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Identifying professional development needs to enhance inclusive leadership among university faculty in Chongqing, China

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Abstract

This study aims to identify the professional development needs required to enhance inclusive leadership among university faculty members in Chongqing, China. As part of a broader initiative to design a competency-based training model for higher education, the research adopts a quantitative, descriptive design involving 379 academic professionals. A structured needs assessment tool, utilizing a modified Priority Needs Index (PNImodified), was employed. The findings revealed significant gaps between the current and desired states of inclusive leadership, particularly in talent optimization, adaptive mindset, and interpersonal trust. Training was the most frequently cited off-the-job method, while mentoring and coaching dominated among on-the-job strategies. The study concludes that inclusive leadership development remains insufficiently addressed in current faculty development efforts. Practically, the results inform the design of targeted training models for higher education, offering strategic direction for future human resource development (HRD) initiatives in Chinese universities.

Keywords: Inclusive leadership, priority needs, professional development, university faculty members.

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Transparency: The authors confirm that the manuscript is an honest, accurate, and transparent account of the study; that no vital features of the study have been omitted; and that any discrepancies from the study as planned have been explained. This study followed all ethical practices during writing.

Institutional Review Board Statement: This study was approved by the Research Ethics Review Committee for Research Involving Human Subjects: The Second Allied Academic Group in Social Sciences, Humanities and Fine and Applied Arts, Chulalongkorn University (COA No. 516/67), on 5 December 2024. All participants provided informed consent prior to their inclusion in the study.

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1. Introduction

In recent years, China's national and regional policies—such as the “14th Five-Year Plan for the Development of Human Resources and Social Security in Chongqing”—have increasingly emphasized the development of high-quality talent aligned with global strategies like the Belt and Road Initiative. As a rapidly growing hub for international cooperation and higher education, Chongqing has positioned itself as a center for educational reform, internationalization, and institutional development [1, 2]. In this context, universities are expected not only to improve their academic performance but also to cultivate inclusive leadership that supports diversity, innovation, and faculty development. Inclusive leadership has been widely recognized as a critical factor in enhancing organizational learning, employee engagement, and institutional resilience [3, 4].

Professional development (PD) is widely understood as a structured process to enhance educators' knowledge, skills, and attitudes, ultimately aimed at improving student outcomes Guskey [5]. Coldwell [6] further emphasizes PD as a dynamic learning opportunity that transforms classroom practices. Scholars have conceptualized PD as encompassing personal, social, and professional dimensions, often within collaborative and self-directed contexts [7, 8]. Its impact on teaching effectiveness and student success has been well documented across career stages [9]. In China, PD is increasingly linked to educational quality and national reform agendas. Wang and Gu [10] propose that teacher competence frameworks must integrate international theories with local adaptations, contributing to a uniquely Chinese approach to PD aligned with the evolving curriculum landscape.

While the literature on teacher professional development (PD) in China has expanded, it has largely focused on macro-level policies, system-wide challenges, and institutional roles, with limited emphasis on actionable frameworks or faculty-centered developmental models. Existing initiatives, such as university teacher development centers, offer training in ethics, pedagogy, and team collaboration [11], yet they often lack a coherent structure grounded in inclusive leadership principles. Despite inclusive leadership being increasingly recognized as a key competency in higher education globally, its integration into PD strategies in China remains underexplored. This study seeks to address this gap by examining the developmental needs of university faculty members in Chongqing, a region with strong educational ambitions and institutional reform momentum, highlighting the need for further investigation into faculty-specific training needs within this regional and institutional context.

Therefore, this study aims to assess the professional development needs of university faculty members in Chongqing, China, with a focus on enhancing inclusive leadership competencies. Using a modified Priority Needs Index (PNI_{modified}), the study examines faculty perceptions across four key HRD stages planning, monitoring, developing, and rating/rewarding to inform the design of a localized training framework rooted in inclusive leadership principles.

2. Research Conceptual Framework

This study established a conceptual framework by integrating two theoretical domains: professional development (PD) and inclusive leadership. The PD component was adapted from established models by Lynham [12], Gomez-Mejia et al. [13], and Vulpen [14], which organize development into four stages: (i) planning, (ii) monitoring, (iii) developing, and (iv) rating and rewarding. These stages reflect a cyclical, competency-based approach to faculty growth.

To guide the content focus within each stage, the framework incorporates five core components of inclusive leadership synthesized from contemporary literature such as Colquitt et al. [15]; Bourke and Titus [16]; Tapia and Polonskaia [17], and the Center for Creative Leadership [18]. They are: (i) building interpersonal trust, (ii) integrating diverse perspectives, (iii) optimizing talent, (iv) applying an adaptive mindset, and (v) achieving transformation.

Together, these two frameworks intersect to form a matrix that informs the needs assessment and subsequent development strategy. The full conceptual framework is illustrated in Figure 1.

