

A MODEL OF DEVELOPMENT AND INCENTIVE MECHANISM OF TEACHERS IN PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES IN GUIZHOU PROVINCE*

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Abstract

This study aimed to 1) examine the key variables influencing career development and incentive mechanisms for teachers in private universities in Guizhou Province, and 2) develop a model for enhancing teacher career development and incentive mechanisms. The research employed a mixed-methods approach combining quantitative and qualitative methods. The quantitative data were collected from 422 teachers working in private universities in Guizhou Province using a structured questionnaire. The qualitative data were obtained through in-depth interviews with 22 key informants, including faculty members and administrators. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, t-tests, ANOVA, and correlation analysis, while qualitative data were analyzed through content analysis.

The findings revealed that insufficient salary and benefits, imperfect promotion mechanisms, limited training opportunities, and insufficient teaching and research resources were the main obstacles affecting the effectiveness of incentive mechanisms. Among these factors, salary and benefits and promotion systems were identified as the most significant challenges. In addition, teachers emphasized that retention rate, teaching quality improvement, promotion opportunities, research productivity, and job satisfaction were important indicators for evaluating the effectiveness of incentive mechanisms. Based on

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these findings, a model for enhancing teacher career development and incentive mechanisms was proposed, emphasizing fair compensation, transparent promotion systems, professional development opportunities, and balanced evaluation of teaching and research performance.

Keywords: Teacher Career Development, Incentive Mechanisms, Private Universities, Higher Education

Introduction

Amid the accelerating trend of massification and diversification in higher education, private universities have become an indispensable component of China's higher education system. In Guizhou Province, a region in Southwest China with relatively underdeveloped economic conditions but growing strategic importance, private higher education has experienced rapid growth in recent years. (Jiang, & Ke, 2021) The number of private universities has steadily increased, with expanding institutional scale and a growing contribution to the cultivation of application-oriented talents for regional economic and social development (Markey, Et al 2021)

With the rapid advancement of higher education in China, private universities have played an increasingly important role in expanding access to educational resources and meeting the diverse learning needs of the population. (Singh, & Kaur, 2023) In Guizhou Province—a key region in western China characterized by both economic under development and strategic importance—the number of private universities has grown steadily in recent years. (Wang, Yang, & Maresova, 2020) This expansion has been accompanied by a rising demand for qualified teaching personnel. However, critical issues such as unclear career development paths and underdeveloped incentive mechanisms have become more pronounced, seriously affecting teacher motivation, job satisfaction, and retention, as well as the overall quality of teaching and institutional sustainability (Zhao, Et al 2024)

Teachers in Guizhou's private universities currently face multiple professional challenges. (Zhang, Et al 2009) These include limited and often opaque pathways for academic promotion, insufficient institutional support for research activities, and overlapping responsibilities between administrative and

instructional roles. (Liu, Zha, & He, 2019) Furthermore, disparities in salaries and benefits, a weak sense of professional identity, and limited opportunities for recognition and achievement continue to undermine teachers' morale and contribute to high turnover rates. (Mather, & Bam, 2025) Such challenges not only hinder individual professional development but also impede the broader goal of improving educational quality and institutional competitiveness in the private higher education sector. (Mather, & Bam, 2025) Although a growing body of research has investigated faculty development and motivation in Chinese universities. (Adarkwah, Mekonen, & Kalim, 2021) The existing literature tends to focus on public institutions or those located in economically advanced regions particularly in eastern. China In contrast. there remains a significant research gap regarding the unique conditions and needs of private universities in Guizhou. The local context—marked by limited educational funding, lower prestige, and inadequate faculty support systems—necessitates targeted analysis and context-specific solutions. (Sun, Lin, Liang, Y., & Li, 2016)

Therefore, it is essential to conduct a comprehensive and systematic investigation into the career development paths and incentive mechanisms for faculty in private universities in Guizhou Province. This research seeks to identify the root causes of the current challenges, evaluate their impact on teaching staff, and explore tailored strategies to enhance professional growth and institutional effectiveness. Ultimately, the findings aim to provide both theoretical insights and practical recommendations to promote faculty development and support the sustainable evolution of private higher education in the region.

Objectives

1. To examine the key variables influencing career development and incentive mechanisms for teachers in private universities in Guizhou Province
2. To develop a model for enhancing teacher career development and incentive

Methodology

1. Research Design

This study employed a mixed-methods research design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing teacher career development and incentive mechanisms in private universities in Guizhou Province. The quantitative component aimed to examine the key variables affecting incentive mechanisms, while the qualitative component was conducted to provide deeper insights and support the development of an appropriate model for enhancing teacher career development and motivation.

