

## Current Situation of Performance Pay Satisfaction of Chinese University Teachers - A Survey of N Universities

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### Abstract

*Given the current performance pay distribution method implemented at N University, this paper conducted a survey and research on the current performance pay satisfaction of full-time teachers at N University with performance pay. The results show that teachers in N universities are generally dissatisfied with performance pay, with an average value of 2.47. It is found that the proportion of performance pay in the total pay is small, which leads to the weak incentive effect of performance pay. In addition, most teachers are not satisfied with the current performance pay, believing that the effort does not match the return and that the current performance pay cannot truly reflect their performance level.*

**Keywords :** *performance pay, performance pay satisfaction, incentive effect, improvement approach.*

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### Introduction

The reform of performance pay is a profound reform of the internal management system and operation system of colleges and universities, which is conducive to improving the efficiency and academic level of colleges and universities, deepening the reform of the distribution system, and playing an important role in fully mobilizing the enthusiasm of university staff and staff. In the total amount of performance pay, the incentive performance pay distribution plan is formulated by the universities themselves, which effectively mobilizes the staff's enthusiasm<sup>[1-4]</sup>.

Teachers are an important driving force to promote the continuous progress of the university and play a vital role in the construction and development of colleges and universities. At present, due to the complexity and independence of college teachers' work, it is not easy to establish a set of scientific evaluation system which should cover teaching, scientific research awards, advanced learning, and other multidimensional indicators in teacher performance evaluation, teaching quality and teaching effect are difficult. Even if teachers' pay much energy in the teaching process, the teaching quality and effect are difficult to measure in a short time. To study the current performance pay satisfaction of university teachers, establishing a scientific, systematic, and fair evaluation is of great practical significance to the self-development of teachers and the overall development of colleges and universities<sup>[5-14]</sup>.

Pay satisfaction was first proposed by scholar Adams in 1965 on the basis of equity theory. He believes that the concept of salary satisfaction refers to the subjective feeling of satisfaction or dissatisfaction, positive or negative, generated by comparing the actual remuneration with the inner expectation<sup>[15]</sup>. In 1971, scholar Lawler proposed on the basis of the gap theory that pay satisfaction is an individual's satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the difference between actual income and deserved income, and the gap between actual pay and expected pay will have a great impact on pay satisfaction<sup>[16]</sup>. Nowadays, scholars generally agree with the multi-dimensional structure modified by Heneman scholars in 1985. Their definition of pay satisfaction is that employees' satisfaction emotion is not only reflected in the amount of compensation, but also includes the pay management system of their organization. In other words, employees feel emotionally satisfied with the level of pay, the amount of benefits, the increase in pay and whether the management of the pay system is reasonable<sup>[17]</sup>. In China, scholars generally agree with foreign scholars' understanding of pay satisfaction. In 2017, scholar Liang Yingdi pointed out that the pay satisfaction of college teachers is a psychological state generated when college teachers can actually get economic and non-economic gains and compare their expected gains in the process of working in colleges and universities<sup>[9]</sup>. Therefore, as for the concept of pay satisfaction of college teachers, this paper considers that it is the degree to which college teachers are satisfied with the economic and non-economic rewards they get in colleges and universities.

Heneman and other scholars developed the PSQ(Pay Satisfaction Questionnaire) in 1985<sup>[17]</sup>. Du Ping and Xie Yao revised the pay satisfaction measure of Heneman and Schwab to obtain the pay satisfaction scale for primary and secondary school teachers. In 2016, Peng Yuyi designed the performance pay satisfaction scale, which is divided into three dimensions: satisfaction with performance pay structure, satisfaction with performance pay management and satisfaction with performance pay emotion. This scale has a high applicability to the measurement of performance salary satisfaction in domestic universities.