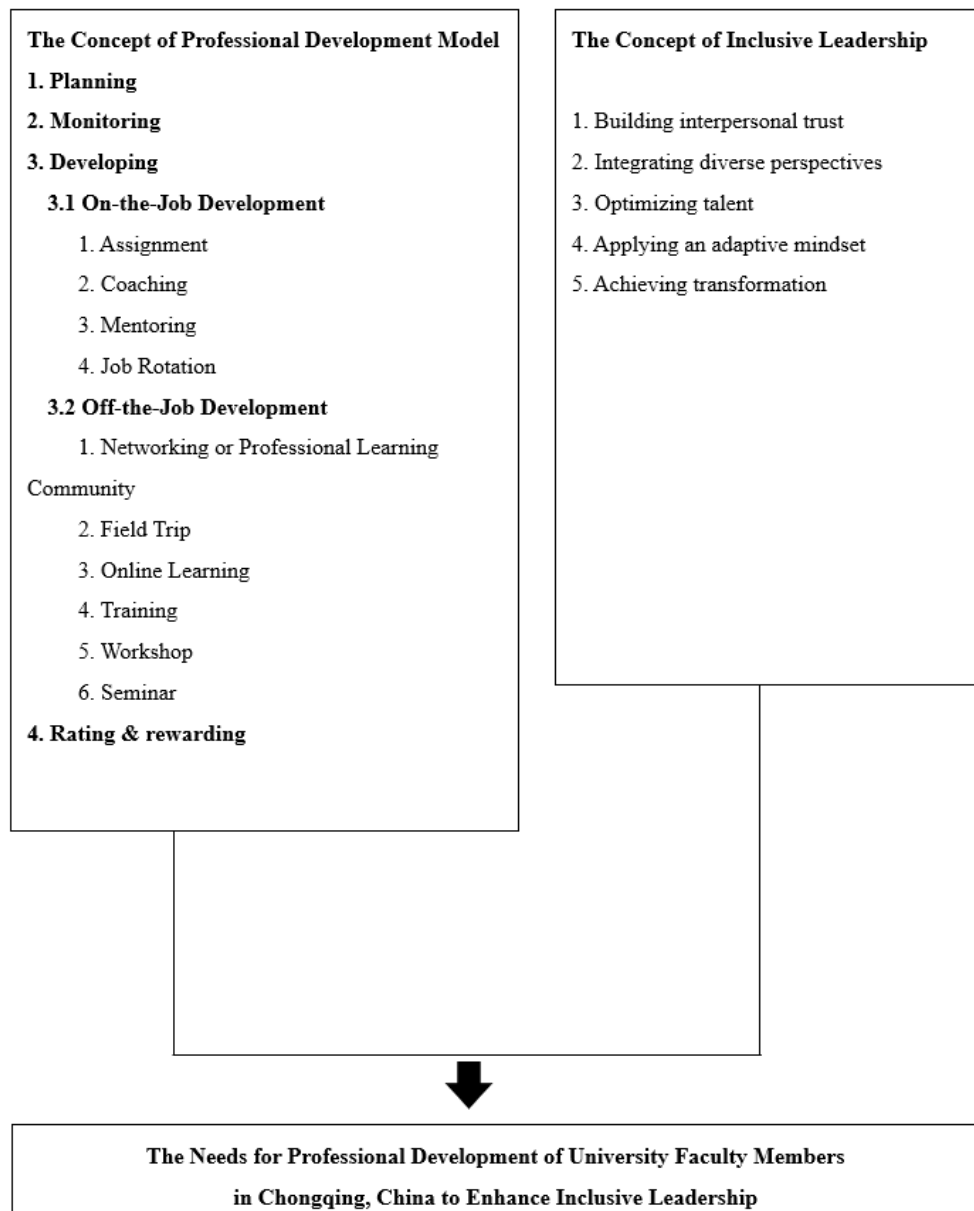


Figure 1.
Conceptual Research Framework.

3. Research Objective

This study aims to analyze the professional development needs of university faculty members in Chongqing, China, with the objective of enhancing inclusive leadership.

4. Research Methodology

This study employed a quantitative approach using a descriptive research design to analyze the professional development needs of university faculty members in Chongqing, China, in relation to enhancing inclusive leadership.

4.1. The Respondents

The population consisted of 26,728 university faculty members across 17 institutions in Chongqing, China. Based on Krejcie and Morgan [19] sample size table, a minimum of 379 respondents were required using a 5% margin of error. A multi-stage sampling method was employed. Initially, between five and twenty-four faculties were randomly selected from each university. Then, one to five faculties per university were chosen using convenience sampling. Within each selected faculty, at least five lecturers were invited to participate. The final sample comprised deans, deputy deans, department directors/heads, and lecturers.

4.2. Research Instrument

The research instrument was a structured questionnaire titled "The Needs for Professional Development to Enhance Inclusive Leadership." It was developed based on the study's conceptual framework, which integrates four stages of

professional development and five dimensions of inclusive leadership. The instrument was designed to assess the perceived current and desired levels of leadership competencies, as well as preferred professional development methods.

The questionnaire was divided into three sections:

Section 1 gathered demographic information through seven checklist items, including gender, age, education level, current position, work experience, academic rank, and affiliated university.

Section 2 focused on the current and desired states of inclusive leadership development. It included 96 items organized into 20 sub-dimensions (corresponding to the 4×5 conceptual matrix). Respondents rated each item twice once for the current state and once for the desired state using a five-point Likert scale.

Section 3 explored respondents' preferences for professional development methodologies, consisting of 12 multiple-choice items covering on-the-job and off-the-job learning approaches (e.g., training, mentoring, coaching).

The instrument's content validity was evaluated by five field experts using the Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) index. Items with IOC values above 0.5 were retained without revision. The questionnaire demonstrated high internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.908 [20].

4.3. Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation were used to analyze demographic data and response trends. To identify gaps between the current and desired states of professional development, the modified Priority Needs Index (PNI_{modified}) was applied. This index was calculated using the formula $(I - D) / D$, where I represents the desired mean and D the current mean.

The PNI_{modified} was chosen for its ability to prioritize needs based on perceived developmental gaps and has been widely applied in needs assessment research in the education and HRD domains [21].

5. Research Results

A total of 366 university faculty members participated in the study, consisting of 157 males (42.90%) and 209 females (57.10%). The majority of participants (49.73%, $n = 182$) were aged between 30 and 40 years. In terms of academic qualifications, 89.62% ($n = 328$) of respondents held a doctoral degree. Regarding their professional experience, 39.07% ($n = 143$) had between 6 to 10 years of work experience in their current roles. This demographic distribution reflects a relatively experienced and highly educated sample, suitable for exploring perceptions of inclusive leadership in academic contexts.

The results of the current state, desired state, and priority needs for professional development aimed at enhancing inclusive leadership among university faculty members are presented below.

Table 1.

The current state, desirable state and priority needs analysis results of professional development of university faculty members to enhance inclusive leadership in Planning Stage.

