Academic Education Publishing House

Occupation and Professional Education Vol. 2 No. 11, 2025

Research on the Influence of Incentive Mechanism on the Development of Students in the Management of Higher Education

Jiazhen Wang
Yinchuan University of Energy, Yinchuan, Ningxia, China

Abstract:For decades, universities have relied primarily on scholarships and academic honors as their main incentive mechanisms. However, these approaches have revealed systemic issues throughout students 'development, including narrow coverage, oversimplified evaluation criteria, and increased psychological burdens. Key challenges include insufficient support for underperforming students, monotonous comprehensive development incentives, inadequate mental health safeguards, and misalignment between career guidance and industry demands. The root causes stem from administrators' failure to identify students 'differentiated needs, over-reliance on quantitative metrics, outdated incentive content that fails to meet social skill requirements, and closed feedback channels delaying policy adjustments. Practical improvements require establishing a tiered diagnostic framework, creating a multi-dimensional evaluation system covering academics, research, practical experience, and volunteer activities, introducing diverse incentive formats like academic salons, internship fast-track programs, and mentor appointment pools, and implementing dynamic feedback loops through regular discussions, online anonymous channels, and version disclosure systems. This approach will continuously enhance incentive effectiveness and foster students' holistic development.

Keywords:Incentive Mechanism in Higher Education; Student Development; Multiple Evaluations; Psychological Resilience; Career Transition

1. The Intrinsic Relationship between Incentive Mechanism and Student Development in Higher Education Management

1.1 Core Components of Incentive Mechanisms

The incentive mechanisms in higher education management are composed of four interwoven elements with clearly defined yet mutually reinforcing functions. Material incentives primarily take the form of scholarships, research grants, and competition awards, directly addressing students 'financial needs. Their distribution standards are typically linked to academic rankings, research output, or duration of social service, creating immediate reinforcement through quantifiable resource allocation. Spiritual incentives manifest as public recognition, mentor affirmation, and peer validation, often conveyed through ceremonies, exhibition boards, and official social media posts. These focus on fulfilling students' psychological needs for self-esteem and belonging, with their effectiveness depending on the scarcity and authority of such recognition. Overgeneralization may weaken motivational intensity. Honor incentives, represented by titles, certificates, and inclusion in honor rolls, possess symbolic capital attributes. A tiered honor system comprises titles like "Outstanding Student," "Excellent Graduate," and "Top Ten Volunteers." Students accumulate these honors to gain identity markers, which then translate into competitive advantages for graduate school recommendations and job applications. The design hinges on the distinctiveness and continuity of titles—too few tiers or short selection cycles would rapidly diminish the marginal effects of honors. Opportunity incentives center on access to scarce resources, including international exchanges, direct PhD admissions, research assistant positions, and competition training qualifications. Their logic links capability verification to future benefits, requiring students to complete prerequisite tasks to enter the selection pool. The exclusive nature of opportunity incentives intensifies competition while demanding procedural fairness, as any opaque practices may trigger negative

demonstrations. Within the higher education context, four types of motivational elements form a complementary chain: material incentives provide foundational drive, spiritual incentives reinforce emotional identification, honor incentives confer symbolic value, and opportunity incentives broaden developmental pathways. The combination of these elements determines the overall efficacy of the incentive system. [3] (15):77-80

1.2 Definition of Key Dimensions of Student Development

The key dimensions of student development encompass four aspects: academic performance, comprehensive qualities, mental health, and vocational competence. Academic performance is measured through course GPA, scores in core professional courses, thesis grade, and award levels in academic competitions. Comprehensive qualities focus on extracurricular growth, quantified through social practice, student organization roles, awards in cultural and sports competitions, and volunteer service. Mental health is assessed using the annual normative survey from the school's psychological center, with three indicators: self-efficacy, emotional regulation strategies, and stress coping methods. Vocational competence evaluates the transition from campus to workplace, covering the quality of career planning documents, vocational skill certifications, internship matching, and employer feedback. These multidimensional quantitative indicators collectively form an evaluation system for student development, providing clear observation coordinates for studying the impact of incentive mechanisms on student growth.

