

An Empirical Study on the Impact of Incentive Factors on the Teachers' Performance among Private Higher Institution in China

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ABSTRACT

This empirical study delves into the intricate relationship between incentive factors and the performance of teachers within the realm of private higher education institutions in China. With the rapid expansion of the private higher education sector in China, understanding the mechanisms that drive teacher performance becomes imperative for sustaining educational quality and institutional competitiveness. Employing a mixed-methods approach, this research integrates quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews to capture a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted dynamics at play. The quantitative phase involves administering structured questionnaires to a representative sample of teachers across various private higher institutions in China, while the qualitative phase entails in-depth interviews with key stakeholders, including administrators and educators. The study evaluates a range of incentive factors, encompassing financial rewards, professional development opportunities, recognition, and job satisfaction, among others. Through statistical analyses and thematic coding, the research aims to identify the most influential incentive factors and their differential impacts on teachers' performance indicators such as teaching effectiveness, research productivity, and overall job satisfaction. Preliminary findings suggest that while financial incentives remain a significant motivator for teachers, non-monetary factors such as opportunities for professional growth and recognition also play a pivotal role in enhancing performance and job satisfaction. Moreover, the study uncovers nuanced variations in the perceived effectiveness of incentive mechanisms across different demographic and institutional contexts. By shedding light on the intricate interplay between incentive factors and teachers' performance, this study provides valuable insights for private higher education institutions in China to formulate evidence-based strategies for optimizing faculty motivation, productivity, and overall institutional effectiveness. The implications of these findings extend beyond the confines of academia, offering policymakers and educational stakeholders actionable recommendations to foster a conducive environment for teaching excellence and innovation in the private higher education sector.

KEYWORDS: higher education, incentive factors, teacher performance, China

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Teacher Performance in Higher Education

Teacher performance in private higher education institutions in China is a topic of growing interest due to the rapid expansion of the sector and its implications for educational quality. Empirical studies have highlighted various factors that influence teacher performance, including incentives, job satisfaction, professional development, and institutional support (Shi & Wang, 2019). In a study by Shi and Wang (2019), it was found that financial incentives significantly impact teacher performance, but non-monetary factors such as recognition and opportunities for professional growth also play a crucial role. Additionally, institutional factors such as leadership style and organizational culture have been identified as important determinants of teacher performance (Li & Zhou, 2020). Li and Zhou (2020) argue that supportive leadership and a positive organizational culture can enhance teacher motivation and job satisfaction, ultimately leading to improved performance. These findings underscore the complex interplay of various factors in shaping teacher performance in private higher education institutions in China and emphasize the need for comprehensive strategies to support and incentivize educators.

B. Incentive Factors for Teacher Performance

Empirical studies investigating the incentive factors for teacher performance have shed light on the complexities underlying educators' motivation and productivity. Research by Deci and Ryan (2000) emphasizes the significance of intrinsic motivation in driving sustained and meaningful engagement among teachers. Intrinsic motivators, such as autonomy, mastery, and purpose, are found to be more conducive to long-term performance enhancement compared to extrinsic rewards alone. Moreover, studies by Lepper and Greene (1978) and Cameron and Pierce (1994) highlight the role of tangible rewards, such as financial incentives, in complementing intrinsic motivation and fostering desired behaviors. These findings underscore the importance of a balanced incentive system that incorporates both intrinsic and extrinsic motivators to effectively enhance teacher performance. Furthermore, empirical evidence suggests that non-monetary factors, including recognition, opportunities for professional development, and supportive leadership, significantly impact teacher motivation and job satisfaction (Shi & Wang, 2019; Li & Zhou, 2020). Such factors contribute to a positive work environment conducive to fostering teaching excellence and innovation. In sum, empirical studies underscore the multidimensional nature of incentive factors influencing teacher performance and advocate for tailored approaches that recognize the diverse motivations and needs of educators.