Inclusive Leadership	Current Stated			Desirable Stated			PNI_{modified}	Rank
	M	SD	Level	M	SD	Level		
Planning Stage	1.97	0.779	Low	2.99	0.645	Average	0.513	
1. Needed to set goals	2.03	0.808	Low	2.99	0.640	Average	0.476	2
1.1 Building interpersonal trust	2.09	0.788	Low	2.96	0.573	Average	0.420	5
1.1.1 Valuing differences	2.16	0.791	Low	2.98	0.541	Average	0.378	2
1.1.2 Instilling trust	2.01	0.778	Low	2.95	0.603	Average	0.467	1
1.2 Integrating diverse perspectives	2.02	0.792	Low	2.98	0.650	Average	0.477	4
1.2.1 Balancing stakeholders	2.05	0.792	Low	3.03	0.668	Average	0.475	2
1.2.2 Managing conflict	1.99	0.792	Low	2.94	0.630	Average	0.480	1
1.3 Optimizing talent	2.01	0.791	Low	3.00	0.643	Average	0.493	1
1.3.1 Driving engagement	2.05	0.782	Low	2.99	0.649	Average	0.459	3
1.3.2 Developing talent	1.95	0.769	Low	3.01	0.637	Average	0.543	1
1.3.3 Developing collaboration	2.03	0.821	Low	3.04	0.677	Average	0.499	2
1.4 Applying an adaptive mindset	2.01	0.799	Low	2.98	0.648	Average	0.482	3
1.4.1 Situational adaptability	1.97	0.754	Low	2.92	0.650	Average	0.482	2
1.4.2 Global perspective	2.02	0.778	Low	3.04	0.640	Average	0.501	1
1.4.3 Cultivates innovation	2.03	0.863	Low	2.97	0.616	Average	0.461	3
1.5 Achieving transformation	2.04	0.876	Low	3.03	0.674	Average	0.489	2
1.5.1 Encouraging to drive results	2.05	0.865	Low	3.02	0.641	Average	0.472	2
1.5.2 Persuading to drive results	2.02	0.888	Low	3.05	0.707	Average	0.507	1
2. Defining Individual Success Metrics	1.92	0.751	Low	2.98	0.651	Average	0.552	1
2.1 Building interpersonal trust	1.99	0.745	Low	2.95	0.598	Average	0.486	5
2.1.1 Valuing differences	2.03	0.706	Low	2.96	0.591	Average	0.458	2
2.1.2 Instilling trust	1.95	0.781	Low	2.95	0.606	Average	0.515	1

2.2 Integrating diverse perspectives	1.94	0.739	Low	3.08	0.626	Average	0.559	3
2.2.1 Balancing stakeholders	1.91	0.724	Low	3.01	0.578	Average	0.574	1
2.2.2 Managing conflict	1.96	0.754	Low	3.03	0.672	Average	0.545	2
2.3 Optimizing talent	1.92	0.750	Low	2.98	0.675	Average	0.547	4
2.3.1 Driving engagement	1.93	0.741	Low	2.95	0.637	Average	0.527	3
2.3.2 Developing talent	1.90	0.734	Low	2.99	0.721	Average	0.572	1
2.3.3 Developing collaboration	1.94	0.776	Low	2.99	0.664	Average	0.542	2
2.4 Applying an adaptive mindset	1.88	0.742	Low	2.97	0.653	Average	0.577	2
2.4.1 Situational adaptability	1.87	0.740	Low	3.00	0.716	Average	0.607	1
2.4.2 Global perspective	1.92	0.717	Low	2.97	0.580	Average	0.544	3
2.4.3 Cultivates innovation	1.86	0.769	Low	2.94	0.658	Average	0.581	2
2.5 Achieving transformation	1.88	0.780	Low	2.98	0.685	Average	0.587	1
2.5.1 Encouraging to drive results	1.91	0.816	Low	3.01	0.704	Average	0.577	2
2.5.2 Persuading to drive results	1.86	0.743	Low	2.96	0.665	Average	0.596	1

The results from Table 1 indicate that faculty members in Chongqing universities perceive the planning stage of inclusive leadership development to be relatively weak overall ($M = 1.97$). Among the planning subdimensions, 'Needed to set goals' emerged as the most developed area ($M = 2.03$), though the score still falls within the low range. This suggests that while institutions may emphasize goal-setting, the actual articulation and communication of these goals may lack clarity and alignment with faculty needs.

Looking at the five inclusive leadership dimensions, the highest current mean was in Building Interpersonal Trust ($M = 2.09$), followed closely by Achieving Transformation ($M = 2.04$) and Integrating Diverse Perspectives ($M = 2.02$). The relatively low variation across dimensions reinforces a broader systemic gap in inclusive planning across institutions.

In contrast, the desirable state of the planning stage was rated at an average level ($M = 2.99$). Notably, faculty placed the highest expectations on achieving transformation ($M = 3.03$), signaling a desire for change-oriented and impactful leadership development outcomes that go beyond administrative formalities.

The Priority Needs Index (PNI_{modified}) analysis confirms these trends. The highest priority need appeared in Defining individual success metrics ($PNI_{\text{modified}} = 0.552$), followed by Needed to set goals ($PNI_{\text{modified}} = 0.476$). Within these subdimensions, the top gaps were identified in Achieving transformation ($PNI_{\text{modified}} = 0.587$) and applying an adaptive mindset ($PNI_{\text{modified}} = 0.577$), indicating faculty demand for more individualized, forward-looking frameworks to guide success and change.

These results suggest that current planning processes may appear formalized but fail to reflect the individualized and forward-looking needs of faculty. The identified gaps in defining individual success metrics and the need to set goals reveal a strong desire for more personal, transformation-driven frameworks. Addressing these expectations calls for leadership planning that empowers faculty to articulate success in diverse and meaningful ways, rather than relying on generalized templates or rigid performance markers.

Table 2.