In recent years, the enrollment scale of colleges and universities has expanded, and many young teachers have entered the teaching, management, and scientific research teams of colleges and universities. The structure of the whole teaching team has been continuously optimized, the

educational structure has been significantly improved, and the overall quality has been improved. However, judging from implementing a performance-based pay system in some colleges and universities, the reform of a performance-based pay system is complicated. On February 1, 2015, a researcher of China Education Research Institute said in an interview with Tencent that due to the intervention of administrative forces, the current performance pay of most teachers is still an administrative "official performance pay". In 2015, the National Two sessions also gave great attention to performance pay, a young teacher in Weifang City, Shandong province, said in an interview that there is still a gap between the implementation of performance pay policies in colleges and universities and expectations, and long-term cooperation is needed to see results. For a long time, college teachers have been regarded as a profession with a high threshold. According to the above theory, the pay level of college teachers should match their personal human capital investment and personal value. According to the average annual pay statistics of some knowledge-intensive industries in the country, the average annual pay of college teachers ranks 13th among all the industries surveyed. The average annual income of college teachers is much lower than that of other knowledge-intensive industries such as securities, software, computers, and banks. Facing the fierce competition of human resources under the background of globalization to improve the quality of talent in the whole country. It is necessary to fully leverage the fundamental role of university teachers in talent cultivation and stimulate their vitality.

Performance pay (PRP), also known as reward pay. Scholars pointed out in his book "Operation and Practice Manual of Performance Pay Reform in Public Institutions" : Performance pay is based on the jobs that employees are employed in. Performance pay can be divided into basic performance pay and incentive performance pay according to the technical content of the posts, the size of responsibilities, the difference in labor intensity, and the quality of the environment. A basic performance pay affirms teachers' due diligence in performing their work. And the incentive performance pay is the affirmation of the teachers over the completion of work tasks and work breakthrough. Performance pay in colleges and universities is generally the reward and affirmation for the contributions made by college teachers in a certain time. Therefore, this paper takes full-time teachers of N University as the research object, calculates the satisfaction of teachers of N University with performance pay, and summarizes the institutional experience in promoting the development of N University. At the same time, the institutional obstacles of the current performance pay system to the development of the university are solved, so as to promote the development of N university better and help realize the connotative development of the university.

### **Study Design**

Research methods: Based on the current performance pay distribution method implemented in N University, this paper conducted a survey and research on the current situation of performance

pay satisfaction of full-time teachers in the university. The scale was revised according to Peng Yuyi's performance pay satisfaction scale and the actual situation of the university, with a total of 12 questions. The scale adopts four-point Likert scale, as shown in Table 1 the higher the score, the higher the satisfaction of college teachers. According to the calculation of Sloven formula, 322 questionnaires were sent out and 322 were collected, with a recovery rate of 100%. 322 questionnaires were valid. The questionnaire adopts weighted average to calculate the satisfaction degree of college teachers.

**Table 1**  
***Performance Pay Satisfaction Scale***

Indicators	Satisfaction
1. I am familiar with what constitutes performance pay in my school.	Strongly Agree (4)
	Agree (3)
	Disagree (2)
	Strongly Disagree (1)
2. The proportion of my school's performance pay in total salary is reasonable.	Strongly Agree (4)
	Agree (3)
	Disagree (2)
	Strongly Disagree (1)
3. The performance pay structures create my enthusiasm for work.	Strongly Agree (4)
	Agree (3)
	Disagree (2)
	Strongly Disagree (1)
4. I am satisfied with the level of performance pay.	Strongly Agree (4)
	Agree (3)
	Disagree (2)
	Strongly Disagree (1)
5. The performance pay appraisal method implemented by my school is scientific.	Strongly Agree (4)
	Agree (3)
	Disagree (2)
	Strongly Disagree (1)
6. I feel happy when the school evaluates my performance according to my work results.	Strongly Agree (4)
	Agree (3)
	Disagree (2)
7. The content of the school performance pay	Strongly Disagree (1)
	Strongly Agree (4)

assessment is specific and clear.	Agree (3) Disagree (2) Strongly Disagree (1) Strongly Agree (4)
8. My performance pay reflects my level of performance.	Agree (3) Disagree (2) Strongly Disagree (1) Strongly Agree (4)
9.The scientific performance appraisal affects my work input.	Agree (3) Disagree (2) Strongly Disagree (1) Strongly Agree (4)
10.The fairness of performance appraisal affects my interpersonal relationship.	Agree (3) Disagree (2) Strongly Disagree (1) Strongly Agree (4)
11. Implementing performance pay makes me more identify with the teaching profession.	Agree (3) Disagree (2) Strongly Disagree (1) Strongly Agree (4)
12. I feel that my efforts have been rewarded.	Agree (3) Disagree (2) Strongly Disagree (1)