2. Population and Sample

2.1 The population of this study consisted of teachers working in private universities in Guizhou Province, China. The sample size was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan sampling table to ensure adequate representation of the population.

2.2 A total of 422 teachers were selected as the quantitative sample through stratified purposive sampling, considering factors such as institution type, geographic location, and academic position. This sampling method ensured diversity and representativeness among respondents.

2.3 For the qualitative component, 22 key informants were selected using purposive sampling. These participants included faculty members, administrators, and academic managers such as deans or personnel officers who were familiar with teacher career development and institutional incentive policies.

3. Research Instruments

3.1 The primary research instrument for the quantitative phase was a structured questionnaire designed to examine factors related to teacher career development and incentive mechanisms. The questionnaire consisted of three sections: demographic information, factors influencing career development and incentive mechanisms, and evaluation indicators for the effectiveness of incentive systems. The items were measured using a five-point Likert scale.

3.2 The content validity of the questionnaire was evaluated by three experts in educational administration and higher education management. The

reliability of the instrument was tested using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, which yielded a reliability value greater than 0.80, indicating a high level of internal consistency.

3.3 For the qualitative phase, semi-structured interview questions were developed to explore participants' perspectives on career development challenges, incentive mechanisms, and potential strategies for improvement.

4. Data Collection and Data Analysis

4.1 Data collection for the quantitative phase was conducted using Google Forms, which was distributed to teachers working in private universities in Guizhou Province. A total of 422 valid responses were obtained and used for analysis. For the qualitative phase, in-depth interviews were conducted with the selected key informants, and the interview data were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed.

4.2 Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation, to describe the general characteristics of the variables. In addition, inferential statistics such as t-test, ANOVA, and chi-square analysis were employed to examine differences and relationships among variables.

4.3 Qualitative data were analyzed using content analysis, which involved categorizing and interpreting key themes related to teacher career development and incentive mechanisms. The qualitative findings were used to support the interpretation of quantitative results and to assist in the development of the proposed incentive model.

Results

Objective 1 To examine the key variables influencing career development and incentive mechanisms for teachers in private universities in Guizhou Province

The research findings clearly demonstrate that the process of putting a structured incentive model into practice within private universities located in Guizhou encounters a variety of substantial and noteworthy challenges. These challenges are multifaceted and complex, encompassing aspects such as financial limitations which can severely restrict the scope and scale of incentive

programs; institutional resistance where existing power structures and traditional ways of operating may be reluctant to embrace new incentive systems; fairness concerns as different stakeholders may have varying perceptions of what constitutes an equitable distribution of rewards; incentive imbalance which can lead to certain types of achievements or contributions being undervalued or overvalued; and inadequate communication that can result in misunderstandings and a lack of clarity regarding the purpose and operation of the incentive model. Among all these obstacles, funding constraints stand out as the most fundamental barrier. This is because financial resources are the lifeblood of any incentive system, and without sufficient funding, it becomes extremely difficult to sustain incentive measures over the long term.

Furthermore, there are additional factors that can impede the effectiveness of the incentive model. Ineffective management practices, for example, can create confusion and inefficiencies in the implementation process. When combined with the lack of transparent evaluation standards, these issues can significantly undermine teachers' trust in the system. Teachers need to have confidence that their efforts and achievements will be fairly and accurately assessed, and without clear and open evaluation criteria, this trust can be easily eroded. Moreover, an overemphasis on research - based incentives may not adequately cater to the diverse career orientations of faculty members. In particular, those who are primarily focused on teaching may feel marginalized or undervalued if the incentive system disproportionately rewards research output at the expense of teaching excellence. Additionally, the limited participation of teachers in the design and adjustment of incentive policies can further reduce the model's practical effectiveness. When teachers are not actively involved in shaping the incentive system, it may fail to address their specific needs and concerns, leading to a lack of buy - in and engagement from the very people it is intended to motivate.

Table 1 Descriptive statistics of obstacles to the implementation of incentive mechanisms (n = 422)

Obstacles	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Insufficient salary and benefits	358	84.8
The promotion mechanism is not perfect.	307	72.7
Limited training opportunities	166	39.3
Insufficient teaching and research resources	141	33.4
Unreasonable allocation of workload	128	30.3

As shown in Table 1 insufficient salary levels (84.8%) and imperfect promotion mechanisms (72.7%) are the most prominent obstacles to the effective implementation of incentive systems. These results reflect the resource and institutional constraints commonly faced by private universities.

Other factors such as limited training opportunities and inadequate research resources further weaken the sustainability of incentive mechanisms.

Chi-square analysis indicates statistically significant differences among teachers with different professional titles in their perceptions of promotion mechanisms and workload allocation ($p < 0.05$). This finding suggests that implementation challenges are structurally differentiated, affecting faculty members at various career stages in distinct ways.