2. Current Status Review of the Impact of Incentive Mechanisms in Universities on Student Development

Current university incentive mechanisms for career awareness primarily rely on career planning courses, corporate seminars, and alumni sharing sessions. These incentives disproportionately focus on upperclassmen while inadequately covering freshmen's career enlightenment needs, resulting in most students developing vague industry perceptions only by their junior year. The lack of sustained external triggers for self-exploration further exacerbates this gap. Regarding skill training participation, existing incentives mainly consist of certificate subsidies and credit rewards. Most programs remain limited to general training in office software and language skills, which significantly misaligns with industry demands for Python, cloud computing, and cross-border e-commerce operations in the digital economy. Even after completing training, students often feel their skill gaps remain unaddressed, leading to declining participation enthusiasm. In internship experience accumulation, incentive methods overly emphasize outcome recognition—for instance, only awarding scholarships to those receiving employer commendations while neglecting pre-employment support like internship position information, process guidance, and accommodation. This results in disadvantaged students being excluded due to informational and financial barriers, creating a polarized internship distribution that ultimately undermines incentive fairness and reach. This structural framework creates a paradoxical state of partial effectiveness versus overall limitations: while it delivers immediate effects in crafting resume highlights, it fails to establish a comprehensive, tiered, and industry-aligned career competency growth chain spanning the entire university journey. Students face the dilemma of certificate accumulation mismatching real job requirements, with diminishing marginal utility of incentives over time. [5]

3. Practical Path of Optimizing Incentive Mechanism to Promote Student Development

3.1 Accurately Locate The Needs of Students and Strengthen the Pertinence of Motivation

To genuinely embed incentive mechanisms into students 'developmental trajectories, universities must first systematically identify the growth needs of different student groups and implement tiered strategies to address these differences. At the semester's start, administrators distribute anonymous electronic questionnaires and semi-structured interview outlines. The questionnaire covers four core variables: grade level, major, socioeconomic status, and academic self-positioning. Interviews focus on students' most pressing growth challenges and desired resources. These two sets of data are collected and cross-verified within two weeks to create a needs heatmap. The heatmap uses red, yellow,

and green colors to indicate demand intensity: red areas highlight three high-frequency keywords (academic alerts, financial constraints, psychological support); yellow areas represent three improvement-oriented needs (research training, international exchanges, vocational skills); green areas correspond to three developmental needs (academic recognition, cultural experiences, interest expansion). Based on this, administrators categorize students into three vertical groups (adaptation-focused, capability-enhancing, and top-tier growth) and twelve subgroups by academic discipline. During the planning phase, the university designs customized incentive packages for each subgroup per academic year. The adaptation-focused package prioritizes academic assistance funds, study method workshops, and peer counseling hours. The capability-enhancing package includes fast-track research grants, short-term overseas exchange subsidies, and fee reductions for industry certification exams. The top-tier growth package offers one-on-one mentorship guidance, special funding for high-level competitions, and pre-review opportunities for graduate school recommendations. The implementation process employs an elastic trigger mechanism, allowing students to self-adjust their categories twice per semester (in the third and tenth weeks). The administration synchronizes updates to incentive packages, ensuring dynamic alignment between demand and supply. The evaluation phase incorporates a progress tracking form, retaining only four core metrics: academic progress, research participation, psychological resilience index, and career competency completion. At the end of each academic year, the results undergo three-tier verification: self-assessment by students, review by academic advisors, and sampling interviews by a third-party expert panel. These results are directly applied to calibrate the demand heatmap for the next cycle, enabling continuous optimization of the incentive program. [4]11(33):87-91

3.2 Improve the Multi-Dimensional Evaluation System and Expand the Coverage of Incentives

The multi-dimensional evaluation framework is structured around three pillars: value diversity, subject diversity, and method diversity. Academic performance is assigned a weight of approximately 50%, creating space for four key evaluation dimensions: social practice, scientific innovation, cultural and sports talents, and volunteer service. Each dimension is further categorized into two components: observable behavioral records and verifiable achievement records. Behavioral records consist of activity check-ins, process logs, and peer evaluations, while achievement records include project completion reports, competition awards, exhibition of works, and service duration documentation. These two categories are combined in a 70-30 ratio to form individual scores. The four individual scores, along with the academic score, are integrated into a final evaluation matrix. The matrix uses a percentage-based system with interval thresholds, ensuring that any outstanding performance in any dimension can independently elevate the overall grade, thereby avoiding the one-size-fits-all approach of traditional GPA.

