

CURRENT SITUATION AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES OF TEACHER MANAGEMENT AND TEACHER TEAM BUILDING IN BORDERLAND UNIVERSITIES - A CASE STUDY OF YUNNAN WENSHAN UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the current situation and optimization paths of teacher management and faculty team building in Chinese borderland universities, taking Yunnan Wenshan University as a typical case. Guided by the Push-Pull Theory, Resource Curse Theory, and Ethnic Education Theory, a unique "Geography- Policy- Culture" three-dimensional conceptual framework for borderland universities was constructed. A mixed-methods approach was adopted, including a questionnaire survey of 250 valid samples and in-depth interviews with 5 key informants, to systematically analyze the core challenges of faculty construction in the case university. The results show that Wenshan University's faculty team construction is at a moderate level, with three prominent problems: unbalanced faculty structure, general talent retention intention, and inadequate adaptability of management mechanisms. Hierarchical and operable optimization suggestions are put forward from the policy, institutional and individual levels to tackle these challenges. This study enriches the theoretical paradigm of faculty management in Chinese borderland universities and provides practical references for similar institutions in ethnic border areas to optimize teacher team building and enhance regional service capabilities.

Keywords: Borderland Universities; Faculty Team Building; Teacher Management;

INTRODUCTION

Borderland universities are core carriers of regional talent cultivation, scientific research, and social services in China, undertaking the dual missions of promoting local economic and social development and consolidating border stability. As an important part of China's higher education system, they play an irreplaceable role in bridging urban and rural development gaps and promoting ethnic integration. Located in southwest China, Yunnan Province is a key gateway for China's opening-up to South Asia and Southeast Asia, and its borderland universities are tasked with cultivating compound talents rooted in border areas and promoting cross-border educational and cultural cooperation (Akcaoglu & Arsal, 2024). However, influenced by remote geographical locations, weak local economic

foundations, and multi-ethnic cultural integration, Yunnan's borderland universities face unique challenges in teacher management and faculty team building, which restrict their high-quality development and regional service capacity.

Yunnan Wenshan University, located in the southeastern border of Yunnan (adjacent to Vietnam), is a typical representative of borderland universities with characteristics of border location, ethnic diversity, and underdevelopment. Its dilemmas in faculty construction, such as talent loss and structural imbalance, are highly representative of similar institutions in China's ethnic border areas. Existing research on university faculty management has mostly focused on the economically developed eastern regions or national key universities (Li & Cheng, 2021), with insufficient systematic and targeted research on borderland universities in ethnic minority areas. In view of this, this study takes Wenshan University as the research object, constructs a targeted analytical framework, and systematically analyzes the current situation, core challenges, and optimization strategies of its teacher management and faculty team building. The research not only has important theoretical significance for enriching the research on faculty management in borderland universities but also provides practical references for the high-quality development of borderland higher education in China and the implementation of national border revitalization strategies.

OBJECTIVE

1. To investigate the current level of teacher management and faculty team building in Yunnan Wenshan University, a typical Chinese borderland university, and clarify the core dilemmas and their formation mechanisms.
2. To propose hierarchical and operable optimization strategies for teacher management and faculty team building in Chinese borderland universities based on the case study, combining the unique characteristics of borderland areas.

METHODOLOGY

1. Participants and Sample

This study adopts an explanatory sequential mixed methods design, which combines quantitative and qualitative research to achieve complementary advantages and improve the depth and credibility of research results. The research population consists of 653 full-time teachers from 7 faculties of Yunnan Wenshan University (as of May 2025). Based on the Krejcie and Morgan Sample Size Table, 250 teachers were selected as the questionnaire sample via stratified random sampling (stratified by academic rank, disciplinary type, and age) to ensure the sample representativeness. For the qualitative phase of the study, 5 key informants were selected through purposive sampling, including department-level administrators, functional department directors, young faculty members under the age of 35, and leaders of characteristic disciplines, for in-depth one-on-one interviews.

2. Research Tools and Data Analysis

Research tools include a structured questionnaire and a semi-structured interview protocol. Based on the 'Geography-Policy-Culture' conceptual framework, the questionnaire was designed

with 6 dimensions and 48 items (5-point Likert scale), which measures the balance of faculty structure, talent retention intention, policy perception, cultural adaptation, academic support, and the adaptability of management mechanisms. The questionnaire passed reliability and validity tests (Cronbach's α coefficient of the overall questionnaire is 0.89, KMO=0.872, $p<0.001$), indicating good reliability and validity. The semi-structured interview protocol covers 5 core modules (career background, talent retention challenges, management mechanism perceptions, development suggestions, characteristic discipline-specific insights) with 18 key questions, to supplement and explain quantitative data.

