

## **The Incentive Mechanisms for Administrative Staff at NanNing University**

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**Abstract:** The objectives of this research were 1) to study the current situation of incentive mechanisms at NanNing University, and 2) To suggest the guideline of incentive mechanisms for administrative staff at NanNing University in four aspects as follows: 1) compensation incentive, 2) growth incentive, 3) achievement incentive, and 4) environment incentive. The sample group of this research was 86 administrative staff at NanNing University and the interviewees were 5 administrative staff with experience and expertise in their fields. The research instruments were questionnaires and structured interviews. The data analysis statistic was a percentage, mean, and standard deviation. The results of this research found that the current situation of the incentive mechanisms at NanNing University was satisfactory at a high level. When considering the research results in various fields, it was found that the highest level was environmental motivation, followed by achievement incentive, and growth incentive was the lowest level. Guideline for the development of incentive mechanisms should be considered in line with the findings and personal status as follows: 1) set up a salary payment system and promote clear and transparent career advancement, 2) foster a culture of continuous learning and development by providing training opportunities, 3) encourage employees to participate in the decision-making process regarding incentive programs and policies, and 4) promote a good working environment in teamwork and mutual respect among colleagues.

**Keywords:** incentive mechanisms, administrative staff, NanNing University

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### **1. Introduction**

The National Medium and Long-Term Education Reform and Development Plan in China has placed private education in a strategic position of priority development, with strong support for its growth and expansion. Private higher education institutions in China play a significant role in higher education and contribute to the country's talent development. However, there is a disparity between private colleges and public universities in terms of social standing, wage, welfare insurance, and development prospects due to weaker management teams and a lack of incentive mechanisms for administrative staff in private institutions. Addressing these issues is crucial for ensuring the steady and sustainable growth of private colleges and universities and for the overall advancement of education reform in China. By improving management teams and implementing suitable incentive mechanisms, private institutions can improve the motivation and productivity of their administrative staff, which can lead to better overall growth and development of these institutions.

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### **2. Literature Review**

#### **2.1 Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory**

Maslow's hierarchy of needs is represented as a pyramid with the more basic needs at the bottom. Maslow's hierarchy of needs is an idea in psychology proposed by Abraham Maslow in his 1943 paper "A Theory of Human Motivation" in *Psychological Review*. Maslow's hierarchy of needs is used to study how

humans intrinsically partake in behavioral motivation. Maslow used the terms "physiological", "safety", "belonging and love", "social needs" "esteem", and "self-actualization" to describe the pattern through which human motivations generally move. According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory, employees are motivated by fulfilling their physiological, safety, social, esteem, and self-actualization needs. Incentive mechanisms that consider these needs can effectively motivate university staff to improve their performance and achieve higher levels of job satisfaction (Maslow, 1943).

**2.2 David McClelland's achievement motivation theory**

McClelland claimed that motivation is “a recurrent concern for a goal state or condition as measured in fantasy, which drives, directs and selects the behavior of the individual”. He believes that individuals have three important motivations or needs in work situations: the need for achievement, power, and social interaction. These needs are not innate instinctive desires as Maslow's theory suggests, but are acquired through later learning, hence the achievement needs theory is also called the acquired needs theory.

**2.3 Alderfer ERG needs theory.**

Alderfer (1969) proposed the ERG theory after many empirical studies, which suggests that there are three core human needs: survival, relatedness, and growth and development needs. Additionally, the theory states that these three needs can produce incentives and do not need to be satisfied in a hierarchical order.

**2.4 Herzberg’s two factors theory**

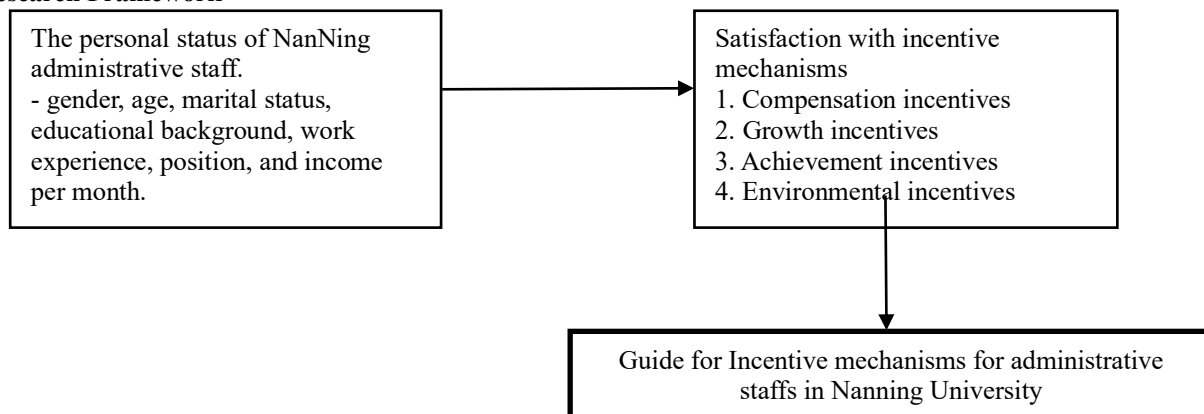
Herzberg (1959) first proposed the two-factor theory, which suggests that there are two factors related to employee motivation: hygiene factors and motivational factors. Hygiene factors are the factors that lead to employee dissatisfaction, while motivational factors are the factors that lead to employee satisfaction.

