

GUIDELINE FOR DEVELOPING INCENTIVE MECHANISM MANAGEMENT FOR TEACHERS IN NANCHANG VOCATIONAL UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

The study aims to investigate the current status and existing problems of the teacher incentive mechanism at Nanchang Vocational University, and to propose corresponding improvement strategies. Effective incentive mechanisms are crucial for attracting and retaining talent, developing potential, and fostering a positive competitive environment. Taking the teachers of Nanchang Vocational University as the research object, this study employed questionnaires and interviews to assess the current situation. Quantitative and qualitative analyses were performed on data collected from 297 teachers via questionnaire and 5 administrators via in-depth interviews. The survey covered aspects including the understanding and application of incentive theories, the implementation and evaluation of incentive measures, teaching quality management, and prospects for school development. The research identified several key issues within the existing incentive mechanism across six critical dimensions: an unclear mechanism management system with insufficient policy transparency, a compensation structure with weak links to performance, an unreasonable distribution system that hinders teaching innovation, a weakened psychological contract characterized by low mutual trust between teachers and administration, inadequate career development pathways that limit professional growth, and declining job satisfaction that affects teacher retention. These interconnected issues collectively undermine the motivational potential of the current system. Based on the findings and theoretical frameworks, the study proposes strategic recommendations for improving the incentive mechanism: 1) Reforming the compensation system to strengthen its performance-based linkage; 2) Enhancing the training system by integrating both external and internal development programs; 3) Improving career planning to align personal growth with institutional goals; and 4) Optimizing the evaluation system through flexible indicators, regular review processes, and clearer criteria. These suggestions are intended to provide a theoretical and practical foundation for the university to develop a more scientific and effective incentive system, thereby stimulating teacher motivation and creativity, improving educational quality, and supporting the sustainable development of the institution.

Keywords: Incentive Concept, Incentive Mechanism Management, Development of Teachers

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INTRODUCTION

motivational tools, incentive mechanisms are one of the most effective for university teachers. A well-designed incentive system can optimize human resource allocation within a university, foster discipline development by providing conditions and guarantees for professional growth and innovation, and stimulate teachers' creativity. By promoting the appreciation of teachers' intellectual capital, universities can gain competitive advantages in faculty reserves, talent cultivation, academic achievements, and social impact. (Xu Lixin, 2023)

However, common issues persist in faculty development, including an overall shortage of teachers, the loss of key personnel, structural imbalances in academic and professional backgrounds, generational gaps in age and values, and a utilitarian tendency fueled by quantitative evaluation systems that discourage rigorous, long-term research. These problems are closely linked to the absence of effective incentive mechanisms. (Yuan Dun, 2020)

Conversely, a sound incentive mechanism is crucial for institutional and national development. It helps maintain faculty stability—especially by retaining experienced professors—fully mobilizes teaching enthusiasm and creativity, and aligns with national talent strategy by focusing on attracting outstanding individuals, meeting diverse needs, fostering scientific literacy and innovation, utilizing potential, and harmonizing personal growth with institutional and national objectives. (Li Ping, 2021)

In summary, implementing a teacher-oriented incentive mechanism that effectively meets faculty needs is a vital pathway to achieving the dual goals of enhancing teaching/research quality and improving management efficiency in higher education institutions.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To study the level of the incentive mechanism for teachers in Nanchang Vocational University.
2. To propose the guideline for developing incentive mechanism management for teachers in Nanchang Vocational University.

SCOPE OF THE RESEARCH

1. Population Scope

1.1 Population

The population of this study consisted of 1,250 teachers in Nanchang Vocational University.

1.2 Sample

The sample size was determined using Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table for finite populations. For a population of 1,250 teachers, the required minimum sample size was 297 teachers. Therefore, a total of 297 teachers were selected as the quantitative sample of this study using an appropriate sampling technique.

1.3 Key Informants for In-Depth Interviews

Qualitative data were collected from five key informants through semi-structured in-depth interviews. Participants were selected using purposive sampling based on their professional experience, institutional roles, and direct involvement with the university's incentive mechanism management system. The informants comprised:

Two senior administrators, the Vice President (Mr. Zhang San) and the Principal (Mr. Li Si), who are primarily responsible for institutional policy formulation, strategic planning, and overall human resource governance.

Three department-level administrators, Directors Wang Wu, Chen Liu, and Wu Qi, who oversee specific academic or personnel functions. Importantly, in addition to their administrative responsibilities, these three individuals also maintain active teaching schedules as full-time instructors, thereby possessing dual-role status as both managers and frontline teachers.

EXPECTED BENEFITS

1. The study provides a systematic analysis of the existing incentive mechanism management system, offering evidence-based insights for improving institutional governance and human resource management in vocational universities.
2. The findings contribute to enhancing teacher motivation, job satisfaction, and professional commitment by proposing practical strategies for optimizing payroll management, distribution systems, and career development pathways.
3. The research offers strategic recommendations that can support sustainable organizational development, strengthen faculty stability, and improve overall educational performance at Nanchang Vocational University.

