

# Optimize the Incentive Mechanism: An Effective Way to Stimulate the Vitality of Primary and Secondary Schools

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**Abstract:** A large number of studies have shown that the current vitality of primary and secondary schools is insufficient, and the healthy development of schools is restricted. This is manifested in the following: The incentive mechanism for schools to organize their own schools in accordance with the law is not perfect; the incentive mechanism for social participation in school governance is lacking. Therefore, we should encourage schools to run their own schools by exchanging performance for autonomy; Clarify the school performance objectives and combine performance with reward and accountability; Build a perfect teacher incentive system; Encourage, support and guide parents, communities and other school stakeholders to participate in school management in an orderly manner.

**Keywords:** Primary and secondary schools; School running vitality; Excitation mechanism

## 1. Introduction

A large number of studies show that the vitality of primary and secondary schools is insufficient, and the healthy development of schools is restricted. Therefore, in 2020, the Ministry of Education and other eight departments issued *Several Opinions on Further Stimulating the Vitality of Primary and Secondary Schools* (hereinafter referred to as the *Opinions*), Emphasize “Deepen the reform of system and mechanism, and strive to solve the difficulties and problems that affect and restrict the vitality of primary and secondary schools.” “Continue to release and stimulate the vitality and vitality of primary and secondary schools.” Practice has proved that one of the effective ways to achieve the above objectives is to optimize the incentive mechanism. The so-called incentive mechanism refers to the guidance of scientific incentive theory in the process of running primary and secondary schools, Take a variety of incentive means and make them standardized and relatively fixed to meet the legitimate needs of the school and its stakeholders, so as to stimulate its motivation, fully mobilize its initiative and creativity, and promote the process of school governance modernization.

## 2. The value of incentive mechanism for stimulating the vitality of primary and secondary schools

Firstly, a scientific and reasonable incentive mechanism can enhance the school's understanding of the mission and responsibility entrusted to it by the state, the government and society, Recognize the advantages and disadvantages of running a school, so as to stimulate the internal driving force of running a school independently, and then improve the motivation and awareness of obtaining and exercising autonomy according to law, risk-taking awareness and responsibility awareness.

Secondly, A scientific and reasonable incentive mechanism can improve the understanding of the government and its staff on the importance of implementing the school's autonomy, Enhance the awareness and desire to maximize the interests of public education, treat political achievements and interests correctly, reshape the spirit of public administration, administer according to laws and regulations, simplify administration and delegate power to the government, change government functions, and give schools more autonomy in running schools.

Thirdly, A scientific and reasonable incentive mechanism can stimulate the enthusiasm of school stakeholders such as parents, communities and the public to participate in school governance, allow them to express their interest demands, and improve their sense of self-efficacy and acquisition, so as to contribute to the scientization and democratization of school decision-making and the improvement of school work.

### **3. Problems existing in the incentive mechanism in the process of running primary and secondary schools at present**

Firstly, The incentive mechanism for the school to run its own school according to law is not perfect. The lack of scientific and reasonable incentive mechanism leads to the lack of vitality of school independent development and awareness of exercising autonomy. The highly centralized management system has led schools to develop excessive dependence on the government. Gradually schools have lost the awareness of independent decision-making, self-management, independent development and competition. The characteristics of "family support" have been formed day by day, and the inertia of self-closure and self-conservatism has gradually solidified. As the scholar says, "The family nature of school organization makes the school in a conservative insulating layer, forming the defects of low resource utilization efficiency and school running performance of modern public schools." [1] In this closed, conservative and enterprising background, the school has formed a fixed cognitive structure and way of thinking, has a vague understanding of the school's own school running objectives and positioning, and lacks development vision and development strategy. In addition, the government still mainly adopts the assessment and evaluation of schools based on students' academic achievements, and the situation of one-sided pursuit of enrollment rate has not been fundamentally reversed. For most public primary and secondary schools, there is no real student source crisis. As a result, the school has a weak sense of competition and a lack of crisis consciousness. At the same time, there are also different degrees of problems in the internal incentive mechanism of the school, and the positive initiative of teachers needs to be further improved.

Secondly, There is a lack of incentive mechanisms for social participation in school governance. Facts have proved that incentive is an important means to promote effective social participation. When parents, communities, educational intermediary organizations and other school stakeholders' participation is valued and respected by the government, school administrators, and teachers, or if they feel that their participation is conducive to the promotion of school class management, improvement of students' academic performance, and school work. Therefore, their awareness and ability to participate in school governance will be enhanced. On the contrary, if their opinions and suggestions are ignored for a long time or no feedback is received, and then, They may gradually lose their enthusiasm for participating in school governance, and thus form a vicious circle. As the scholar says: "The public is either unwilling to participate because of the lack of incentive mechanism, or will actively participate according to the wishes of managers, but it will soon become very depressed because of its limited influence, and no longer have any illusions about participation." [2]

### **4. Countermeasures to optimize the incentive mechanism to stimulate the vitality of primary and secondary schools**

Practice has proved that a scientific and reasonable incentive mechanism can stimulate the vitality of running a school according to law, enhance the subject's sense of responsibility and realize independent development.