**2.5 Expectancy theory**

Expectancy theory was proposed by American psychologist Victor Vroom (1964) in his book "Work and Motivation" published in the year. Vroom believed that every person has needs and needs to be motivated to achieve a certain goal. Expectancy theory is a theory that studies the relationship between needs (expectations) and goals. It reflects the relationship between the power a person is stimulated by the goals pursued, and the possibility of achieving them. To motivate employees to do their job well, it is necessary to make them clear about three issues: first, whether the job can provide them with what they need; second, whether what they desire is related to performance; and third, whether their performance can be improved if they work hard.

**3. Research Methodology**

**3.1 Research Framework**



**3.2 Population and sample group**

**Population**

The population of this research was 117 administrative staff at Nanning University.

**The Sample Group**

The sample group of this research was 86 administrative staff in Nanning University, determined by random sampling from Nanning University. The interviewee in this research was five administrative staff in NanNing University. They were stratified with groups of work sampling and specific random sampling by administrative staff who have extensive experience and expertise in their respective fields.

### 3.3 Data Collection

The data collection was completed through the questionnaire. The researcher emailed a questionnaire to administrative staff and required them to submit it within three days of receiving the questionnaire. The researcher interviewed five administrative staff who have extensive experience and expertise in their respective fields one-on-one.

### 3.4 Research Instruments

#### a. Questionnaire

The Instrument to collect the data in this research was the questionnaire about incentive mechanisms for administrative staff at Nanning University. Which was designed based on four incentive mechanisms: 1) compensation incentive, 2) growth incentive, 3) achievement incentive, and 4) environment incentive. The questionnaire was provided into 2 parts. Part one was a survey of the personal information of respondents, classified by gender, age, marital status, education level, and income. Part two was a survey of the incentive mechanisms for administrative staff at NanNing University. There are 5 questions for compensation incentives, 5 questions for growth incentives, 5 for achievement incentives, and 5 for environmental incentives, a total of 20 questions.

A score of 4.50-5.00 indicates the highest level of satisfaction, 3.50-4.49 expresses satisfaction at a high level, 2.50-3.49 expresses satisfaction at a medium level, 1.50-2.49 indicates satisfaction at a low level, and 1.00-1.49 indicates satisfaction at the lowest level.

#### b. Structured interview

The structured interview about the incentive mechanisms was designed based on the results of data analysis from the questionnaire. The interview questions mainly focused on the incentive mechanisms in four aspects as follows: 1) compensation incentive, 2) growth incentive, 3) achievement incentive, and 4) environment incentive. The interviewees with extensive experience and expertise in their respective fields suggested developing incentive mechanisms for administrative staff at NanNing University in this step.

### 3.5 Reliability and Validity of the Questionnaire

The construction of the research instrument was as follows: the researcher reviewed and analyzed concepts, theories, documents, and related research to construct the questionnaire about the incentive mechanisms based on this information. The accuracy of the contents of each question was examined by three experts. The index of objective congruence (IOC) was 0.67 to 1.00. Then revise and refine the questions based on the experts' suggestions. The reliability and validity of the questionnaire were obtained by Konbach's alpha coefficient method, the reliability was 0.952 and the validity was 0.88.

Table 3.1: Reliability of Questionnaire

Cronbach's $\alpha$	Items	Sample
0.95	21	86

Table 3.2: Validity of Questionnaire

KMO test and Bartlett's test	
KMO	0.88

### 3.6 Data Analysis

Data were analyzed for personal status and motivational satisfaction with descriptive statistics consisting of frequency, maximum-minimum value, mean (Mean), percentage (%), and standard deviation (S.D.). Content Analysis for the development of incentive mechanisms.

## 4. Result Analysis

### 4.1 Results of the study of personal information and satisfaction with incentive mechanisms

#### a. The analysis results about the personal information of respondents

The information was classified by gender, age, marital status, educational background, work experience, position, and income per month. Presented in the form of several people and a percentage.