Specifically, associate professors and professors, who have attained higher professional titles, tend to place greater emphasis on the fairness and transparency of promotion mechanisms. They often express concerns that the current promotion criteria may overly prioritize quantitative indicators, such as the number of publications or research grants, while neglecting the quality and long - term impact of teaching and research.

Objective 2) To develop a model for enhancing teacher career development and incentive

In contrast, lecturers and assistant professors, who are in the early stages of their academic careers, are more sensitive to the availability of training opportunities and mentorship support during the promotion process. They

frequently report that the lack of clear guidance on career development trajectories and insufficient support for skill improvement impede their progress towards higher titles.

These disparities highlight the necessity for incentive systems to be customized to the specific requirements and concerns of faculty members at different professional stages, rather than adopting a uniform approach.

Table 2 Statistics on the acceptance of incentive mechanism effectiveness evaluation indicators (n = 422)

Evaluation indicators	Frequency (n)	percentage(%)
Teacher retention rate	341	80.8
Improve teaching quality	329	78.0
Promotion rate	316	74.9
Increase in scientific research results	298	70.6
Job satisfaction	321	76.1

Based on the data presented in Table 4 - 5, it is apparent that teaching professionals consider the faculty retention rate, improvement of teaching quality, and job satisfaction as the most significant indicators when evaluating the effectiveness of an incentive model. These particular indicators not only illustrate the overall stability of the educational institution but also mirror the developmental advancement of individual educators within the organization. The integration of these factors offers a comprehensive understanding of the performance of the incentive system from both institutional and individual viewpoints.

Discussion

1. Discussion on the Key Variables Influencing Career Development and Incentive Mechanisms

The findings indicate that insufficient salary and benefits, imperfect promotion mechanisms, and limited professional development opportunities are the main factors affecting incentive mechanisms for teachers in private universities in Guizhou Province. Among these factors, salary and benefits were identified as the most significant obstacles, indicating that financial incentives remain essential for maintaining teacher motivation and professional

commitment. This result is consistent with Mather and Bam (2025), who emphasized that compensation and career advancement opportunities significantly influence faculty satisfaction and retention in higher education institutions. In addition, the lack of transparent promotion systems may weaken teachers' motivation and reduce their willingness to remain in academic institutions. Similar findings were reported by Zhao et al. (2024), who noted that clear and fair promotion pathways are important for retaining academic staff. Limited training opportunities and insufficient research resources were also identified as barriers to teachers' professional development. These findings support Adarkwah et al. (2021), who highlighted that continuous professional development is essential for enhancing teachers' competencies. Moreover, an excessive emphasis on research achievements may create an imbalance in incentive systems, particularly for teachers who focus mainly on teaching. Singh and Kaur (2023) suggested that universities should maintain balanced evaluation systems that recognize both teaching and research contributions. Finally, regional economic conditions in Guizhou Province may further constrain the implementation of effective incentive mechanisms, as regional disparities can influence the availability of institutional resources (Sun et al., 2016).

2. Development of a Model for Enhancing Teacher Career Development and Incentive

Based on the findings, a model for enhancing teacher career development and incentive mechanisms was developed. The model emphasizes fair compensation, transparent promotion systems, professional development opportunities, and balanced evaluation criteria for teaching and research performance. The results also indicate that teacher retention, improvement of teaching quality, and job satisfaction are key indicators for evaluating the effectiveness of incentive mechanisms. These findings suggest that incentive systems should integrate financial rewards with broader institutional support for professional development. This is consistent with Jiang and Ke (2021), who emphasized the importance of sustainable human resource management strategies in higher education development. Furthermore, the model highlights the importance of balancing teaching and research responsibilities in faculty evaluation systems. Wang et al. (2020) suggested that sustainable higher

education development requires integrating teaching quality, research productivity, and social contributions. In addition, supportive institutional environments are essential for promoting teachers' long-term professional growth (Korthagen & Nuijten, 2022).

Recommendation

Future research should explore the longitudinal impact of different incentive mechanisms on teacher performance and retention in private universities, considering variables such as institutional size, funding models, and disciplinary differences. Comparative studies between public and private university incentive systems could yield insights into best practices adaptable to Guizhou's context. Additionally,

qualitative investigations into teachers' perceptions of incentive effectiveness and barriers to implementation will provide a deeper understanding of motivational dynamics. Exploring the role of government policies and regional economic factors in shaping incentive frameworks can offer guidance for policy refinement. Incorporating technological tools for monitoring and evaluating incentive outcomes may also enhance the precision and responsiveness of development programs. Such comprehensive research will contribute to formulating evidence-based, sustainable incentive models that support the professional growth of teachers and the advancement of private higher education in Guizhou Province.

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