A Theoretical Analysis of the Relationship Between University Teachers' Positive Leadership and Students' Learning Engagement in Guizhou Province

Zhiyuan Yang*, Aimi Binti Anuar

Management and Science University, Shah Alam 40100, Malaysia
*Author to whom correspondence should be addressed.

Abstract: *Student learning engagement is a key area in higher education quality research, particularly within private universities. In these institutions, the level of student engagement significantly influences both institutional development and the quality of talent cultivation. As important contributors to national human capital, private universities graduate large numbers of students each year. Enhancing the learning engagement of education majors in these institutions is essential to fostering their comprehensive growth and personal development. Moreover, improving student engagement can elevate the overall quality of talent training and institutional performance. Focusing on this issue thus contributes meaningfully to the high-quality development of China's higher education system by supporting a stronger reserve of qualified professionals.*

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1. Introduction

Against the backdrop of China's strategic goal of achieving high-quality development in higher education, student learning engagement has emerged as a critical indicator of educational effectiveness and teaching outcomes. In Guizhou Province, local universities face specific challenges shaped by regional economic development, educational resource allocation, and cultural context. These challenges manifest in low student motivation, shallow engagement, and weak learning persistence. Traditional teaching and management models have proven inadequate in stimulating students' intrinsic motivation, highlighting the urgent need to reform teacher roles to meet new demands.

Positive leadership among university teachers emphasizes non-authoritative influence, leveraging value guidance, emotional connection, and instructional innovation to unlock student potential and foster deeper learning engagement.

2. The Relationship Between Positive Leadership and Student Learning Engagement

2.1 Meeting Students' Educational Needs

Faculty involved in lifelong education in universities play an essential role in addressing students' ideological and emotional concerns. By investigating the psychological status and value orientations of both students and community members, educators can provide timely and relevant ideological guidance. Enhancing the capabilities of these faculty members also helps modernize ideological and political education, allowing it to align more closely with students' cognitive rhythms. Leveraging platforms such as TikTok, WeChat, and Weibo, educators can communicate in students' preferred formats, improving the receptiveness and effectiveness of ideological education.

2.2 Stimulating Educational Vitality

Promoting reforms in education models, institutional structures, and governance mechanisms is key to breaking through systemic barriers and outdated mindsets that hinder quality improvement. In implementing the national strategy to strengthen education, it is essential to enhance fairness and diversity in educational opportunities—especially in underdeveloped areas—and to ensure broad access to quality resources. Educational evaluation plays a foundational role in ensuring strategic alignment, and optimization of assessment systems—rooted in China's national context and involving multiple stakeholders—is needed to advance high-quality educational development.

3. Major Challenges in Student Learning Engagement

3.1 Improper Use of Digital Technologies

Many students have only limited engagement with smart classrooms and digital libraries, often struggling to use these technologies proficiently. Some avoid online discussion forums, resulting in difficulty navigating complex or integrative tasks, frequent errors, and reduced learning motivation. Students tend to use only basic functions, failing to take advantage of data analytics and collaborative tools. This fragmented use of technology leads to disjointed knowledge construction and a disconnect between digital tools and learning objectives.

3.2 Weak Information Literacy

In the digital era, students often struggle to distinguish reliable from misleading information. Without adequate critical thinking or cross-verification skills, they may be easily influenced by unverified or emotionally charged content. Lacking the ability to evaluate source credibility, students may follow online trends blindly, leading to cognitive biases and erroneous judgments.

3.3 Low Participation Motivation

Student participation is essential for high-quality teaching, yet many students show passive engagement in learning activities. Some students undervalue the importance of education in their future development, resulting in disengagement. Others lack effective study methods or the ability to adapt to interdisciplinary learning. The absence of robust incentive and evaluation mechanisms further reduces their motivation and sense of purpose in participating in educational tasks.

4. Strategies for Enhancing Student Learning Engagement Through Teacher Leadership

4.1 Establishing a Multi-directional Communication Network

A vertical structure should connect leadership across university, department, and faculty levels with students, while allowing for cross-level communication and feedback. This structure ensures that grassroots voices are heard by upper management and that decision-making reflects both top-level strategy and on-the-ground realities. Horizontally, communication and collaboration among peer leaders at each level—such as department heads and faculty—should be strengthened to maintain cohesion and shared vision across the institution.

4.2 Building a Systematic Teacher Training Framework

To enhance digital competencies among faculty, a tiered and systematic training approach is essential. New teachers should receive foundational training in digital tools, while experienced teachers should be supported in course design and assessment innovation. Senior faculty can be trained in digital leadership and emerging pedagogies. A blended format—combining online resources with offline workshops and peer observation—should be adopted. Trainer development should focus on integrating pedagogical expertise with technical fluency, ensuring practical relevance and long-term digital literacy development.

4.3 Implementing a Mentorship-based "Master-Apprentice" System

Mentorship programs that pair experienced teachers with early-career faculty are key to building a high-quality teaching force. These systems support professional growth through co-teaching, joint research, and collaborative student evaluation. New teachers should participate in structured activities such as lesson observations, syllabus reviews, and reflective practice. Shared responsibilities in grading and teaching strategy adjustments foster pedagogical awareness and help meet diverse student needs.

4.4 Establishing Sustainable Learning Mechanisms

Teachers should design semester-long learning plans focused on current social issues, aligning with ideological and theoretical course objectives. For example, October themes may explore patriotism through National Day discussions, while May may focus on labor rights and social equity. Activities such as field research or volunteer service can reinforce students' understanding of these topics and link theoretical knowledge to real-world practice, thus forming a complete learning-practice cycle.

4.5 Creating a Framework for Personalized Psychological Growth

A comprehensive campus mental health system should include professional counseling services, dedicated courses on mental wellness, and mechanisms for crisis intervention. Lectures and workshops can help improve students' emotional regulation and stress management. Mental health education should be embedded in both core and elective curricula, covering interpersonal skills, emotional literacy, and career planning. Counselors and teachers should maintain routine communication with students, and intervene early when psychological concerns arise, offering timely professional support.

4.6 Enhancing Teachers' Reflective Practices

University teachers must guide students to engage in autonomous learning by linking learning goals with appropriate resources and strategies. This process cultivates problem-solving skills, innovation, and lifelong learning habits. In early childhood education programs, for example, student-teachers must build self-directed learning capacities through clear objectives, effective strategies, access to diverse resources, and frequent success reinforcement. Teachers, in turn, need advanced reflective capabilities to support this growth and continuously refine their instructional approaches.

5. Conclusion

Positive teacher leadership serves as a powerful lever for enhancing the quality of higher education. When teachers act as value mentors, emotional supporters, and instructional innovators, they significantly improve students' engagement across behavioral, emotional, and cognitive dimensions. Addressing current challenges requires multi-dimensional strategies and the cultivation of a collaborative educational ecosystem. Future research may further examine the differential impacts of teacher leadership across disciplines and institutional types, as well as explore localized practices tailored to the development of higher education in Western China.

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