Table 4.1: Number of people and percentage of respondents

	Personal information	Number of people	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>	Female	56	65.00
	Male	30	35.00
	<b>Total</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Age</b>	25-30	39	45.50
	31-35	25	29.00
	Under 25	19	22.00
	Over 35	3	03.50
	<b>Total</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Marital Status</b>	Married	46	54.00
	Unmarried	40	46.00
	<b>Total</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Education Background</b>	Bachelor's degree or below (including diploma)	59	68.00
	Bachelor's degree or above	27	32.00
	<b>Total</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Work Experience</b>	1-3 years	29	34.00
	4-6 years	43	50.00
	Over 7 years	14	16.00
	<b>Total</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Position</b>	Section-level cadres	56	65.00
	Supervisor Level	27	31.50
	Director Level	3	03.50
	<b>Total</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Income per month</b>	5000 - 8000 CNY	37	43.00
	3500 - 5000 CNY	29	34.00
	More than 8000 CNY	14	16.00
	Less than 3500 CNY	6	07.00
	<b>Total</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 4.1 showed that most respondents were 56 females, accounting for 65%, and 30 males, accounting for 35%. The age of respondents was mainly 25-30 years old for 39 people, accounting for 45.50%, followed by 31 - 35 years old, and over 30 years old was the lowest level for 3 people, accounting for 3.50%. Marital status was mainly married for 46 people, accounting for 54%, and unmarried for 40 people, accounting for 46%. Education background was mainly bachelor's degree or below (including diploma) for 59 people, accounting for 68%, and bachelor's degree or above for 27 people, accounting for 32%. Work experience was mainly 4-6 years for 43 people, accounting for 50%, followed by 1-3 years, and over 7 years was the lowest level for 14 people, accounting for 16%. The position was mainly section-level cadres for 56 people, accounting for 65%, followed by supervisor level, and director level was the lowest level for 3 people, accounting for 3.5%. The income per month was mainly 5000 - 8000 CNY for 37 people, accounting for 43%, followed by 3500 - 5000 CNY, and less than 3500 CNY was the lowest level for 6 people, accounting for 7%.

**b. The analysis result of the current situation of the incentive mechanism at Nanning University**

The information was presented in the form of average value and standard deviation.

Table 4.1 The current situation of the incentive mechanism at Nanning University in 4 aspects

<b>The current situation of the incentive mechanism at Nanning University</b>	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	Level	Order
Compensation incentives	3.80	1.02	High	3
Growth incentives	3.79	0.97	High	4
Achievement incentives	3.85	0.99	High	2
Environmental incentives	3.87	0.95	High	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>3.83</b>	<b>0.98</b>	<b>High</b>	

Table 4.2 found that the current situation of the incentive mechanism in four aspects was at a high level ( $\bar{x} = 3.83$ ). Considering the results of this research aspects ranged from the highest to lowest level were as follows: the highest level was environmental incentives ( $\bar{x} = 3.87$ ), followed by achievement incentives ( $\bar{x} = 3.85$ ), and growth incentives were the lowest level ( $\bar{x} = 3.79$ ).

**The incentive mechanisms in compensation incentives** are the basic salary and the subsidy in a university that is reasonable for the job position. Monthly compensation that is reasonable for the performance. The welfare system which includes meal allowance, physical check-up, and travel allowance is reasonable. The year-end bonus in the university is reasonable for overall performance.

**The incentive mechanisms in growth incentives** are university support of the development of knowledge and skill, such as training and seminars, etc. The assessment system of academic title promotion in universities is fair and reasonable. University provides opportunities to develop knowledge and abilities for career advancement and reasonably supports staff career planning. In addition, Job promotion in the university is fair and reasonable.

**The incentive mechanisms for achievement incentives** are staff recognized by the colleagues upon successful completion of work and satisfaction with the reward system in the university. Also, staff feel valued in their current position, and can demonstrate talents at the university and a suitable social status in the university.

**The incentive mechanisms in environmental incentives** are the humanistic care provided by the university is fair and reasonable, and the communication channels provided by the school are convenient for work. The university organizes activities to promote good relationships regularly. A good working environment is more enthusiastic about staff's work. Work equipment in a university is properly managed and convenient for work.

**4.2 The incentive mechanism guide for administrative staff at NanNing University**

The guideline of incentive mechanisms for administrative staff at NanNing University in four aspects contains 18 measures. There are 4 measures of compensation incentives, 5 measures of growth incentives, 4 measures of achievement incentives, and 5 measures of environmental incentives.

Compensation incentives: 1) offer more performance-based pay, 2) increase subsidy program, 3) provide flexible work arrangements, such as remote work options, and 4) increase the amount of paid time off.

Growth incentives: 1) offer more training and seminar opportunities, 2) provide fair and reasonable job promotion opportunities, 3) support career planning, 4) offer opportunities for cross-functional collaboration, and 5) provide mentorship programs.

