

Study on the Impact of Teacher Salary Incentives on Teachers' Performance in Higher Education

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Abstract

Teachers in universities are the main force in conducting teaching and research in universities, and are also the main force in cultivating high-level talents. Scientific salary incentive mechanism is the source of attracting talents, enhancing innovation ability and improving core competitiveness in universities. The relationship between university teachers' remuneration incentives and teachers' performance is a hot issue in the field of higher education. This paper analyzes the current situation of research on salary incentives and job performance of university teachers, discusses the relationship between salary incentives and job performance of university teachers, sorts out the main problems of current salary incentives, and finally puts forward policy suggestions to provide theoretical basis for universities to enhance the effect of salary incentives and improve job performance of teachers.

Keywords

University Teachers; Salary Incentives; Job Performance.

1. Presentation of the Problem

In recent years, the Chinese government has issued a series of policies and regulations on the reform of universities. The National Medium and Long-term Education Reform and Development Plan (2010-2020) proposes that higher education reform should "improve management models, introduce competition mechanisms, implement performance evaluation and carry out dynamic management"[1]. As a special group with strong self-awareness and psychological needs, university teachers are different from ordinary operational and service employees and cannot be dealt with by simple target management or performance management, which makes it necessary for university managers to think about how to improve the performance output of university teachers by combining their work characteristics and needs.

Salary is an effective lever for optimising human resources[2] and salary incentives play an active role in attracting and stabilising teacher talent. Remuneration incentives for teachers in higher education include material, developmental, target and outcome based incentives[3]. Material incentives, however, are the most important and valuable incentives for employees and provide a huge boost to teachers' behaviour. However, on the whole, teachers are very dissatisfied with their income[4]; in 2013, Sohu video aired a collective strike by thousands of teachers at a university in Chongqing over the distribution of performance salary. This shows that how to improve the motivational effect of salary has become one of the main issues to be addressed by universities. There is a complex relationship between salary and job performance, and it becomes urgent and necessary to study salary as an important factor affecting the job performance and stability of university teachers.

2. The Current State of Research on Teacher Salary Incentives and Job Performance in Higher Education

2.1. Related Research on Salary Incentives

2.1.1. China the Remuneration Incentive System and Main Ways for Teachers in Higher Education

2.1.1.1 Current System of Remuneration Incentives for University Teachers

Since 2006, the state has launched the reform of income distribution in institutions, universities have gradually implemented the post setting and the first post employment grading system, and most research universities have initially completed the steps of basic salary entry and post salary grading. Many universities have, on the basis of scientific posting, linked the income of teaching staff to their work performance through performance appraisal and other means, and fully mobilised the enthusiasm of teaching staff by widening the income gap.

However, the post-employment management of teachers is still in the exploratory stage, and the overall level of salary enhancement and differentiation is not obvious. Teachers' expectations for the introduction of the new scheme are getting higher and higher, resulting in an increase in the potential pressure on the implementation of performance salary in universities and a rising trend of institutional incentive costs, and there are still many aspects of the reformed research university teachers' salary system that need to be improved.

2.1.1.2 Main Ways to Motivate Teachers' Remuneration in Higher Education

At present, scholars at home and abroad generally believe that there are three main ways of salary incentives: first, economic salary incentives in monetary form or convertible into monetary form. It is mainly reflected in the internal fairness and external competitiveness of remuneration, rewards, allowances, various benefits and good training, performance salary and stock options etc.[5]. Secondly, non-financial remuneration incentives. With the emergence of the concept of total remuneration, non-economic factors such as social recognition, trust, job autonomy, individual employee growth and the need for achievement should also be taken into account when setting remuneration. The third is the incentive of a total salary approach, i.e. a comprehensive salary incentive model that combines reasonable economic salary as well as sound non-economic salary.

2.1.2. Other Studies on Salary Incentives

In terms of research objects, most of the domestic and international studies on salary incentives focus on enterprises, but there are not many studies on the salary incentives of university teachers, who are the representatives of knowledge workers. In terms of research content, most of the studies focus on the analysis of the problems of university salary system and improvement strategies, or research on salary incentive factors and their incentive effects based on theories and models. In terms of research methods, most of the early studies were mainly theoretical, but in the past 20 years, they have gradually shifted to applied research supported by data. As the salary incentives of university teachers are closely related to the local economy, culture and policies, there is an urgent need to combine incentive theory with university salary management practices and adopt quantitative methods for analysis.

