core teachers, focusing on in-depth efforts to specifically empower individual teachers and stimulate their intrinsic motivation. In terms of individual empowerment, educational leaders should pay attention to the differences among teachers and provide targeted guidance. For teachers with relatively weak digital literacy, one-on-one training should be conducted on the popularization of digital technologies and the use of digital platforms for teaching resources, enabling them to become familiar with digital teaching tools through gradual practice and eliminate their fear of using digital technologies. For teachers with a certain foundation in digital literacy, they should be guided to explore more in-depth digital teaching models, such as blended learning and project-based learning in ethnic traditional culture courses, and encouraged to participate in the in-depth development of digital teaching resources to improve their innovative capabilities in digital teaching. In terms of motivation stimulation, micro-level leadership focuses on exploring teachers' intrinsic needs and satisfying their needs for self-actualization and social recognition. On the one hand, platforms should be built for teachers to showcase their digital teaching achievements—for example, organizing teachers to conduct open digital teaching classes and recommending them to participate in various levels of digital teaching competitions, so that their teaching innovation achievements can be displayed and recognized, helping them gain professional fulfillment. On the other hand, attention should be paid to teachers' emotional needs: maintaining regular communication with them, understanding the difficulties and confusions they encounter in participating in digital reform, and providing timely emotional support and encouragement to make them feel understood and cared for. When teachers' intrinsic needs are met, their motivation to participate in digital reform and promote their own professional growth will continue to strengthen, and their intrinsic motivation will be further deepened through continuous positive feedback, prompting them to invest in digital teaching reform and professional development for a long time and proactively.

## **4. Practical key points for educational leadership to stimulate teachers' internal momentum**

### **4.1. Adhere to a teacher-centered value orientation**

Against the backdrop of digitalization in colleges and universities in ethnic minority areas, educational leadership needs to translate the teacher-centered value orientation into concrete actions and stimulate intrinsic motivation from three aspects: demand response, rights protection, and value recognition.

In terms of demand response, it is necessary to establish a regular research mechanism to accurately address the differentiated needs of different teachers through interviews, questionnaires, and other forms. For young teachers' needs to learn cutting-edge technologies, customized training should be offered in collaboration with technical departments; for senior teachers' fear of technology, "one-on-one" assistance and experience sharing should be arranged to alleviate their anxiety, make them feel cared for, and stimulate their willingness to participate.

In terms of rights protection, the "management mindset" should be abandoned, and a system of teachers' professional autonomy should be implemented. Teachers have autonomy in curriculum: they can select applicable educational technology tools and strategies on their own; autonomy in resources: they can create micro-courses, instructional videos, etc., based on the traditional cultures of ethnic minorities in their regions, and receive corresponding financial and resource support; autonomy in assessment: diversified assessment criteria

should be adopted, incorporating tentative innovations and student evaluations, adhering to the principle of non-quantification, thus transforming the situation from “teachers having no choice but to comply” to “teachers taking the initiative.”

In terms of value recognition, a comprehensive system should be built. Spiritually, titles such as “Star of Digital Teaching Innovation” should be established, and achievement shows should be held; materially, digital achievements should be linked to assessments and professional titles, with performance bonus points and funding inclinations provided, and typical teacher cases should be publicized to enhance their sense of professional honor and sustained motivation.

## **4.2. Emphasizing the synergistic integration of ethnic culture and digitalization**

Relying on the heritage of ethnic minority cultures, educational leadership needs to transform cultural identity into teachers’ intrinsic motivation through cultural guidance, carrier innovation, and achievement transformation.

In terms of cultural guidance, exchange platforms should be built to carry out activities such as ethnic culture studies, expert lectures, and intangible cultural heritage exhibitions. A “Teaching and Research Section for the Digital Inheritance of Ethnic Cultures” should be established to help teachers recognize their dual roles as both knowledge imparters and cultural inheritors, and proactively integrate ethnic culture into digital teaching.

In terms of carrier innovation, resources should be integrated to build practice bases, guiding the exploration of “culture + technology” paths. Funding should be provided to establish virtual resource libraries of ethnic cultures, transforming items such as Miao silver ornaments and Dong Grand Choirs into 3D models and VR courses. The use of information technology to implement immersive teaching—such as virtual village experiences and online ethnic culture projects—should be advocated to provide teachers with more creative ideas and enhance their sense of gain.

In terms of achievement transformation, a “teaching-research-social service” mechanism should be established. Excellent digital resources should be promoted in teaching; in research, teachers should be supported to summarize their achievements for project applications and paper publications; at the social service level, resources should be promoted to local communities or teachers should be encouraged to participate in digital cultural and tourism projects, enabling them to feel the social value of their work and strengthen their intrinsic motivation.

## **4.3. Constructing a dynamically adjustable leadership practice mechanism**

In response to the iteration of digital technologies and changes in teachers’ motivation, it is necessary to build a dynamically adjustable mechanism through monitoring and evaluation, feedback and optimization, and collaborative linkage.

For process evaluation, hierarchical evaluation criteria should be established, with the leadership level (system implementation, support intensity), teacher level (recognition, enthusiasm), and functional performance (level, effectiveness) as the evaluation subjects. A combination of qualitative and quantitative analysis methods should be adopted for hierarchical and process-based evaluation to identify problems in a timely manner.

Feedback and optimization require a rapid response. For common problems (such as complex platform operations), technical departments should be collaborated with to upgrade systems or increase training; for individual problems (such as low enthusiasm for resource development in departments), targeted assistance should be provided. At the same time, teachers should be invited to participate in strategy adjustments to enhance their

recognition.

In terms of collaboration, an internal coordination mechanism should be established among the university, schools (colleges), teaching and research sections, and technical/academic affairs departments with clear responsibilities. Externally, collaboration should also be carried out with peer universities, research institutes, enterprises, and public institutions to learn advanced practices and invite experts to participate in diagnosis. Such coordinated efforts ensure that leadership practices are suitable for the university's actual situation and development needs, and continuously release momentum.

## 5. Conclusion

In the development of digital education in colleges and universities in ethnic minority areas, it is necessary to tap teachers' internal motivation through educational leadership. Through the "top-middle-bottom" three-level leadership operation, from cultivating the foundation and stimulating motivation to nurturing internal motivation, teachers can be gradually developed into active agents of digital transformation reform. This is not only a context-sensitive leadership model based on ethnic minority areas, but also a leadership model that conforms to the development of digital education. It provides a feasible practice for improving the internal motivation of teachers' professional development in the digital transformation of colleges and universities in ethnic minority areas.

## Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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