The Current Stated, Desirable Stated and Priority Needs in Professional Development Innovation to Enhance Inclusive Leadership of University Faculty Member in Chongqing, China in Monitoring Stage.

Inclusive Leadership	Current Stated			Desirable Stated			PNI_{modified}	Rank
	M	SD	Result	M	SD	Result		
Monitoring Stage	1.92	0.765	Low	3.00	0.649	Average	0.566	
1. Continuous Performance Conversations	1.91	0.766	Low	3.00	0.656	Average	0.573	1
1.1 Building interpersonal trust	1.96	0.739	Low	2.97	0.601	Average	0.513	5
1.1.1 Valuing differences	1.99	0.712	Low	2.99	0.585	Average	0.502	2
1.1.2 Instilling trust	1.93	0.764	Low	2.95	0.617	Average	0.525	1
1.2 Integrating diverse perspectives	1.91	0.772	Low	3.03	0.645	Average	0.584	3
1.2.1 Balancing stakeholders	1.93	0.791	Low	3.03	0.674	Average	0.569	2
1.2.2 Managing conflict	1.90	0.754	Low	3.04	0.616	Average	0.599	1
1.3 Optimizing talent	1.92	0.772	Low	2.99	0.685	Average	0.559	4
1.3.1 Driving engagement	1.93	0.759	Low	2.98	0.656	Average	0.541	3
1.3.2 Developing talent	1.87	0.752	Low	2.95	0.660	Average	0.574	1
1.3.3 Developing collaboration	1.95	0.804	Low	3.05	0.735	Average	0.561	2
1.4 Applying an adaptive mindset	1.88	0.760	Low	3.01	0.655	Average	0.604	1
1.4.1 Situational adaptability	1.84	0.766	Low	2.99	0.674	Average	0.631	1
1.4.2 Global perspective	1.92	0.758	Low	3.03	0.628	Average	0.574	3
1.4.3 Cultivates innovation	1.87	0.756	Low	3.00	0.664	Average	0.609	2
1.5 Achieving transformation	1.89	0.783	Low	3.02	0.673	Average	0.598	2

Inclusive Leadership	Current Stated			Desirable Stated			PNI _{modified}	Rank
	M	SD	Result	M	SD	Result		
1.5.1 Encouraging to drive results	1.89	0.776	Low	3.03	0.678	Average	0.604	1
1.5.2 Persuading to drive results	1.89	0.792	Low	3.01	0.668	Average	0.592	2
2. Pulse Surveys	1.92	0.764	Low	2.99	0.642	Average	0.559	2
2.1 Building interpersonal trust	1.93	0.734	Low	3.01	0.623	Average	0.561	4
2.1.1 Valuing differences	1.98	0.704	Low	3.04	0.629	Average	0.539	2
2.1.2 Instilling trust	1.89	0.761	Low	2.99	0.617	Average	0.584	1
2.2 Integrating diverse perspectives	1.89	0.802	Low	2.98	0.644	Average	0.576	1
2.2.1 Balancing stakeholders	1.91	0.799	Low	2.99	0.658	Average	0.563	2
2.2.2 Managing conflict	1.87	0.804	Low	2.98	0.630	Average	0.590	1
2.3 Optimizing talent	1.93	0.771	Low	2.97	0.650	Average	0.535	5
2.3.1 Driving engagement	1.97	0.783	Low	2.98	0.647	Average	0.508	3
2.3.2 Developing talent	1.86	0.750	Low	2.92	0.643	Average	0.567	1
2.3.3 Developing collaboration	1.97	0.776	Low	3.01	0.658	Average	0.531	2
2.4 Applying an adaptive mindset	1.92	0.749	Low	3.01	0.641	Average	0.567	2
2.4.1 Situational adaptability	1.92	0.745	Low	3.01	0.668	Average	0.571	2
2.4.2 Global perspective	1.91	0.737	Low	3.06	0.623	Average	0.601	1
2.4.3 Cultivates innovation	1.94	0.767	Low	2.97	0.630	Average	0.531	3
2.5 Achieving transformation	1.92	0.767	Low	3.00	0.651	Average	0.564	3
2.5.1 Encouraging to drive results	1.92	0.765	Low	3.01	0.654	Average	0.563	2
2.5.2 Persuading to drive results	1.91	0.769	Low	2.99	0.649	Average	0.565	1

According to Table 2, the Monitoring Stage of inclusive leadership development is currently perceived at a low level ($M = 1.92$). Among its subdimensions, Pulse surveys had the highest mean score ($M = 1.92$), followed closely by Continuous performance conversations ($M = 1.91$). These figures suggest that although feedback mechanisms are in place, their effectiveness and perceived value remain limited from the faculty's perspective.

In terms of the five inclusive leadership dimensions during this stage, building interpersonal trust had the highest current rating ($M = 1.93$), slightly higher than optimizing talent ($M = 1.93$) and applying an adaptive mindset ($M = 1.92$). The small variation in scores points to a consistent perception of underdevelopment across dimensions, with integrating diverse perspectives ($M = 1.89$) ranked the lowest.

The desired state was rated at an average level ($M = 3.00$). The faculty expressed the strongest preference for improving Continuous performance conversations ($M = 3.00$), followed closely by Pulse surveys ($M = 2.99$), reflecting a demand for more ongoing, responsive, and inclusive feedback systems.

The Priority Needs Index (PNI_{modified}) analysis identified Continuous performance conversations as the most urgent area (PNI_{modified} = 0.573), followed by Pulse surveys (PNI_{modified} = 0.559). Within Continuous performance conversations, faculty members emphasized applying an adaptive mindset (PNI_{modified} = 0.604) and achieving transformation (PNI_{modified} = 0.598) as top development priorities, suggesting that feedback mechanisms should not only evaluate performance but also support change and flexibility. Meanwhile, in Pulse surveys, integrating diverse perspectives (PNI_{modified} = 0.576) and applying an adaptive mindset (PNI_{modified} = 0.567) were identified as essential, highlighting the need for feedback systems that incorporate varied voices and viewpoints.