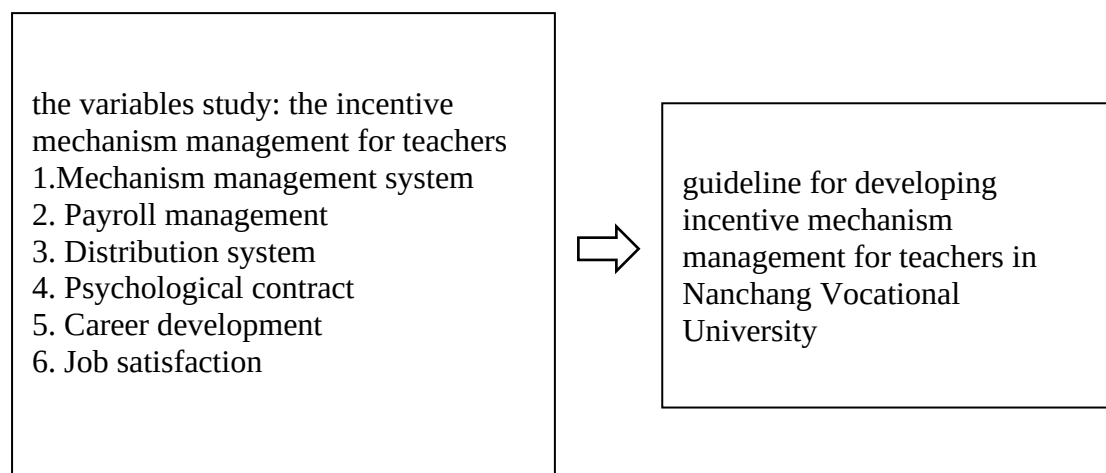
LITERATURE REVIEW

Motivational Theory Foundations: The study explores content theories, including Maslow's hierarchy of needs (emphasizing the higher-order needs of knowledge workers), Herzberg's two-factor theory (distinguishing hygiene factors from motivators), Alderfer's ERG theory, and McClelland's theory of needs. It also integrates process theories such as Adams' equity theory, Locke's goal-setting theory, Vroom's expectancy theory, Self-Determination Theory (SDT), and Human Resource Management (HRM) theory.

Six Dimensions of Incentive Mechanisms: The conceptual framework covers the mechanism management system, payroll management, distribution system, psychological contract, career development, and job satisfaction.

Institutional Context: Nanchang Vocational University (NVU) is a private institution aiming to cultivate "dual-qualified" teachers who possess both academic knowledge and practical industry skills.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK



RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1. Research Methodology

Population and Sample: The target population consisted of 1,250 full-time teachers. A quantitative sample of 297 teachers was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table. For the qualitative component, 5 key informants (the Vice President, the Principal, and 3 dual-role department directors) were selected using purposive sampling.

2. Research Steps

1. Developed research instruments (questionnaires and interview forms) based on literature reviews and motivation theories.

2.Submitted the draft instruments to the thesis advisor to verify content accuracy and language appropriateness.

3.Revised and finalized the instruments according to the advisor's recommendations before conducting actual data collection.

3. Data Collection

Quantitative Data: Coordinated with university staff to distribute and collect questionnaires from the 297 sampled teachers through both in-person and online channels.

Qualitative Data: Conducted in-depth, face-to-face interviews with the 5 administrators. The sessions were recorded using electronic devices (with permission), and immediate summary notes were taken after each interview.

4. Data Analysis

Part 1 (General Demographics): Analyzed using frequency and percentage.

Part 2 (Incentive Mechanism Levels): Analyzed using mean and standard deviation (S.D.), interpreted across a 5-level rating scale (ranging from 4.51–5.00 for the highest level to 1.00–1.50 for the lowest level).

Qualitative Data: Analyzed using content analysis to extract in-depth thematic conclusions from the interviews.

RESEARCH RESULTS

- **Quantitative Results:** Overall, teachers rated the incentive mechanism at a high level ($M = 4.23$, $S.D. = 0.59$). Ranked from highest to lowest, the dimensions are: Mechanism management system ($M = 4.38$) $\rightarrow$ Career development ($M = 4.33$) $\rightarrow$ Payroll management ($M = 4.25$) $\rightarrow$ Distribution system ($M = 4.19$) $\rightarrow$ Job satisfaction ($M = 4.15$) $\rightarrow$ Psychological contract ($M = 4.08$).

- **Qualitative Results:** Interviews uncovered latent issues such as inflexible top-down policies, a salary structure tied more to seniority and academic rank than to teaching innovation, research-heavy evaluation criteria, a fragile psychological contract, and a lack of mutual trust (which received the lowest single-item score of $M = 3.98$).

DISCUSSION

The findings revealed an **empirical paradox** between the high quantitative scores and the underlying systemic problems identified in the qualitative interviews. The high scores reflect the institution's success in establishing formal administrative structures and fulfilling transactional contracts (functioning as Herzberg's hygiene factors, such as timely payroll). However, in practice, the system lacks genuine motivators and socioemotional support. A rigid, research-centric evaluation environment causes a "frustration-regression" effect (based on ERG theory) as teachers' career growth needs are blocked.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Mechanism Management: Establish department-level policy adaptation committees to allow flexible, discipline-specific rule implementation, and create an online policy feedback portal.

Payroll Management: Reform the compensation structure into three parallel tracks (teaching-excellence, applied-research, and vocational-expert) and introduce market-based salary supplements for high-demand disciplines.

Distribution System: Adopt a Balanced Scorecard approach for evaluations (e.g., 35% teaching, 20% student development, 20% industry engagement) and institutionalize teaching innovation awards.

Psychological Contract & Job Satisfaction: Implement annual "Stay Interviews" to proactively address faculty concerns, establish comprehensive wellness programs and emergency support funds, and conduct workload reviews to ensure a fair workload-reward balance.

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Data Availability Statement: The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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