Quantitative data were collected via online and paper-based questionnaires (recovery rate 94.8%, effective rate 97.7%), and analyzed using SPSS 26.0 for descriptive statistics, ANOVA, and correlation analysis. Qualitative data were collected through in-depth one-on-one interviews (45–70 minutes per session), and coded and analyzed using NVivo 12 based on grounded theory. The two types of data were integrated through a joint display table to realize cross-validation and complementarity.

RESULTS

1. Sample Demographic Characteristics

The 250 valid respondents reflect the typical structural characteristics of Wenshan University's faculty team, which is consistent with the overall situation of borderland universities in Yunnan Province (Yunnan Provincial Department of Education, 2023). The specific sample structure is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Sample Demographic Characteristics of Wenshan University Faculty

Dimension	Category	Proportion (%)
Gender	Male	64.80
	Female	35.20
Age	≤35 years old	29.60
	36-45 years old	38.80
	≥46 years old	31.60
Education	Doctoral Degree	13.20
	Master's Degree & Below	86.80
Academic Rank	Professor	11.20
	Associate Professor	42.40

	Lecturer & Below	46.40
Discipline	Traditional Basic Disciplines	54.80
	Emerging Applied Disciplines	45.20

It can be seen from Table 1 that the faculty team of Wenshan University has obvious structural characteristics: male teachers account for the majority; the age structure is slightly aging, with young teachers under 35 accounting for less than 30%; the proportion of doctoral degree holders is only 13.20%, far below Yunnan's provincial average of 25.0% (Yunnan Provincial Department of Education, 2023); the academic rank distribution presents a "middle large, two ends small" pattern, with professors accounting for only 11.20%; traditional basic disciplines account for more than half, while emerging applied disciplines related to regional development are relatively weak, which is not conducive to the school's service to local industrial upgrading.

2. Core Challenges of Faculty Team Building

Quantitative analysis shows that the overall level of faculty team building in Wenshan University is moderate (average score 2.912, SD=0.889), with three prominent core challenges, and the specific quantitative indicators are shown in Table 2. These challenges are consistent with the common problems faced by local universities in China in faculty construction (Yan, 2024), but have unique manifestations due to the borderland characteristics.

Table 2. Core Challenges of Faculty Team Building (Quantitative Indicators)

Core Challenge	Mean	SD	Key Performance
Unbalanced Faculty Structure	2.880	0.896	Low doctoral ratio, irrational discipline distribution, aging echelons; lack of backbone teachers in emerging applied disciplines
General Talent Retention Intention	2.920	0.921	High turnover risk of young teachers (72% of resigned teachers in 2023-2024 are under 35), 20%-30% lower remuneration than provincial capital universities (Hu & Yuan, 2021), limited development space

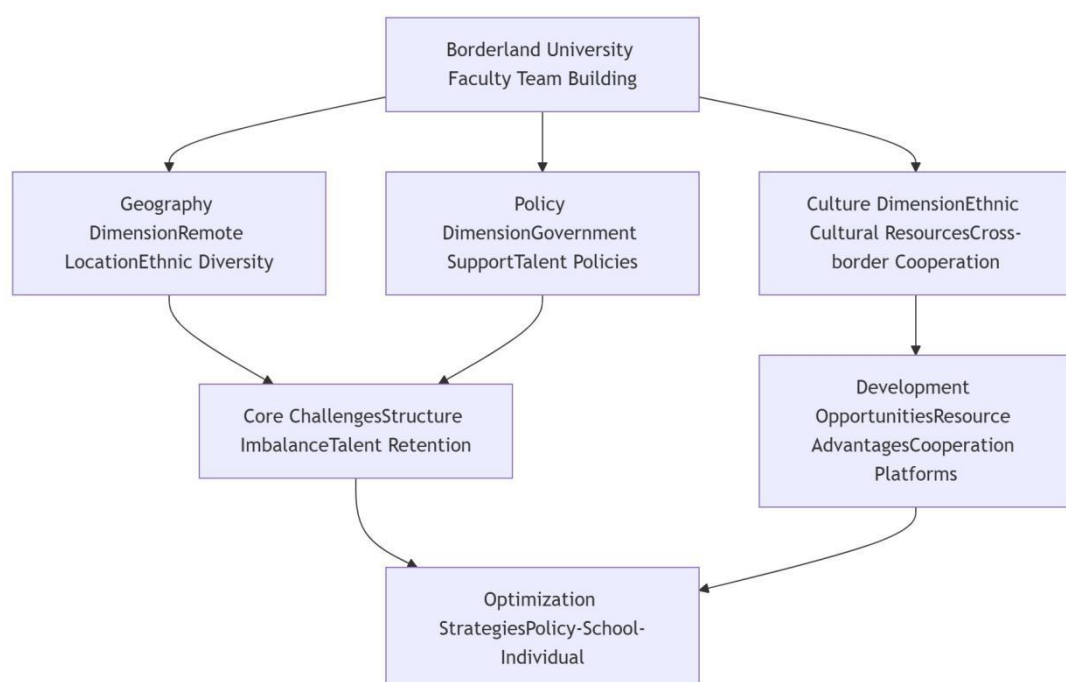
Inadequate Management Mechanism Adaptability	2.948	0.907	Utilitarian evaluation (60% weight on quantitative scientific research indicators), fragmented training, lagging digital management
Digital Management Efficiency	2.892	0.869	Disconnected management systems, heavy manual operations, low management efficiency