2.2. Related Studies on Job Performance

The analysis and research on the connotation and structural dimensions of university teachers' performance by academics have generally formed the following consensus: the structural dimensions of university teachers have basically been extended from the perspective of university functions, forming talent cultivation performance, research and academic performance and social service performance around the three major functions of universities, namely talent cultivation, research and academic and social service. In the assessment and

evaluation of teachers' performance, different scholars adopt different assessment methods and assessment tools, reflecting the difficulties in the evaluation of teachers' performance in universities. Due to the relative complexity of talent cultivation performance, research and academic performance and social service performance in terms of performance presentation and assessment implementation process, it is a difficult task to accurately and comprehensively measure the performance level of university teachers.

2.3. A Study on the Impact of Salary Incentives on Job Performance

2.3.1. The Impact of Salary Incentives on Talent Development Performance

Yu Huajun found through an empirical study that salary incentives have a significant impact on talent development performance[6]. College teachers, especially young teachers, must consider how to get basic livelihood protection first based on the pressure of life, and the low economic income is the biggest source of pressure for college teachers.[7] Therefore, improving the income level of college teachers and relieving the economic pressure of college teachers will improve the performance level of college teachers and enable college teachers to rest on their work.[8] , both by improving the teaching income of college teachers to ensure that teachers It is also necessary to increase rewards for teachers' teaching performance and achievements to form a virtuous circle[9]. It is also necessary to promote the organic combination of practical teaching activities, classroom teaching and scientific research, and to fully mobilise the initiative, enthusiasm and creativity of university teachers to participate in teaching through mechanisms such as teaching workload allowances and rewards for teaching achievements [10] .

2.3.2. The Impact of Salary Incentives on Academic Performance in Research

At present, there are two views on the relationship between salary incentives and academic performance in research. One view is that there is a positive effect of salary on research academic performance, such as Zhu Wei's view that all kinds of reward and evaluation mechanisms in research activities may become external conditions to motivate work, and that these mechanisms can lead to the improvement of research quality[11] . In terms of the fairness of salary motivation, there are similarly situations where university researchers perceive salary mechanisms to be fair will lead to increased motivation, and conversely, when salary is perceived to be unfair, motivation will be affected. Another view is that salary does not have a positive effect on research academic performance. Zhang Xun et al. argue that salary satisfaction of university teachers has no positive effect on research commitment[12] . However, on the whole, there are more scholars who hold the view that salary incentives have a positive effect on research academic performance.

2.3.3. The Impact of Salary Incentives on Social Service Performance

At present, universities do not have enough financial support for teachers to carry out research, and it would be helpful for universities to obtain external financial support for research from the community. At the same time, obtaining external remuneration through service to the community is also of positive significance in improving the current situation of relatively low income for university teachers. In addition to lecturing and researching well, university teachers should actively engage with society and carry out university-enterprise cooperation and social services, and need to link these social services work with university teachers' salaries, so as to stimulate the enthusiasm and initiative of university teachers' work.[13]Some argue that salary does not have a positive effect on social service performance. For example, Yu Huajun believes that the effect of salary incentives on social service performance is not significant. However, most of the existing studies basically accept that there is a relationship between salary incentives for university teachers on social service performance, and that by

increasing the salary incentives for university teachers, it can help to enhance social service performance.

3. Existing Problems and Policy Recommendations on Remuneration Incentives

3.1. Key Issues in Remuneration Incentives for Teachers in Higher Education

3.1.1. Low Teacher Salary Levels and Lack of External Competitiveness

In general, the determination of remuneration levels in higher education institutions lacks sufficient integration with the market, and there is a disconnect between the remuneration levels of teachers and the 'price' of the human market. The remuneration of teachers with equivalent qualifications in higher education institutions is not competitive with that of teachers in social organisations. Although the state salary in the remuneration of university teachers has a stable and reliable source of funding with guaranteed policy support, the state salary of university teachers is currently of a low to medium level in terms of the actual situation in the country. Moreover, the proportion of state salary in the composition of teachers' salaries is becoming lower and lower, and the dominant role of this part of salary has decreased.

3.1.2. Single Form and Rigid Means of Teacher Salary Incentives

Some colleges and universities, when formulating their salary incentive mechanisms, often lack the analysis of individual teachers' needs, and adopt the same and single incentive measures for teachers in general, ignoring the differences in their individual psychological characteristics and age, and have not yet established a multi-dimensional cross-incentive system. In the establishment of the salary incentive system of universities, the proportion of economic salary is more inclined to increase, and the incentive of non-economic salary for teachers' work is easily ignored. At the same time, many institutions are now rigidly stipulating that the publication of academic journals of sufficient level or the achievement of prescribed honours and awards is the only way to obtain promotion, thus contributing to the utilitarianisation of some teaching and research work. A rigidly materialistic and uncaring remuneration mechanism will not ensure that universities achieve a high level of success in the battle for talent in the 21st century.