These findings reveal a significant gap between the existing and expected feedback practices within institutions. Faculty members are not only calling for more frequent and responsive performance dialogues, such as continuous performance conversations, but also seeking feedback mechanisms like pulse surveys that genuinely reflect the diversity of voices within academic settings. Importantly, the emphasis on applying an adaptive mindset and integrating diverse perspectives underscores the expectation that feedback should go beyond monitoring and instead contribute to learning, innovation, and inclusive growth.

Table 3.

The Current Stated, Desirable Stated and Priority Needs in Professional Development Innovation to Enhance Inclusive Leadership of University Faculty Member in Chongqing, China in Developing Stage.

Inclusive Leadership	Current Stated			Desirable Stated			PNI _{modified}	Rank
	M	SD	Result	M	SD	Result		
Developing Stage	1.88	0.739	Low	2.98	0.648	Average	0.587	
1.1 Building interpersonal trust	1.96	0.742	Low	3.00	0.593	Average	0.534	5
1.1.1 Valuing differences	2.00	0.762	Low	2.99	0.585	Average	0.496	2
1.1.2 Instilling trust	1.91	0.720	Low	3.01	0.601	Average	0.574	1
1.2 Integrating diverse perspectives	1.88	0.711	Low	2.97	0.653	Average	0.581	4
1.2.1 Balancing stakeholders	1.90	0.671	Low	3.03	0.636	Average	0.595	1
1.2.2 Managing conflict	1.85	0.749	Low	2.90	0.665	Average	0.567	2
1.3 Optimizing talent	1.87	0.761	Low	3.00	0.677	Average	0.601	3
1.3.1 Driving engagement	1.91	0.773	Low	3.01	0.658	Average	0.577	3
1.3.2 Developing talent	1.88	0.755	Low	2.99	0.696	Average	0.589	2
1.3.3 Developing collaboration	1.83	0.754	Low	2.96	0.684	Average	0.619	1
1.4 Applying an adaptive mindset	1.86	0.727	Low	2.98	0.644	Average	0.604	2
1.4.1 Situational adaptability	1.91	0.734	Low	3.00	0.660	Average	0.572	3
1.4.2 Global perspective	1.83	0.724	Low	2.95	0.629	Average	0.613	1
1.4.3 Cultivates innovation	1.83	0.722	Low	2.95	0.634	Average	0.611	2
1.5 Achieving transformation	1.85	0.742	Low	2.99	0.656	Average	0.619	1
1.5.1 Encouraging to drive results	1.84	0.734	Low	2.98	0.634	Average	0.619	2
1.5.2 Persuading to drive results	1.86	0.750	Low	3.01	0.678	Average	0.620	1

Table 3 indicates that the Developing Stage of inclusive leadership among faculty members in Chongqing is currently perceived as low ($M = 1.88$). Across the five dimensions, Building interpersonal trust received the highest current score ($M = 1.96$), while Achieving transformation was rated the lowest ($M = 1.85$). This gap suggests that while faculty may engage in trust-building practices to some extent, more ambitious aspects of leadership development, such as transformation and adaptability, remain significantly underdeveloped.

The desirable state, in contrast, was rated at an average level ($M = 2.98$), showing that faculty members expect far more support in leadership development during this stage. Interestingly, building interpersonal trust ($M = 3.00$) remained the highest, followed closely by Optimizing talent and Achieving transformation (both $M = 2.99$). This alignment between current and desired strengths suggests that faculty view interpersonal connection as a foundational competency, but still feel its development is insufficient.

The Priority Needs Index (PNI_{modified}) highlights Achieving transformation as the most critical area (PNI_{modified} = 0.619), followed by Applying an adaptive mindset (PNI_{modified} = 0.604) and Optimizing talent (PNI_{modified} = 0.601). These results show a clear call for leadership development efforts that are forward-looking and resilience-oriented, helping faculty not just navigate change but drive it.

The findings from the Developing Stage reflect faculty members' growing desire for deeper transformation and stronger adaptability in their leadership journeys. While trust-building is still viewed as important, the emphasis on achieving transformation, applying an adaptive mindset, and optimizing talent points to a more strategic expectation: universities must equip faculty not only to lead teams but to guide meaningful institutional change. Addressing these needs will require development programs that are both individualized and future-facing.

Table 4.

The Professional Development Methodologies in Inclusive Leadership of University Faculty Members in Chongqing, China, frequency (f), percentage (%).