#### ***4.1. Optimize the incentive mechanism for schools to run their own schools in accordance with the law***

The *Opinions* emphasized that to enhance the school's vitality, it is necessary to ensure the school's autonomy in education and teaching, personnel work, and the use of funds. After all, school autonomy must ultimately be implemented at the school level. Therefore, how to effectively implement school autonomy is particularly important. Firstly, we should encourage schools to run their own schools by exchanging performance for autonomy. The so-called performance for autonomy means that the government does not give all schools exactly the same autonomy, but links part of the autonomy or the degree of autonomy with the school running performance: schools with high school running performance can obtain higher autonomy; Schools with low school performance can only get a low degree of autonomy[3]. This means that the government should differentiate the matters, degree and methods of delegating power to schools, and must not adopt a one-size-fits-all approach. School autonomy should be delegated according to the school's sense of responsibility, ability to assume autonomy, and school performance. Generally speaking, for those schools with good school running conditions, high performance, high social satisfaction, perfect internal governance structure and standardized exercise of school running autonomy, the government can give them greater school running autonomy; On the contrary, the government should appropriately centralize power and retain greater management authority.

Secondly, Clarify the school performance objectives and combine performance with accountability. Since performance for autonomy is an important measure to encourage schools, a correct understanding and definition of school performance is a crucial core issue. The *Opinions* puts forward: “Establish and improve the quality education-oriented school quality evaluation system, strengthen procedural and developmental evaluation, pay more attention to the evaluation of the actual effectiveness of the school in improving the quality of school management, and serve as the total amount of the school’s approved performance wages, An important basis for the implementation of assessment and commendation for principals and teachers, to guide and promote the continuous improvement of the school to raise the level of running a school.” It can be seen that the establishment and improvement of school education quality evaluation system is an important issue. Albert Shanker, President of the American teachers' Federation, once pointed out that it is very narrow to define teaching quality according to narrow teaching standards such as test scores and academic ability test (SAT) scores. Teaching achievements should be assessed from three aspects: first, the teaching of knowledge; Second, cultivate the civic awareness of active participation in political activities and the ability to excel in economic activities; Third, promote personal growth and participation in social and cultural life [4]. This expands our thinking, at least indicating that students' academic performance must not be regarded as the only indicator to evaluate the school's performance.

Thirdly, through interest driven, stimulate the school running vitality and mobilize teachers' awareness of exercising autonomy. Exchange theory tells us that if actors are rewarded and rewarded for their contributions in social activities, they will continue to do it, otherwise they will terminate this behavior. “All human actions are governed by some exchange activity that can bring rewards and rewards.” [5]Therefore, the government can make full use of economic leverage to stimulate the vitality of schools and mobilize the enthusiasm of schools. For example, for schools that have achieved excellence in performance appraisal, the human resources and social security, finance and education departments can study and formulate incentive measures, give corresponding financial incentives to schools, and improve school running conditions; or float the total amount of performance-based salary of such schools according to a certain proportion to play an incentive and guiding role. Similarly, in the school, the principal should pay attention to the application of exchange theory, make himself in a high-level exchange relationship with the teaching staff, strengthen the incentive role in the school, build a perfect teacher incentive system, give the teaching staff more humanistic care and support, place high hopes, and fully stimulate the majority of teachers' educational feelings and work enthusiasm. Lead teachers' professional development with a high position, respect and encourage teachers to exercise professional autonomy according to laws and regulations, improve job promotion incentives and performance wages. The comprehensive application of these strategies will enhance the majority of teachers' sense of acquisition, trust, responsibility, honor and happiness, enhance organizational commitment and make better work performance.

#### ***4.2. Optimize the incentive mechanism for parents to participate in school governance***

Enhance the sense of acquisition of parents' participation, that is, parents can feel their own value and practical effect by participating in school governance, which is a crucial factor to stimulate parents' active participation. Therefore, Schools should optimize the incentive mechanism, encourage, support and guide parents to participate in school management in an orderly manner, understand, respect and trust parents, regard parents as “insiders”, create a cooperative atmosphere and culture for parents' participation, establish a cooperative partnership with parents, ensure parents' right to know, participate, express and supervise, and improve parents' sense of self-efficacy Sense of belonging and ability to participate.

Specifically, schools should respond to parents' concerns, opinions and suggestions in a timely manner. For those parents who actively participate in the activities, participate in the activities more effectively, and pay labor or make certain contributions to the cooperation between home and school, the school shall absorb them as members of the parents' committee, carry out relevant publicity and reports, give spiritual rewards and issue honorary certificates, so as to play the role of sample demonstration. For parents who have expertise in a certain field, such as calligraphy, music, painting, taekwondo, martial arts, cooking, etc., the school can hire them as guest teachers to give full play to their strengths and use their spare time to teach students who are spare and interested in learning. In this way, it can not only make up for the lack of teachers in this area, but also cultivate students' interests and hobbies, contribute to the all-round development of students, but also stimulate parents' enthusiasm for participation.

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