Achievement incentives: 1) implement a more comprehensive recognition and reward system, 2) offer opportunities for employees to demonstrate their talents, 3) implement a more robust and transparent recognition and reward system that includes clear criteria for advancement and promotion, and 4) offer opportunities for employees to take on leadership roles or collaborate on high-profile research projects.

Environmental incentives: 1) provide more humanistic care, 2) organize regular activities to promote good relationships, 3) ensure work equipment is properly managed and convenient for work, 4) invest in more modern technology, and 5) improve physical workspaces, such as by adding more natural light and greenery.

## 5. Conclusion

Evaluated the incentive mechanisms at NanNing University and identified four key aspects: environment, achievement, compensation, and growth incentives. The results showed that the highest level of incentives was the environment incentive, followed by achievement, compensation, and growth incentives, which were the lowest.

The study further analyzed each aspect and found that compensation incentives were at an important level, primarily driven by a reasonable basic salary and monthly compensation. In contrast, growth incentives were driven by the university's support for knowledge and skill development, fair and reasonable assessment systems for academic title promotion, and support for career planning.

Similarly, achievement incentives were high, primarily driven by recognition from colleagues, feeling valued in the current position, and opportunities to demonstrate talents in the university. The environmental incentives were driven by convenient communication channels, a good working environment, and fair and reasonable humanistic care provided by the university.

Based on the interviews with the firm representatives from five work groups, suggestions exist to improve the potential associated with the theoretical incentive rating situations. including performance-based pay, job promotion opportunities, support for career planning, recognition, and reward systems, and enhancing the work environment and communication channels. These suggestions can guide the university in improving employee satisfaction and motivation. It is important to note that perspectives may vary based on education level, marital status, and other factors, highlighting the need for a diverse range of perspectives when evaluating and improving the university's incentive programs.

### Recommendation

#### a. Compensation Incentives

In terms of administrative staff compensation, fixed salaries serve as a stable positive incentive. Therefore, the human resource department should monitor the real-time salary standards of peer institutions and the economic level of the city to fully understand both internal salary differences and external salary market trends. Based on this, personalized fixed salary plans should be developed considering differences in position, seniority, level, and performance, including introducing flexible or broadband salary models. Through consultation and democratic voting, base salaries, allowances, subsidies, and benefits for executive staff should be periodically increased each year. Similarly, fixed salary standards for administrative staff, including basic salaries, allowances, subsidies, and social insurance and housing fund contributions, should be regularly adjusted to maintain a reasonable salary level and mitigate potential dissatisfaction or negative feelings among staff.

#### b. Growth Incentives

To enhance the proficiency, expertise, and all-around capability of administrative personnel, the university should implement targeted policies that support their engagement in advanced studies. To improve its all-around competency, the university may collaborate with relevant provincial and municipal education departments or other institutions. Organize appropriate training programs and professional skill training courses for college counselors, business backbone exchange sessions, and expert lectures. Offer more opportunities for administrative staff to receive further education and training outside the university. In terms of improving knowledge, the university may forge partnerships with domestic and international institutions and endeavor to offer opportunities for administrators to visit campuses and pursue studies abroad.

#### c. Achievement Incentives

Promotion serves to increase compensation and provide sufficient recognition to administrative staff, thereby fulfilling their material and spiritual needs. However, the current promotion mechanism in universities lacks objectivity and systematicity, thereby reducing its motivating effect. Consequently, it is essential to construct a scientific promotion mechanism and enhance the talent selection, utilization, and evaluation system. Initially, the preparation of administrative job function descriptions will enable administrative managers to understand the career planning and job matching aligned with their development. Subsequently, establishing explicit promotion standards and publicizing the excellent qualities, professional qualifications, ability requirements, assessment levels, work experience, and other employment regulations required for job promotion will facilitate competition and promotion.

#### d. Environmental Incentives

The organization should offer condolences and gifts to employees who get married, have children, fall ill, are hospitalized, leave, or retire, and assist them in handling relevant subsidies. During major holidays,

departmental gatherings, reunions, and holiday parties can be held to cultivate a “family-like” cultural atmosphere that enhances a sense of belonging and collective identity. Under the unified plan of the university, regular staff representative meetings and staff symposiums should be held to provide a platform for functional departments and college administrators to report their work, discuss departmental and college work plans and major issues, and seek the opinions and suggestions of administrators as a reference for decision-making, thereby promoting regular participatory management. In addition to formal communication meetings, informal communication activities such as afternoon tea, chatting bars, and sharing sessions can be organized to facilitate friendly gatherings to communicate with each other, confide in difficulties, and seek advice, to truly put into practice the administrative staff’s right to supervision, participation, and expression.

### **Future Research**

1. Directions for future research, such as the need to optimize measurement dimensions. It should be noted that the motivational mechanism is a complex system.
2. Future research could expand the category and content of the motivation dimension. and adding a motivation measurement dimension to gain a more comprehensive understanding of motivation.

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