Inclusive Leadership	Issue	On-the-Job Development						Off-the-Job Development					
		Assignment	Coaching	Mentoring	Job rotation	Project Assignment	Total	Field Trip	Online Learning	Training	workshop	Seminar	Total
1. Building interpersonal trust	f	603	614	628	561	489	2895	533	628	632	599	501	2893
(PNI _{modified} = 0.534)	%	10.42	10.61	10.85	9.69	8.45	50.02	9.21	10.85	10.92	10.35	8.66	49.98
1.1. Valuing differences	f	309	326	306	273	236	1450	258	318	312	294	256	1438
(PNI _{modified} = 0.496)	%	10.70	11.29	10.60	9.45	8.17	50.21	8.93	11.01	10.80	10.18	8.86	49.79
1.2 Instilling trust	f	294	288	322	288	253	1445	275	310	320	305	245	1455
(PNI _{modified} = 0.574)	%	10.14	9.93	11.10	9.93	8.72	49.83	9.48	10.69	11.03	10.52	8.45	50.17
2. Integrating diverse perspectives	f	583	608	622	588	498	2899	529	610	630	599	495	2863
(PNI _{modified} = 0.581)	%	10.12	10.55	10.80	10.20	8.64	50.31	9.18	10.59	10.93	10.40	8.59	49.69
2.1 Balancing stakeholders	f	284	306	316	289	253	1448	253	306	325	305	237	1426
(PNI _{modified} = 0.595)	%	9.88	10.65	11.00	10.06	8.80	50.38	8.80	10.65	11.31	10.61	8.25	49.62
2.2 Managing conflict	f	299	302	306	299	245	1451	276	304	305	294	258	1437
(PNI _{modified} = 0.567)	%	10.35	10.46	10.60	10.35	8.48	50.24	9.56	10.53	10.56	10.18	8.93	49.76
3. Optimizing talent	f	861	919	946	872	750	4348	761	900	936	924	770	4291
(PNI _{modified} = 0.601)	%	9.96	10.64	10.95	10.10	8.68	50.33	8.81	10.42	10.83	10.70	8.91	49.67
3.1 Driving engagement	f	297	314	323	286	248	1468	256	298	321	310	262	1447
(PNI _{modified} = 0.1577)	%	10.19	10.77	11.08	9.81	8.51	50.36	8.78	10.22	11.01	10.63	8.99	49.64
3.2 Developing talent	f	284	311	308	292	250	1445	273	296	304	312	247	1432
(PNI _{modified} = 0.589)	%	9.87	10.81	10.71	10.15	8.69	50.23	9.49	10.29	10.57	10.84	8.59	49.77
3.3 Developing collaboration	f	280	294	315	294	252	1435	232	306	311	302	261	1412
(PNI _{modified} = 0.619)	%	9.83	10.33	11.06	10.33	8.85	50.4	8.15	10.75	10.92	10.61	9.17	49.6
4. Applying an adaptive mindset	f	877	929	925	867	752	4350	769	914	963	904	740	4284

Inclusive Leadership	Issue	On-the-Job Development						Off-the-Job Development					
		Assignment	Coaching	Mentoring	Job rotation	Project Assignment	Total	Field Trip	Online Learning	Training	workshop	Seminar	Total
(PNI _{modified} = 0.601)	%	10.16	10.76	10.71	10.04	8.71	50.38	8.84	10.59	11.15	10.47	8.57	49.62
4.1 Situational adaptability	f	294	309	306	288	248	1445	253	305	314	298	259	1429
(PNI _{modified} = 0.572)	%	10.23	10.75	10.65	10.02	8.63	50.28	8.80	10.61	10.93	10.37	9.01	49.72
4.2 Global perspective	f	288	313	313	286	256	1456	258	310	323	304	234	1429
(PNI _{modified} = 0.613)	%	9.98	10.85	10.85	9.91	8.87	50.47	8.94	10.75	11.20	10.54	8.11	49.53
4.3 Cultivates innovation	f	295	307	306	293	248	1449	252	299	326	302	247	1426
(PNI _{modified} = 0.611)	%	10.26	10.68	10.64	10.19	8.63	50.4	8.77	10.40	11.34	10.50	8.59	49.6
5. Achieving transformation	f	583	616	624	563	486	2872	514	599	625	611	502	2851
(PNI _{modified} = 0.619)	%	10.19	10.76	10.90	9.84	8.49	50.18	8.98	10.47	10.92	10.68	8.77	49.82
5.1 Encouraging to drive results	f	287	313	310	290	246	1446	256	307	302	312	249	1426
(PNI _{modified} = 0.619)	%	9.99	10.90	10.79	10.10	8.57	50.35	8.91	10.69	10.52	10.86	8.67	49.65
5.2 Persuading to drive results	f	296	303	314	273	240	1426	258	292	323	299	253	1425
(PNI _{modified} = 0.620)	%	10.38	10.63	11.01	9.58	8.42	50.02	9.05	10.24	11.33	10.49	8.87	49.98
Total	f	3,507	3,686	3,745	3,451	2,975	17,364	3,100	3,651	3,786	3,637	3,008	17,182
	%	10.15	10.67	10.84	9.99	8.61	50.26	8.97	10.57	10.96	10.53	8.71	49.74

Table 4 presents the frequency of professional development methodologies used to enhance inclusive leadership among university faculty members. Overall, training was the most frequently reported off-the-job method ($f = 3,786$, 10.96%), followed closely by mentoring ($f = 3,745$, 10.84%), the most common on-the-job approach. This suggests a balanced preference for both structured external learning and workplace-based guidance.

Across inclusive leadership dimensions, the preferences vary slightly. In the context of building interpersonal trust, faculty members leaned toward coaching ($f = 326$, 11.29%) and mentoring ($f = 322$, 11.10%), indicating that interpersonal competencies are often developed through direct, individualized feedback. Integrating diverse perspectives saw high frequencies in training ($f = 325$, 11.31%) and mentoring ($f = 316$, 11.00%), especially in activities like balancing stakeholders and managing conflict, reflecting the role of dialogue and conflict resolution in leadership.

For optimizing talent, faculty showed strong engagement with mentoring, training, and workshops. These methods were often preferred in subdimensions such as driving engagement and developing collaboration, emphasizing the importance of experiential and peer-based learning in talent development. Similarly, in applying an adaptive mindset, methods like training, coaching, and mentoring were favored for competencies including situational adaptability, global perspective, and cultivating innovation.

Within achieving transformation, faculty members selected coaching and workshops most frequently for encouraging results, while training led in persuading to drive results, reinforcing the idea that transformational leadership requires both strategic thinking and strong communication skills, which are often developed through interactive and personalized methods. These findings clearly indicate faculty members' preference for professional development methodologies that blend structured, formal training with personalized, relational approaches such as mentoring and coaching. Implementing such combined development strategies could effectively address identified leadership gaps and enhance faculty capabilities across multiple inclusive leadership dimensions.

These findings suggest that faculty members do not rely on a single preferred methodology but instead embrace a blended approach to leadership development. The strong presence of both training and mentoring highlights a desire for formalized knowledge acquisition complemented by individualized, practice-based learning. The repeated use of coaching across several dimensions further underscores the value faculty place on reflective, feedback-driven processes. To design impactful development programs, institutions should consider combining structured learning platforms with relationship-based support mechanisms tailored to each leadership competency.