3.1.3. Create Egalitarianism and Dilute the Incentive Effect

Most of the universities in China are affiliated with public universities, and their management systems inevitably still have the disadvantage of egalitarianism. The Ministry of Education has set up a research group to study the income of university teachers and conducted a systematic questionnaire survey on the salary and income of some university staff across China. The survey team deliberately calculated the intra-school Gini coefficient for this purpose, i.e. by using data on the distribution of salary income of teachers in the sample universities to calculate the Gini coefficient for each sample university independently. This results in a Gini coefficient for each school. Its findings show that the average Gini coefficient within each HEI in the sample is 0.214, with a maximum value of 0.37. Although intra-school salary income differences have tended to widen, on the whole, the income differences within HEIs are not too great and their maximum value does not exceed the safety line of 0.4. Therefore, to improve the salary system, HEIs need to doctrine to overcome egalitarianism[14].

3.2. Policy Recommendations for Teacher Remuneration Incentives in Higher Education

3.2.1. Remuneration Incentives

The first is to set competitive salary levels. On the basis of extensive research, teachers' salaries are scientifically positioned and controlled, with emphasis on both direct and indirect salary.

Secondly, a reasonable and effective remuneration model is determined. Emphasis is placed on the fairness and operability of the design of the remuneration structure. Fairness is mainly reflected in three aspects: external fairness, internal fairness and personal fairness, that is, to ensure that the salary structure of our university is reasonably designed when compared with universities in the region or even universities in different regions, to ensure that the salary levels between employees of our university with different positions, skills and performance, and teachers in the same positions are fair and reasonable, and to ensure the fairness of engaging in salary. Operability is reflected in the ability of the salary to meet the requirements of salary adjustment for staff position adjustment, promotion, etc.[15] Thirdly, it sets up a salaryment strategy that meets individual needs. Do it according to the individual and the job. For middle-aged teachers, the incentive effect of monetary salary is limited, and non-monetary salary is the only way to motivate themselves. For teaching teachers and research teachers, different evaluation and assessment criteria are set for "teaching" and "research" respectively. The fourth is the implementation of broadbanded salary scales. In the design of salary incentives, a certain degree of orientation should be reflected by adopting a broadbanded salary structure, so that the salary range of each grade becomes larger, the salary grade line is extended, the salary categories are reduced, each category contains more salary grades and standards, and the salary standards between categories are crossed.

3.2.2. In Terms of Work Performance

Universities should salary attention to the effectiveness of salary incentives and establish a "performance-oriented, assessment-based" salary system. On the one hand, performance appraisal promotes the linkage between salary and performance, which in itself has an incentive effect on teachers and is a reflection of the effectiveness of salary incentives; on the other hand, university salary schemes based on scientific appraisal allow salary to be directly combined with teachers' performance, making salary design simple and efficient. In setting the performance assessment objectives of teachers, universities should grasp the principles of measurability, operability, relevance and timeliness to enhance the incentive effect of university salary on teachers and improve the work performance of employees. Only after salarizing attention to the scientific setting and management of salary can we promote the effect of salary incentive, enhance the enthusiasm of university teachers, cultivate teachers' sense of belonging to the university and enhance cohesion, so as to continuously promote teachers' work performance and improve the level of university management teaching and research.

4. Reflection and Outlook

The study of salary incentives for university teachers is a challenging subject. This challenge comes not only from the lack of direct research materials to refer to and rely on, but also from the interdisciplinary nature of the topic itself. As an economic issue in the field of education, the study of this topic requires an in-depth understanding and knowledge of the relevant fields of economics, management and psychology, as well as a grasp of the basic principles of human resource management and salaryroll design, and an in-depth exploration of the special characteristics of higher education.

Remuneration incentives are the most important, effective and critical motivation measure for staff, and are related to the career development of staff and the achievement of the organisation's overall strategic goals. The issue of remuneration incentives for university teachers is seen as a common problem that needs to be solved as soon as possible, directly affecting the motivation of teachers and the long-term development of the organisation. The existence of this problem affects the innovation of the university personnel system and restricts the sustainable development of the university construction. It is important to understand the needs of teachers and to create the conditions to meet their needs in order to improve their

motivation and to synchronise the interests of the university with those of individual teachers, so that the rapid development of higher education in China can be achieved.

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