

Research on the Path to Enhancing the Employment Ability of Students in Application-oriented Institutes

Li,Yongzhang Jiang,Jingdong

Hezhou University, Hezhou, Guangxi, 542899, China

Abstract: The improvement of employment ability for students in applied undergraduate colleges is a systematic project that requires joint efforts from various aspects such as schools, enterprises, and society. This article starts with an analysis of the current employment situation of graduates from applied undergraduate colleges and the core influencing factors of employment problems. It proposes measures such as improving the employment guidance system, strengthening school enterprise cooperation, enhancing students' comprehensive literacy, and establishing personalized employment guidance mechanisms to effectively enhance employability of students, promote smooth employment for students, and promote the sustainable development of the schools.

Keywords: Applied undergraduate colleges; Employment capacity; Path to enhancing

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1. Introduction

As a key part of the higher education system, the employment ability of students in applied undergraduate colleges directly affects the effectiveness of the schools' operation and the long-term development of society. In the context of the increasingly severe employment situation, studying the path to enhance the employability of students in applied undergraduate colleges is of great significance for promoting smooth employment for students, improving the employment rate and quality of the school.

As a livelihood project, the employment of college students is a hot issue of social concern. The employment quality of students directly reflects the education quality and educational level of the school, which is related to the reputation of the school and affects its enrollment. Therefore, whether college graduates can find employment smoothly is not only related to their personal future, but also to the sustainable development of the school^[1].

The Major colleges and universities have also implemented educational reforms, formulated application-oriented talent training programs based on market demand and ability orientation, and vigorously promoted an educational model that combines theoretical knowledge with practical teaching^[2].

Some colleges and universities also enhance the professional abilities of students in their corresponding majors through talent cultivation models, career planning, curriculum ideological and political reforms, and school enterprise cooperation^[3].

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About the Author

Li,Yongzhang (1980-), is a lecturer of Security Department at Hezhou University,who currently does researches about Student management and guidance for employment and entrepreneurship.

Corresponding Author

Jiang,Jingdong (1966-), is a professor of Business English at Hezhou University, who currently does researches about Career Guidance for Business English Major.

2. Current Situation Analysis

The pressure on the employment scale of college graduates continues to rise. The number of college graduates in 2023 has reached 11.58 million, setting a new historical high. Coupled with the slowdown in economic growth, the growth rate of job supply lags behind the increase in graduates. According to data from Zhilian Recruitment, the job competition index for fresh graduates in 2023 (resume delivery volume/number of positions) and the supply-demand ratio for some industry positions has exceeded 5:1^[4].

The employment dilemma of graduates from applied undergraduate colleges is largely due to the lack of competitiveness in employment, where the quality of graduates is not linked to social demand, resulting in a helpless situation of "difficult employment" for students and "labor shortage" for enterprises. Therefore, applied science colleges should focus on their educational positioning and explore effective ways to cultivate applied talents^[5].

Currently, students in applied undergraduate institutions face several challenges in terms of employability, which are specifically reflected in the following aspects.

- (1) High employment expectations, imbalanced job seeking mentality, and the existence of slow and lazy employment phenomena;
- (2) Insufficient understanding of the industry, enterprise, and position, unclear self-awareness, resulting in inaccurate employment positioning;
- (3) The school's employment guidance system is not perfect, and the employment guidance courses are offered late, with a single content and lack of specificity;
- (4) The cooperation between schools and enterprises is not deep enough, and students lack practical experience and professional qualities.

3. Core Factors Influencing Employment of Applied Undergraduate Colleges

The core influencing factors of employment issues can be systematically analyzed from four dimensions: individual students, college education, industry demand, and social environment. There are key constraints or driving factors under each dimension. The following is a specific analysis:

(1) Individual dimensions of students

1) Structural imbalance of abilities

Significant skill disconnect: excessive emphasis on theory and disregard for practice, for example, mechanical engineering students who are proficient in CAD drawing may find it difficult to operate CNC machine tools.

There is a deviation in employment concept: students have low recognition of emerging positions such as intelligent manufacturing operation and maintenance personnel, carbon emission managers, etc., and are more inclined to pursue traditional 'white-collar' positions.

Lack of career planning: Over 60% of students lack clear career goals before their junior year (based on research data from an applied college in a certain province).