Table 5.

The Current Stated, Desirable Stated and Priority Needs in Professional Development Innovation to Enhance Inclusive Leadership of University Faculty Member in Chongqing, China in Rating and Rewarding Stage.

Inclusive Leadership	Current Stated			Desirable Stated			PNI _{modified}	Rank
	M	SD	Result	M	SD	Result		
Rating and Rewarding Stage	1.89	0.755	Low	3.00	0.649	Average	0.566	
1. Engagement and Retention	1.87	0.750	Low	2.94	0.660	Average	0.570	
1.1 Building interpersonal trust	1.81	0.735	Low	2.88	0.619	Average	0.594	1
1.1.1 Valuing differences	1.88	0.686	Low	2.95	0.615	Average	0.569	2
1.1.2 Instilling trust	1.73	0.775	Low	2.81	0.615	Average	0.620	1
1.2 Integrating diverse perspectives	1.89	0.772	Low	2.96	0.697	Average	0.566	3
1.2.1 Balancing stakeholders	1.98	0.712	Low	3.00	0.664	Average	0.520	2
1.2.2 Managing conflict	1.81	0.820	Low	2.92	0.727	Average	0.617	1
1.3 Optimizing talent	1.90	0.744	Low	2.97	0.663	Average	0.560	4
1.3.1 Driving engagement	1.92	0.670	Low	2.96	0.642	Average	0.538	3
1.3.2 Developing talent	1.90	0.797	Low	2.98	0.684	Average	0.572	1
1.3.3 Developing collaboration	1.89	0.761	Low	2.95	0.677	Average	0.561	2
1.4 Applying an adaptive mindset	1.86	0.741	Low	2.95	0.642	Average	0.586	2
1.4.1 Situational adaptability	1.94	0.700	Low	2.95	0.588	Average	0.523	3
1.4.2 Global perspective	1.83	0.777	Low	2.95	0.693	Average	0.614	1
1.4.3 Cultivates innovation	1.82	0.742	Low	2.92	0.686	Average	0.609	2
1.5 Achieving transformation	1.90	0.762	Low	2.95	0.656	Average	0.554	5
1.5.1 Encouraging to drive results	1.97	0.740	Low	2.96	0.622	Average	0.503	2
1.5.2 Persuading to drive results	1.83	0.779	Low	2.95	0.688	Average	0.609	1
2. Enhanced Alignment and Goal Achievement	1.90	0.765	Low	2.97	0.684	Average	0.564	
2.1 Building interpersonal trust	1.86	0.767	Low	2.96	0.700	Average	0.588	
2.1.1 Valuing differences	1.96	0.701	Low	2.98	0.645	Average	0.525	
2.1.2 Instilling trust	1.77	0.818	Low	2.94	0.750	Average	0.656	
2.2 Integrating diverse perspectives	1.92	0.779	Low	2.96	0.713	Average	0.540	
2.2.1 Balancing stakeholders	1.98	0.745	Low	2.98	0.662	Average	0.508	

Inclusive Leadership	Current Stated			Desirable Stated			PNI _{modified}	Rank
	M	SD	Result	M	SD	Result		
2.2.2 Managing conflict	1.87	0.808	Low	2.94	0.761	Average	0.574	
2.3 Optimizing talent	1.91	0.768	Low	2.99	0.673	Average	0.569	
2.3.1 Driving engagement	1.95	0.689	Low	2.98	0.599	Average	0.528	
2.3.2 Developing talent	1.88	0.794	Low	3.00	0.729	Average	0.594	
2.3.3 Developing collaboration	1.89	0.815	Low	2.99	0.686	Average	0.586	
2.4 Applying an adaptive mindset	1.92	0.757	Low	2.98	0.682	Average	0.548	
2.4.1 Situational adaptability	1.98	0.676	Low	2.99	0.590	Average	0.515	
2.4.2 Global perspective	1.88	0.795	Low	2.98	0.710	Average	0.584	
2.4.3 Cultivates innovation	1.91	0.792	Low	2.96	0.739	Average	0.546	
2.5 Achieving transformation	1.89	0.758	Low	2.98	0.660	Average	0.580	
2.5.1 Encouraging to drive results	1.96	0.724	Low	3.00	0.643	Average	0.532	
2.5.2 Persuading to drive results	1.81	0.786	Low	2.96	0.677	Average	0.633	
3. Data-driven Decision-making	1.88	0.750	Low	2.97	0.664	Average	0.581	
3.1 Building interpersonal trust	1.89	0.745	Low	3.01	0.642	Average	0.592	2
3.1.1 Valuing differences	1.95	0.692	Low	2.98	0.575	Average	0.529	
3.1.2 Instilling trust	1.84	0.791	Low	3.04	0.701	Average	0.658	
3.2 Integrating diverse perspectives	1.90	0.750	Low	2.97	0.694	Average	0.563	4
3.2.1 Balancing stakeholders	1.97	0.725	Low	3.01	0.682	Average	0.524	
3.2.2 Managing conflict	1.82	0.768	Low	2.93	0.704	Average	0.606	
3.3 Optimizing talent	1.86	0.742	Low	2.98	0.632	Average	0.599	1
3.3.1 Driving engagement	1.92	0.715	Low	2.96	0.616	Average	0.543	
3.3.2 Developing talent	1.87	0.743	Low	2.99	0.613	Average	0.601	
3.3.3 Developing collaboration	1.80	0.763	Low	2.98	0.668	Average	0.656	
3.4 Applying an adaptive mindset	1.88	0.762	Low	2.93	0.683	Average	0.562	5
3.4.1 Situational adaptability	1.95	0.710	Low	2.96	0.646	Average	0.515	
3.4.2 Global perspective	1.85	0.800	Low	2.93	0.691	Average	0.589	
3.4.3 Cultivates innovation	1.83	0.768	Low	2.90	0.711	Average	0.585	
3.5 Achieving transformation	1.88	0.750	Low	2.98	0.672	Average	0.590	3
3.5.1 Encouraging to drive results	1.96	0.703	Low	2.98	0.630	Average	0.522	
3.5.2 Persuading to drive results	1.80	0.786	Low	2.99	0.712	Average	0.664	