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### Analysis of Results

Table 2 shows the results of the performance pay satisfaction survey of N universities. It can be concluded that most college teachers of N university are not very satisfied with the current performance salary, of which 15.84% are very satisfied, 29.48% are satisfied, 40.66% are dissatisfied and 14.03% are very dissatisfied.

**Table2**  
**Performance Pay Satisfaction Survey of N University**

<b>Weighted mean</b>	<b>Qualitative value</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Population proportion</b>
3.25-4.00	Strongly Agree	Respondents are very satisfied with their current merit pay and do not need to adjust their merit pay	15.84%
2.50-3.24	Agree	Respondents' express satisfaction, performance salary can be adjusted.	29.48%
1.75-2.49	Disagree	Respondents are not satisfied with the current performance salary system and want to adjust it.	40.66%
1.00-1.74	Strongly Disagree	Respondents are too dissatisfied with the current performance-based pay system and want it to be adjusted	14.03%

As can be seen from Table 3, the total weighted average of satisfaction with performance pay in N university is 2.47, indicating that teachers in this university are not satisfied with performance pay. The specific reasons for N college teachers' dissatisfaction with performance pay can be found through the scale investigation.

First of all, Questions 1-4 are mainly aimed at measuring the satisfaction of university teachers in N with the structure of performance pay. It can be seen from the survey results of question 1 that most respondents are familiar with the composition of performance pay in universities and colleges. This point is also pointed out in Yao Meisang's research results, the average understanding of the school's performance pay is 3.15, which is in the middle level. The experts at grades 8-10, 5-7 and 2-4 all have a significantly higher understanding of performance pay than those at grades 11-12, and the experts at grades 2-4 have a significantly higher understanding of performance pay than those at grades 8-10. Grade 11-12 is a junior title, and the general working life is within five years, so the understanding of performance pay is low. Level 2-4 refers to senior titles, generally with longer working years and more participation in the formulation of performance pay, so they have the highest understanding of performance pay [18]. The weighted average of questions 2 and 3 are both lower than the satisfaction value 2.5, indicating that the respondents believe that the current proportion of performance pay is unreasonable, and hope

that the composition, distribution and proportion of performance pay in the total salary can be more reasonable, which can effectively stimulate their enthusiasm for work. This is mainly due to the implementation plan of the State Administration of Development (2018) No. 112 on the adjustment of the salary standard of personnel in public institutions, which includes some subsidies or performance pay into the basic salary, and appropriately increases the proportion of basic salary. In this regard, Zhuang Weiwei also pointed out in his research that the proportion of performance salary in the salary of undergraduate universities in S province decreased, and the change range was larger than that of basic salary and allowances and subsidies. In the reform of the teacher salary system, more consideration was given to the majority of teachers in salary payment, and the proportion of incentive salary decreased significantly, resulting in insufficient incentive effect [19]. As can be seen from the survey in question 4, respondents are not satisfied with the current level of performance pay. It can be concluded that due to the reform of performance pay, the proportion of performance-related incentive performance pay in the overall salary of college teachers has decreased significantly, which has weakened the incentive effect on teachers, and teachers are not satisfied with the current structure of performance pay.

