

Research on Strategies for Improving Employability of Graduates of Higher Vocational Colleges

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Abstract: Finding work after college has always been a big problem for universities and society as a whole. The problem of graduates from higher vocational schools having a hard time finding work is especially noticeable. COVID-19 has slowed down China's social and economic growth in the last few years; things are not looking good for the national economy, which directly leads to the dire state of jobs. The number of college students in higher vocational colleges is growing every day, as is the number of graduates. At the same time, the job market is getting more and more competitive, and there is still a gap between the skills of college students in higher vocational colleges and the skills that are needed in the job market—this has made it harder for college students in higher vocational colleges to find jobs. Thus, making college students in higher vocational schools more employable by developing their overall skills and helping them become more competitive for jobs have become important tasks for higher education and pressing problems that need to be fixed. Based on a comprehensive analysis of existing research, this paper proposes four strategic suggestions: building a talent training model based on employability factors, strengthening the construction of high-quality vocational education characteristic courses, giving full play to the role of practical teaching in cultivating employability, and building a high-quality employment service system for higher vocational colleges. This aims to provide a reference for improving the employability of graduates from higher vocational colleges.

Keywords: Higher Vocational Colleges, Graduates, Employability, Talent Training.

1. Introduction

The employability of graduates from higher vocational colleges has received widespread attention at home and abroad. The United Nations has listed the improvement of employability as the primary measure to solve the global youth employment problem. It believes that the improvement of employability should be based on the skills of workers. The 2019 "Notice of the State Council on Issuing the Implementation Plan for the Reform of National Vocational Education" proposed that only by "promoting employment and adapting to the needs of industrial development" and "focusing on cultivating high-quality workers and technical and skilled talents" can vocational education "provide high-quality talent resources to promote economic and social development and improve national competitiveness" [1].

In the past few years, China's economic and social growth has faced big problems, and the job market, as a result, is not looking good. The current job market for college students has become one of the main issues that everyone is thinking about. Employment is the main way that people make a living and is what keeps them going. For college students, social employment is very important. College students' jobs are linked to the national economy and people's ability to make a living, as well as to the growth and improvement of colleges and universities, social security and harmony, and long-term growth. Hiring college students has an impact not only on the personal growth of the students themselves, but also on the personal interests of thousands of families who support them; more importantly, it has an impact on the national economy and on social development, safety, and stability. This paper will deeply analyze the employability of graduates from higher vocational colleges and propose countermeasures to the problems in order to improve the employability and employment quality of this group.

2. Overview of Employability of Graduates from Higher Vocational Colleges

2.1. The Concept of Employability

China's research on employability started relatively late. The issue of college students' employment has gradually become prominent as China's higher education gradually becomes more accessible and popularized. On this basis, Chinese scholars have also begun to attach importance to research on employability. Zhang provided an overview of employability from multiple perspectives. He said that trade college students' employability is a combination of long-lasting skills, such as their ability to find work and take advantage of job chances [2]. Zhang said that employability is made up of two types of skills: the first is the person's ability to get and keep a job, and the second is the person's ability to plan their future jobs [3]. It was pointed out by Pang that trade college students' work ability is a quality that they develop while they are in school that helps them easily find jobs and keep their job skills up to date [4]. The term "employment competitiveness" was first used by Yang in 2022 to describe college graduates' abilities to get jobs, beat out other applicants, find the right skills for the job, and understand their worth at work. From a psychological point of view, college students' ability to get jobs is mostly made up of two types of traits: open and unconscious. When it comes to getting a job after college, the difference between implicit and visible skills and traits makes a big difference [5].

2.2. Research on the Constituent Elements of Employability

Liu proposed that employability is manifested in

interpersonal communication, sense of responsibility, confidence, innovation, verbal expression, adaptability, psychological resilience, and teamwork[6]. Pang believes that employability can be summarized as consisting of personal qualities, innovation and entrepreneurship abilities, teamwork abilities, professional knowledge abilities, logical thinking abilities, etc [4]. Zhang found through SPSS data analysis that students' basic knowledge and professional skills, overall quality and ability, external employment ability, strong vocational workability, and social communication ability play a more prominent role in universities [7]. Zhang conducted an empirical summary based on the perspective of enterprise demand, dividing the employment ability structure into four dimensions: job skills, psychological qualities, general skills, and vocational qualities [8].