Among them, talent retention is the most prominent problem. According to the interview results, young teachers generally reflect that the low remuneration and insufficient scientific research support are the main reasons for their willingness to leave, which is consistent with the research conclusion on teacher loss in local universities (He & Lu, 2023). In addition, the utilitarian evaluation mechanism makes teachers focus on quantitative scientific research indicators, ignoring teaching quality and regional service contributions, which is not conducive to the long-term development of borderland universities.

To systematically analyze the research problems, this study constructs a "Geography- Policy- Culture" three-dimensional conceptual framework for faculty team building in borderland universities, guided by Push-Pull Theory, Resource Curse Theory, and Ethnic Education Theory. The framework clarifies the core factors affecting faculty construction in borderland universities and the interaction mechanism between them, as shown in Figure 1..

Figure 1

Geography-Policy-Culture Three-Dimensional Conceptual Framework for Faculty Team Building in Borderland Universities



CONCLUSION AND FUTURE WORK

1. Conclusion

This study takes Yunnan Wenshan University as a case to systematically analyze the current situation and core challenges of teacher management and faculty team building in Chinese borderland universities. The results show that the overall level of faculty team building in Wenshan University is moderate, with three prominent problems: unbalanced faculty structure, general talent retention intention, and inadequate adaptability of management mechanisms. The core cause of these issues is the failure to effectively integrate the unique geographical, policy, and cultural characteristics of borderland universities into teacher management practices, which results in the inability to translate the resource advantages of border areas into disciplinary competitiveness and talent attractiveness. This finding is consistent with existing research on regional educational resources and faculty team construction (Zhang & Xue, 2025).

To address these challenges, combined with the national education development strategy (Central Committee of the Communist Party of China & State Council, 2025) and the actual situation of borderland universities, hierarchical and operable optimization strategies are proposed from three levels. At the policy level, governments should establish special funds for the conversion of characteristic resources of borderland universities, formulate targeted talent policies that relax academic qualification requirements for ethnic cultural inheritors, and tilt senior title indicators to borderland universities. At the school level, universities need to optimize faculty structure with characteristic discipline development as the orientation, improve talent retention mechanisms to narrow the salary gap with provincial capital universities, reform evaluation mechanisms to highlight regional service contributions, accelerate digital management construction, and build a "resource-discipline-talent" integration model. At the individual level, young teachers should enhance cross-border service and ethnic cultural inheritance capabilities, senior teachers should drive young teacher echelon construction, and characteristic discipline teachers should strengthen practical cooperation with local enterprises and cross-border universities (Zhou, 2023).

2. Future Work

This study is a single-case study of Yunnan Wenshan University, and the conclusions are mainly applicable to borderland universities in southeastern Yunnan with similar characteristics. In the future, multi-case studies can be carried out on borderland universities in different regions of China (e.g., Xinjiang, Inner Mongolia) to compare and analyze the commonalities and differences of their faculty construction challenges, and further improve the theoretical framework and optimization strategies. In addition, long-term follow-up research can be conducted to track the implementation effect of the proposed optimization strategies and provide dynamic adjustment suggestions for the high-quality development of faculty teams in borderland universities. Moreover, in-depth research on cross-border teacher training and academic exchange mechanisms between Chinese borderland universities and universities in South Asia/Southeast Asia can be strengthened to enhance the internationalization level of faculty teams in borderland universities, which is of great significance for promoting cross-border educational cooperation (Nechita, 2024).

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