2) Shortcomings in competitiveness

Certificate out of touch with actual needs: The Level 2 certificate for ordinary computers does not match the certifications urgently needed in the industry, such as Python and big data, which limits students' competitiveness.

The quality of internships varies greatly: most internship opportunities only stay at the level of doing odd jobs,

making it difficult for students to access core business. For example, students majoring in finance and accounting are only responsible for organizing vouchers and lack substantive training.

(2) Dimension of institutional training

1) The curriculum system lags behind

The update cycle of textbooks is long (average 5 years), lagging behind the speed of technological iteration (such as industrial robot programming has shifted from teaching aids to ROS systems).

The proportion of general education courses is too high, and there is a lack of industry-specific courses (such as TikTok operation courses not offered in cross-border e-commerce majors).

2) Weak practical teaching

Surface level cooperation between schools and enterprises: Limited participation of enterprises and outdated equipment in training bases (for example, the automotive inspection major still uses fuel vehicles as teaching aids).

The proportion of dual teacher .Teachers are less than 30% (according to data from the Ministry of Education in 2023), and teachers lack frontline experience.

3) Inefficient employment services

Career guidance is limited to the aspects of resume modification and interview skills, and has not delved into the analysis within the industry (for example, there is a lack of exploration of the regional talent demand map in the semiconductor industry).

The quality of job fair companies varies, with over 80% of them being small and medium-sized enterprises, and few top companies participating.

(3) Dimension of industrial demand

1) Mismatch of regional industrial structure

The professional settings of colleges and universities are disconnected from local leading industries (such as inland colleges offering port logistics management but without related industries locally).

The demand for composite skills in enterprises is rapidly increasing (for example, electrical engineers need to have both PLC programming and IOT protocol capabilities), but the training of related talents is lagging behind.

2) The impact of technological change

AI substitution risk: The demand for traditional positions such as basic accounting and translation is shrinking, but universities have not timely offered RPA and AI trainer courses.

Green economy transformation: Insufficient supply of skills in areas such as new energy and carbon accounting.

(4) Social environment dimension

1) Policy implementation gap

The policy of integrating industry and education lacks detailed rules, and there is insufficient motivation for enterprises to participate (such as unclear deduction standards for tax incentives).

Grassroots employment projects (such as Three Supports and One Assistance) lack attractiveness and have a retention rate of less than 40%.

2) The impact of economic fluctuations

Small and medium-sized enterprise recruitment contraction: In 2023, the number of school recruitment positions for manufacturing small and medium-sized enterprises decreased by 15% year-on-year (according to data from Zhilian Recruitment).

Significant regional development differences: The employment agglomeration effect is particularly prominent in the Yangtze River Delta and Pearl River Delta regions, while the phenomenon of student outflow from universities in the Northeast and Northwest regions is severe, with an outflow rate exceeding 50%.

3) Social conceptual constraints

The phenomenon of high cost of education is common: when recruiting for ordinary technical positions, companies often force a bachelor's degree, but the actual job content is no different from what vocational education can handle.

Family pressure: Parents tend to prefer their children to choose stable careers (such as taking the civil service exam or working in state-owned enterprises), limiting occupational diversity.

(5) Summary of key contradictions

Types of Contradictions	Embody
Supply-demand contradiction	Single skills cultivated by universities vs. composite abilities required by enterprises
Speed-quality contradiction	Rapid iteration of industrial technology vs. lagging adjustment of college curriculum
Regional-industrial conflict	Homogenization of college major settings vs. demand for regional industrial specialization
Cognitive-reality contradiction	Students' expectations for decent employment vs. actual treatment and development space of manufacturing technology Jobs

(6) Typical case evidence

Positive case: the semiconductor packaging test class jointly built by the Taihu Lake University in Wuxi and SK Hynix, the course is developed by enterprise engineers, and graduates directly enter the job. Its starting salary is 42% higher than the average level of the same industry, which is supported by the industry salary report.

Negative case: The logistics management major of a certain university still teaches traditional warehousing knowledge and has not introduced intelligent warehousing robot operations. The employment rate of graduates has been below 65% for three consecutive years.