Secondly, Questions 5-8 mainly measure the satisfaction of teachers in N universities with the management of performance pay. As can be seen from question 5, teachers in N universities still approve of the current performance pay evaluation method. Qian Hong also reached the same conclusion in the statistics on the rationality of the design of teacher performance appraisal method in S university, and 58.6% of teachers in S university agreed with it, indicating that most teachers hold a positive attitude towards the rationality of the design of school performance appraisal method [20]. The survey results of questions 6-8 are lower than the satisfaction value, which indicates that the respondents are not very clear about the current assessment content and are not very satisfied with the evaluation of themselves based on work performance. Most teachers also think that the assessment content does not reflect their own performance level, and hope to adjust the assessment content and indicators. Chen Bingqiong also pointed out in her research on the quantitative evaluation index system of college teachers' performance that the current imperfect performance evaluation system of college teachers in China is caused by multiple factors, among which index design, weight distribution and characteristics of teachers' positions are the key factors that directly affect the evaluation system [21]. As for the assessment of teachers based on work performance, Qian Hong also pointed out in her study that 80.6% of teachers' support for the assessment from the perspective of actual work process indicates that most teachers are not satisfied with the current assessment of work results and hope that schools can assess teachers' performance from the perspective of work process [20]. The majority of teachers think that performance pay fails to reflect their own performance level, which is mainly related to the recruitment of doctoral degrees in universities in recent years. Yang Hengcang also confirmed in the questionnaire survey on the views of university staff on the implementation of performance-based pay that most young teachers in colleges and universities think that

performance fails to reflect their own level. Meanwhile, young teachers have high expectations on income. Most young teachers now have doctoral degrees, so they are under pressure to get married and buy houses after graduation due to the large investment in early education. Therefore, there are higher income expectations<sup>[22]</sup>. It can be concluded that the current management of performance pay needs to be improved in the way, content and indicators of performance appraisal, and corresponding adjustments should be made according to the current recruitment standards of colleges and universities.

Finally, Questions 9-12 measure the satisfaction of performance pay from the perspective of teachers' personal emotion. From questions 9-11, it can be seen that respondents agree that scientific performance appraisal will affect work involvement, fairness of performance appraisal will affect colleague relationship, and performance pay will increase professional identity. In his research on influencing factors of university teacher engagement, Guo Tao verified that scientific salary and welfare is a dimension that affects university teacher engagement by using factor analysis method<sup>[23]</sup>. Qian Hong also pointed out in her research on the satisfaction degree of university teachers' performance appraisal that 58.2% of teachers agree with the performance salary in terms of its impact on the relationship between teachers and colleagues. Most teachers can feel the social recognition from the performance appraisal and believe that the scientificity of the performance appraisal has a high impact on the interpersonal relationship in their work <sup>[20]</sup>. Zhou Xiangwei also pointed out in his research on the organizational identity of college teachers that the material and emotional demands of teachers are personal factors affecting the organizational identity of college teachers, and salary is an important source to meet the economic material needs of teachers. The influence of salary on the organizational identity of teachers reflects the influence of economic material needs of teachers on their organizational identity level. The organizational identity level of teachers under the age of 50 increases with the increase of age, while the important reason for the low organizational identity level of young teachers is that their salary level is relatively low and cannot fully meet their economic material needs in housing and other aspects <sup>[24]</sup>. As can be seen from question 12, the current respondents are not satisfied with their own efforts and returns, mainly due to the low salary of teachers, the emphasis on scientific research rather than teaching in assessment, and the high teaching workload stipulated by the school, which occupies teachers' time for scientific research, resulting in the lack of enough time and energy to complete scientific research tasks and affects their performance. In addition, the limited amount of incentive pay makes the work effort of some college teachers disproportionate to the reward, which reduces the self-efficacy of teachers. Qian Hong also pointed out that at present, the performance appraisal of colleges and universities tends to emphasize scientific research rather than teaching. In addition, the administrative process of the appraisal is more serious, which increases the burden of teachers' work <sup>[20]</sup>. To sum up, the current performance pay system of the school where the respondents work should be continuously improved to increase teachers' satisfaction and further improve the

guiding role of performance pay.