The evaluation panel comprises five stakeholders: students, course instructors, academic advisors, external mentors, and service recipients. Students submit self-assessment materials with supporting documentation. Course instructors evaluate academic and research innovation components, while advisors oversee social practice and volunteer service evaluations. External mentors and cultural/athletic authorities jointly confirm athletic and artistic talents. Service recipients rate the effectiveness of their contributions through online anonymous questionnaires. The panel's scores are aggregated with weighting factors and reviewed by the college's evaluation committee. Students may raise questions during the review process to ensure transparency. A dispute resolution period is established, with controversial records subject to secondary verification to uphold procedural fairness.

Evaluation outcomes are directly linked to honor awards, opportunity allocation, and resource access. The honor system comprises four categories: Social Practice Model, Scientific Innovation Expert, Cultural & Sports Star, and Public Service Pioneer, each further divided into gold, silver, and bronze tiers. Recipients receive priority access to international exchanges, research grants, internship recommendations, and startup incubation opportunities. Resource access includes dedicated mentor pairing, reserved lab hours, and exemption from entrance exams for industry-academia collaborative courses.

Through the triple synergy of honors, opportunities, and resources, students with diverse aptitudes gain visible and sustainable incentives across their respective fields. This transforms multi-dimensional evaluation from static outcomes into a dynamic developmental support system, continuously expanding incentive coverage to achieve the goal of holistic education encompassing all participants, processes, and dimensions.

3.3 Enrich the Content and Forms of Incentives To Enhance Their Appeal

To diversify incentive mechanisms and enhance their appeal, universities should transform traditional scholarship systems into comprehensive resource chains that span academic cycles, assess multidimensional competencies, and foster long-term development. First, institutions could implement rolling academic micro-grants—small but short-term—to support students 'innovative experiments, research, or creative projects. This extends incentives beyond classrooms to real-world applications, sustaining academic curiosity. Second, enterprises' actual needs should be broken down into phased task packages. After departmental coordination, these tasks become open to student bidding. Successful applicants receive internship access cards and industry credits, which can be linked to graduate school recommendations or overseas study opportunities, creating tangible connections between academics and careers. Third, a mentor appointment pool should be established, dividing faculty's fixed guidance time into rescheduled sessions. Students can exchange project points for one-on-one mentoring, balancing mentor availability with students' earned access to scarce resources. Additionally, universities should coordinate the publication of academic journals, featuring student-exclusive issues with paid contributions that count toward research performance metrics, making writing and publishing tangible incentives. Finally, interdisciplinary teams should receive collaborative allowances funded by project milestones. This internal redistribution mechanism strengthens teamwork while maintaining healthy competition, ensuring dynamic incentive structures.

References

[1]Hou Jin, Chen Cuicui, Zhao Younan. The Art of Motivation in Human Resource Management in Higher Education Institutions [J]. Journal of Shanxi University of Finance and Economics, 2025,47(S1):223-225.

[2]Zhao B. The Value and Practical Innovation of Motivational Education in Higher Vocational Physical Education Teaching [J]. Industry and Science & Technology Forum, 2025,24(13):243-245.

[3]You Haoxing, Hu Zhiqiang, Yang Zizhou. Reflections on the Construction of Incentive Mechanisms for the Teaching Team at the Community Education College [J]. Chengcai Zhi Lu, 2025, (15):77-80.

[4]Liu Zun, Fan Xingkui, Qiu Tianhui, Zhang Xiaowei, Shen Meili, Zhang Ruiqi, Zhou Jingshun. Exploring the Mechanism of Improving College Students' Academic Attitude Inspired by Promising Future Prospects [J]. Higher Education Journal, 2025,11(33):87-91.

[5]Xu Tingting. Optimization of Employee Incentive Models under the Framework of Business Administration [J]. Modern Business Research, 2025, (13):190-192.