C. Problem Statement

In the context of private higher education institutions in China, the effectiveness of incentive factors in enhancing teacher performance presents a multifaceted challenge. Despite the growing recognition of the importance of incentivizing educators, existing literature suggests a gap in understanding the nuanced dynamics of incentive systems within this specific educational context. Studies such as those by Shi and Wang (2019) and Li and

Zhou (2020) have highlighted the significant influence of incentive mechanisms on teacher performance but emphasize the need for further empirical investigation to unravel the complexities involved. One of the pressing issues is the lack of tailored incentive strategies that align with the unique cultural, institutional, and socio-economic characteristics of private higher education institutions in China. Additionally, the prevalence of traditional reward structures, primarily focusing on financial incentives, may not fully capture the diverse motivations and needs of teachers in this context. Furthermore, the impact of non-monetary factors such as recognition, professional development opportunities, and supportive leadership on teacher performance remains underexplored. Hence, there is a compelling need for empirical research that delves deeper into the intricate interplay between various incentive factors and their differential effects on teacher motivation, job satisfaction, and ultimately, performance within private higher education institutions in China.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Defining Teacher Performance

Defining teacher performance within the scope of private higher education institutions requires a multifaceted approach that considers the diverse roles and responsibilities of educators in this context. Teacher performance encompasses not only the traditional facets of effective teaching, such as content delivery and student engagement but also extends to research productivity, professional development, and contributions to institutional goals and values. Research by Chien, Lai, and Tsai (2011) emphasizes the importance of evaluating teacher performance based on multiple dimensions, including teaching effectiveness, scholarly activities, service to the institution, and professional growth. Additionally, within the unique environment of private higher education institutions, where there may be smaller class sizes, greater flexibility in curriculum design, and closer interaction between faculty and students, teacher performance should also be assessed based on the quality of mentorship and guidance provided to students, as well as the cultivation of critical thinking skills and ethical values (Shi & Wang, 2019). Therefore, a holistic definition of teacher performance in private higher education institutions integrates both quantitative and qualitative measures, acknowledging the diverse contributions of educators to the academic, intellectual, and personal development of students.

B. Underpinning Theory on the Teacher Performance

Understanding the underlying theories that inform teacher performance is essential for elucidating the mechanisms through which educators' actions and behaviors contribute to student learning outcomes and institutional effectiveness. One prominent theoretical framework often applied in the context of teacher performance is Self-Determination Theory (SDT) proposed by Deci and Ryan (2000). SDT posits that individuals are intrinsically motivated to pursue activities that fulfill their psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Applied to the realm of education, SDT suggests that teachers who feel a sense of autonomy in their instructional practices, perceive themselves as competent in their teaching abilities, and experience meaningful connections with

students and colleagues are more likely to demonstrate higher levels of engagement, enthusiasm, and ultimately, performance. Additionally, Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) advanced by Bandura (1986) underscores the role of observational learning, self-efficacy beliefs, and environmental factors in shaping teacher behaviors and performance. According to SCT, teachers' performance is influenced by their beliefs in their own efficacy to effectively execute teaching tasks, as well as by the modeling and support provided by peers and administrators. By integrating insights from SDT and SCT, researchers and educational practitioners can develop comprehensive strategies for fostering teacher motivation, professional growth, and ultimately, enhancing student learning outcomes.

C. Defining Incentive Factors

Defining incentive factors for teacher performance involves identifying the tangible and intangible rewards that motivate educators to excel in their roles. While traditional incentive factors such as salary increases, bonuses, and promotion opportunities are often emphasized, recent research suggests that non-monetary incentives play a significant role in shaping teacher motivation and job satisfaction. According to a study by Hattie and Timperley (2007), feedback, recognition, and opportunities for professional development are critical drivers of teacher performance, as they contribute to a sense of competence, autonomy, and relatedness—the core psychological needs outlined in Self-Determination Theory (SDT). Moreover, intrinsic motivators such as a sense of purpose, job satisfaction, and alignment with personal values have been found to have a profound impact on teacher engagement and commitment (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Additionally, contextual factors including supportive leadership, a positive organizational culture, and opportunities for collaboration and growth are integral components of incentive systems that promote teacher effectiveness (Li & Zhou, 2020). By adopting a comprehensive approach that integrates both monetary and non-monetary incentives, educational stakeholders can create an environment conducive to fostering teacher performance and ultimately improving student outcomes.