**Table3**

***Performance Pay Satisfaction Weighted Average of N University***

<b>Indicators</b>	<b>weighted average</b>
1. I am familiar with what constitutes performance pay in my school.	2.88
2. The proportion of my school’s performance pay in total salary is reasonable.	2.38
3. The performance pay structures create my enthusiasm for work.	2.30
4. I am satisfied with the level of performance pay.	2.36
5. The performance pay appraisal method implemented by my school is scientific.	2.56
6. I feel happy when the school evaluates my performance according to my work results.	2.47
7. The content of the school performance pay assessment is specific and clear.	2.48
8. My performance pay reflects my level of performance.	2.31
9.The scientific performance appraisal affects my work input.	2.86
10.The fairness of performance appraisal affects my interpersonal relationship.	2.50
11. Implementing performance pay makes me more identify with the teaching profession.	2.71
12. I feel that my efforts have been rewarded.	1.85
<b>Total weighted average</b>	<b>2.47</b>

**Conclusions**

The average satisfaction of N university teachers on performance pay is 2.47, indicating that most teachers in the university are not satisfied with the current performance pay. There are three main reasons why college teachers are not satisfied with performance pay. First, they are not satisfied with the current structure of performance pay and think that the current structure of performance pay can not stimulate the enthusiasm of work. Second, they are not satisfied with the current performance salary management, and believe that the current assessment methods, contents, indicators, etc., can not reflect their own performance level. Third, most teachers believe that their efforts do not match their returns.N Universities should start from these three

aspects to find out the reasons for adjustment.

### **Recommendation**

As the most direct incentive system choice in the orientation of social value, the distribution of performance pay is also the fundamental need for college teachers to realize their self-value. The long-term development of colleges and universities cannot be separated from excellent teachers, so we should pay attention to the construction of the salary system of college teachers.

#### ***Raise the Salary Level and Stabilize the Teaching Staff***

First of all, in order to attract and retain college teachers, it is necessary to improve the salary level of teachers. The setting of salary system standards for college teachers should take into account the overall salary income of local colleges and universities, local living standards and internal distribution, establish a salary adjustment mechanism commensurate with price level and market changes, add flexible design into the stable salary system, and ensure the external relative fairness of the salary level of college teachers. At the same time, it ensures that the degree of work input of college teachers matches their salary, and attaches importance to the continuous improvement and training of their knowledge, performance and ability, so that the salary level of college teachers has a certain competitiveness. Secondly, universities should take the initiative to broaden financing channels and enrich funding sources. Colleges and universities should make use of their own advantages, actively explore new financing channels, enrich their own financial resources.

#### ***Improve the Incentive Mechanism for Performance-based Pay***

Colleges and universities should clarify the composition of teachers' salary, so that performance salary can really play a role in motivating teachers. At the same time, a diversified compensation supplement mechanism can be established to make up for the lack of incentive caused by the reduction of incentive wage ratio. Such as one-time reward, management allowance, external professional service salary, summer job salary, etc., set rewards according to the actual situation of teachers, encourage teachers to enhance academic output and achieve promotion and development.

The quantitative performance appraisal system is generally adopted in the performance appraisal of teachers in colleges and universities, which does not make a clear distinction between different disciplines and ignores the income gap caused by disciplinary gap, resulting in the disparity of teachers' salaries in colleges and universities. Colleges and universities should reasonably allocate teaching and scientific research tasks, clarify specific work requirements, fully reflect the value of each teacher, avoid the phenomenon of heavy workload and low salary level, resulting in negative psychology, and maintain the fairness among teachers in various

departments. At the same time, the academic resources of teaching staff and research staff should be evenly distributed, and the pay level of teachers in non-key disciplines should be appropriately raised.

### ***Two-way Incentives, Teachers and Universities Need to Develop Together***

For the long-term development of colleges and universities, respect, support and development of college teachers are crucial, which is not only reflected in the aspects of pay and income, but also reflected in the needs of teachers' personal inner development and the satisfaction of self-value. Colleges and universities should consider the development needs of teachers in various aspects, actively investigate the work situation of teaching and scientific research personnel and their satisfaction with salary, listen to the evaluation and opinions of teachers on salary level, let more college and university teachers participate in the formulation of salary system, improve the salary management mechanism, stimulate the enthusiasm of teachers and enhance the sense of belonging of college and university teachers.

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