4. Improving Path of the Employment Ability of Students in Applied Undergraduate Colleges

The colleges and universities employment guidance center is a window for college students to find employment, and the employment guidance work of universities directly promotes the development and smooth progress of graduate employment work. The reason why college students find it difficult to find employment is due to objective reasons such as the expansion of enrollment in universities, but the fundamental reason is still due to their own problems. College graduates, due to their limited exposure to the world and lack of experience, often face numerous job opportunities and lack clear goals. Most students lack the correct employment concept, expect high salaries, place too much emphasis on rewards, and miss out on suitable employers. Employment guidance work is not only about information guidance and posting recruitment information, but more importantly, it provides ideological guidance and career planning for students, providing guidance and services from aspects such as self-awareness, career exploration, career decision-making, job seeking skills, and job seeking psychology^[6].

(1) Improve the guidance system of employment

Schools need to establish a comprehensive and systematic employment guidance system, implementing career planning education in stages and steps from freshman to senior year. The focus of the freshman year is on industry awareness education, inviting elite professionals from the business community to give lectures and organizing students to conduct on-site inspections and visits to enhance understanding. Creating online micro courses in the sophomore year to introduce the development history of different industries; Organize specialized classes for students with employment intentions in their junior year, conduct centralized training, invite enterprise experts to give lectures, and lead students to visit and learn on-site in enterprises; In the fourth year of college, the employment training camp project will be launched, focusing on enhancing the employment competitiveness of graduates, including a series of activities such as job skills training, experience sharing and exchange meetings, and enterprise presentations.

(2) Strengthen cooperation of school and enterprises

Schools should actively cooperate with enterprises and establish new models of cooperation between school and enterprise by implementing order based training and establishing internship add employment bases, we aim to provide students with more practical opportunities and job opportunities. At the same time, we invite enterprises to visit universities and collaborate to organize targeted lectures, matchmaking events, and double selection events, providing a platform for communication between students and enterprises.

(3) Enhance the comprehensive literacy of students

Schools should focus on cultivating students' comprehensive qualities and professional ethics. By offering professional ethics courses, organizing vocational skills competitions, and conducting social practice activities, communication skills, teamwork skills, innovation abilities, and other abilities of students can be enhanced. At the same time, actively advocating for students to participate in social practice and volunteer service in order to cultivate their sense of social responsibility and selfless dedication.

(4) Establish a personalized employment guidance mechanism

Schools should establish personalized employment guidance mechanisms based on the characteristics and needs of different students. Provide specialized career guidance, job recommendations, and internship opportunities for key groups such as poverty alleviation, subsistence allowances, zero employment families, as well as disabled and long-term unemployed graduates. For students facing employment difficulties, we need to carefully analyze job search challenges, optimize resume content, accurately target employment goals, and strengthen job search skills.

(5) Dynamic professional adjustment mechanism

Establish a professional warning index and timely shut down redundant majors based on industry talent demand data (such as the shortage occupational directory of the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security).

(6) Ability based curriculum reform

Reverse design course modules based on job task lists (such as core skill points corresponding to New Energy Vehicle Battery Testing).

(7) Collaboration between government, schools, and enterprises

Local governments establish industrial talent data centers where universities and enterprises share real-time demand information.

5. Conclusion

In summary, for individual students, government policies and school practices are external factors that promote employment. These practices have played a significant role in transforming graduates' employment concepts and facilitating their smooth employment. However, it cannot be denied that the success of graduates' employment and subsequent career development depend more on themselves. Many graduates lack clear self-awareness and positioning, have weak career planning awareness, and lack the ability to withstand pressure, employment, and innovation and entrepreneurship in the severe employment situation. Scientific and reasonable career planning for college students can not only help them understand themselves, accurately position themselves, and lay a foundation for their career choices and development after graduation, but also facilitate the rational allocation of human resources, effectively alleviate the severe employment situation and enormous employment pressure.

The employment challenges faced by applied undergraduate education essentially stem from the mismatch between the supply side of education and the demand side of the industry. To solve this problem, it is necessary to systematically reconstruct the cultivation ecology, such as strengthening practical teaching links, optimizing curriculum settings, increasing the proportion of practical courses, and establishing internship bases in cooperation with enterprises to improve students' practical abilities and adaptability to market demand.

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