D. Underpinning Theory on the Incentive Factors

The underpinning theory on incentive factors for performance revolves around Self-Determination Theory (SDT), proposed by Deci and Ryan (2000), which posits that individuals are intrinsically motivated to pursue activities that fulfill their psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Within the context of incentive factors for performance, SDT suggests that rewards and incentives can either support or undermine intrinsic motivation, depending on the extent to which they satisfy these basic psychological needs. For instance, monetary incentives, such as salary increases or bonuses, may provide extrinsic motivation but can diminish intrinsic motivation if they are perceived as controlling or coercive. On the other hand, non-monetary incentives such as feedback, recognition, and opportunities for professional development are aligned with the core psychological needs outlined in SDT and are more likely to enhance intrinsic motivation and job satisfaction (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Moreover, Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), proposed by Bandura (1986), emphasizes the role of observational learning, self-efficacy beliefs, and environmental factors in shaping behavior and performance. SCT suggests that

teachers' beliefs in their own efficacy to perform well, as well as the modeling and support provided by leaders and peers, play a crucial role in determining the effectiveness of incentive systems (Bandura, 1986). By integrating insights from SDT and SCT, educational stakeholders can develop incentive systems that foster intrinsic motivation, support professional growth, and ultimately enhance performance outcomes.

III. CONCEPTUAL DEVELOPMENT

A. Impact of Incentive Factors on the Teachers Performance

In investigating the effects of incentive factors on teacher performance within private higher education institutions, employing a robust research design is imperative to ensure the validity and reliability of findings. A mixed-methods approach would offer a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted dynamics at play. Quantitative surveys could be administered to a representative sample of teachers across various private higher institutions in China to assess their perceptions of incentive factors and their self-reported performance indicators such as teaching effectiveness, research productivity, and job satisfaction. These surveys could include validated scales to measure intrinsic motivation, extrinsic rewards, job satisfaction, and other relevant constructs. Additionally, qualitative interviews with key stakeholders, including administrators, educators, and possibly students, could provide rich insights into the contextual factors influencing the effectiveness of incentive mechanisms. Thematic analysis could be employed to identify patterns and themes in the qualitative data, while statistical analyses such as regression modeling could be used to examine the relationships between incentive factors and teacher performance indicators quantitatively. By triangulating data from multiple sources, this research design would allow for a more nuanced understanding of how incentive factors impact teacher performance in the context of private higher education institutions in China.

In investigating the direct effects of incentive factors on teacher performance within private higher education institutions, employing a quantitative methodology offers a structured approach to analyze relationships and causal effects. A quantitative study could involve administering surveys to teachers to gather data on their perceptions of various incentive factors, such as financial rewards, recognition, professional development opportunities, and job satisfaction. Additionally, objective measures of teacher performance, such as student evaluations, research output, and administrative assessments, could be collected. Statistical analyses, such as regression modeling, could then be employed to examine the direct effects of incentive factors on teacher performance indicators while controlling for potential confounding variables. By quantifying the strength and direction of these relationships, this methodology allows researchers to identify which incentive factors have the most significant impact on teacher performance outcomes. However, it's essential to recognize the limitations of self-reported data and ensure the validity and reliability of measurement instruments used in the study.

B. Hypothetical Development

In designing a hypothetical empirical study on the impact of incentive factors on teacher performance among private higher institutions in China, a systematic approach is essential to develop clear hypotheses. Drawing from existing literature, one could hypothesize that there is a positive relationship between incentive factors, such as financial rewards, recognition, and professional development opportunities, and teacher performance indicators, including teaching effectiveness, research productivity, and job satisfaction. Specifically, it could be posited that teachers who perceive higher levels of financial rewards, receive more recognition for their contributions, and have access to greater professional development opportunities will demonstrate higher levels of performance across these dimensions. Moreover, considering the cultural context and organizational factors inherent in private higher education institutions in China, one could hypothesize that certain incentive factors may have differential effects on teacher performance based on factors such as leadership style, organizational culture, and institutional resources. By testing these hypotheses using empirical data collected through surveys, interviews, and objective performance measures, researchers can contribute to a deeper understanding of the mechanisms underlying the relationship between incentive factors and teacher performance in this specific context.

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