As shown in Table 5, the overall current state of inclusive leadership competencies during the rating and rewarding stage was relatively low ($M = 1.89$). Among subdimensions, faculty members perceived "enhanced alignment and goal achievement" ($M = 1.90$) as comparatively stronger, though still significantly lacking. Within inclusive leadership dimensions, "integrating diverse perspectives" and "applying an adaptive mindset" (both $M = 1.92$) received slightly higher ratings, highlighting some limited but present strengths in adapting to and managing diverse views. Conversely, "building interpersonal trust" had the lowest rating ($M = 1.86$), indicating substantial gaps in relational competencies within the current rating and rewarding systems.

Respondents clearly articulated a significantly higher desired state ($M = 3.00$). The highest-rated dimensions were "optimizing talent" ($M = 2.99$) and "achieving transformation" ($M = 2.98$), underscoring faculty aspirations for reward systems closely tied to talent maximization and measurable transformative outcomes. Similarly, "enhanced alignment and goal achievement" ($M = 2.97$) was identified as a key expectation, suggesting faculty preference for performance rating and reward mechanisms clearly aligned with institutional goals and personal achievements.

Priority Needs Index (PNI_{modified}) analysis emphasized "data-driven decision-making" (PNI_{modified} = 0.581) as the most critical improvement area, reflecting an urgent need for transparency and objectivity in faculty evaluations and rewards. Specifically, within data-driven decision-making, "optimizing talent" (PNI_{modified} = 0.599) and "building interpersonal trust" (PNI_{modified} = 0.592) were prominent, indicating faculty strongly desire objective rating systems that genuinely support talent identification and trust-building.

Regarding "engagement and retention" (PNI_{modified} = 0.570), "building interpersonal trust" (PNI_{modified} = 0.594) emerged as the primary priority, revealing faculty perceive a critical need to foster trustful work environments to improve overall engagement and retention. Additionally, "enhanced alignment and goal achievement" (PNI_{modified} = 0.564) identified "building interpersonal trust" (PNI_{modified} = 0.588) as central, further highlighting trust-building as an integral factor in achieving institutional alignment and individual motivation.

These findings suggest that faculty members strongly prefer a more objective and transparent approach to evaluating performance, particularly highlighting the critical importance of data-driven decision-making processes. Interestingly, the emphasis placed on optimizing talent and building interpersonal trust clearly reflects faculty aspirations toward creating supportive environments that recognize and nurture individual strengths. Such insights are particularly relevant given current

faculty concerns about fairness and effectiveness in existing reward structures. To truly address these professional needs, it becomes essential for university leadership to consider implementing systematic yet flexible evaluation mechanisms that actively foster trust and talent development, thus enhancing both individual motivation and organizational alignment.

6. Conclusion and Implications of the Study

6.1. Conclusion

The current state of professional development aimed at enhancing inclusive leadership among university faculty members revealed that applying an adaptive mindset received the lowest average score among the measured subdimensions. This finding aligns with research by Hellman [22] and Westover [23], which emphasized that developing adaptive leadership requires more than conventional training; it involves long-term, experiential approaches that include reflective practices and sustained support. The process of cultivating such a mindset is inherently ongoing and often misaligned with the short-term objectives typically embedded in many professional development programs.

In contrast, the desirable state revealed that integrating diverse perspectives and achieving transformation received the highest average scores among the subdimensions. This outcome supports the assertions by Lapid-Bogda [24], Skillen et al. [25], and Cross [26] who highlight the role of diversity in creating inclusive environments that value different experiences and perspectives. Such diversity not only promotes equity but also drives organizational innovation and transformation. This is especially relevant in educational contexts, where inclusive curricula and development programs informed by diverse viewpoints can lead to more responsive teaching and more impactful learning outcomes.

The analysis of priority needs further emphasized that achieving transformation is a critical focus for professional development. This aligns with the work of [27]; Ashikali [28] and Pollock [29] who argue that inclusive leadership enhances community participation and empowerment, particularly among youth, which is fundamental to sustainable development. By embedding diverse identities and perspectives into decision-making processes, inclusive leadership fosters fairness and organizational responsiveness. Moreover, by addressing essential psychological needs such as belonging and recognition, it contributes to improved performance and lower employee turnover.

Nevertheless, these findings should be interpreted within the context of the study's specific institutional and regional focus and may not be universally generalizable.

6.2. Recommendations

6.2.1. Implications

1. Planning stage: The study identified defining individual success metrics for achieving transformation as the most critical requirement for enhancing inclusive leadership. Academic leaders such as deans, deputy deans, department heads, and lecturers should collaborate to clearly establish success metrics that align individual goals with institutional transformation priorities.

2. Monitoring stage: Prioritizing the application of an adaptive mindset during continuous monitoring emerged as a key need. Faculty development leaders should encourage staff participation in structured development programs that foster adaptive thinking and ongoing leadership reflection.

3. Developing stage: Among various methodologies, training was found to be the most frequently used and impactful approach, particularly for achieving transformation. Institutions should design targeted training modules that integrate inclusive leadership content and promote actionable learning.

4. Rating and rewarding stage: The most urgent need was the use of data-driven decision-making to strengthen interpersonal trust. Academic units should incorporate transparent and evidence-based evaluation mechanisms into performance assessment and recognition processes.

6.2.2. Recommendations for Further Research

1. Future studies should focus on developing structured professional development frameworks that support the enhancement of inclusive leadership among university faculty members.

2. It is also recommended to investigate inclusive leadership practices across a range of educational contexts including different institutions, academic disciplines, and grade levels. Such comparative research would provide insights into how inclusive leadership needs vary across settings and help inform the design of more tailored and effective development programs.

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