2.3. Research on the Current Situation of Employment Ability of Graduates from Higher Vocational Colleges

Scholar Ulrich Taizler analyzed the reasons for structural unemployment in China and believed that the unemployment of college students is closely related to their lack of professional skills[9]. Chinese researcher Zhang stated that the turnover rate of graduates from higher vocational colleges remains high, and analyzed the reasons that affect their employability from both external and internal factors. External factors include social needs, political background, family education, and social identity. Internal factors mostly include school training programs, curriculum design, the strength of the teachers, and the company's hiring standards. Personal skills and traits, as well as internal factors that affect employment, are also taken into account [10]. Ge and Dong say that the limitations of students' personal knowledge and the need for school-business cooperation are big problems that affect college students' ability to get jobs in higher vocational colleges. This is also shown in how college students think about their own job prospects. All of these things will make it harder to get a job and draw attention to the mental health issues of college students in higher trade schools. Some people think that college students should always be able to get better jobs [11].

2.4. Research on the Impact of the Epidemic on the Employment of College Students

Shen believes that the global spread of the epidemic has caused a rapid decline in the world economy, leading to a cliff-like drop in global consumer demand, investment demand, and trade demand. This has also made it harder for a lot of recent college grads and people who have moved from rural areas to cities to find work [12]. Based on Liu's research, the COVID-19 spread has made it harder for college students to find work. There is a lot of pressure on college graduates to find work because job openings are shrinking, hiring procedures have changed, and employees can't move around as easily as they used to [13]. Li pointed out that the reduction in the number of job positions has led to a narrowing of the range of options for graduates and increased competition pressure. Especially in the service sector, the catering, tourism, and other industries have suffered losses, resulting in a sharp decline in recruitment demand. In this situation, many companies have turned their attention to fresh college graduates to improve employment rates and reduce labor costs. The large number of graduates does not match the demand for recruitment, leading to some college students

facing difficulties in finding employment[14].

2.5. Research on Strategies for Enhancing the Employment Ability of Graduates from Higher Vocational Colleges

Shi analyzed students' employability from the perspective of human capital, and in his opinion, their employment outcomes are closely related to their abilities[15]. Jiang considers the current demand for professional talents in society and believes that the quality of education in vocational colleges should be continuously improved, with particular emphasis on employment guidance and adjustments to entrepreneurship courses to enhance students' innovation and entrepreneurship abilities[16]. Peng and Yang wrote in a survey research report that vocational colleges should be the focus of research in order to improve the job prospects of vocational college students, improve collaboration between schools and businesses in top-level design, and set up a scientific curriculum system and outstanding businesses [17]. Li suggested that college students should work hard in school to gain social respect, become more resilient through leadership training and mental health education, and always be self-oriented through practice, review, and other methods. This would help improve the quality of jobs available in the long run [18]. Some years ago, Wei suggested that the idea of college students' usefulness is one that is always changing and growing because of changes in society and the job market. It is necessary for universities to continuously optimize their talent cultivation methods, cultivate and enhance students' comprehensive qualities, and boost their employment confidence; Enterprises should also clarify their employment needs and strengthen collaboration with universities[19]. Song mentioned that improving the innovation, entrepreneurship, and employment abilities of college students, can better assist them in finding high-quality employment and achieve the goal of innovation and reform in talent cultivation in universities[20].

3. Strategies to Improve the Employability of Graduates from Higher Vocational Colleges

3.1. Construct a Talent Training Model based on Employability Elements

Determine employability as the training goal and implement the competency-based concept in the training process. Reasonable, scientific and clear training goals are the prerequisite for the school to smoothly carry out all educational activities, and are also an important action guide for guiding the school to implement the training plan. Higher vocational education directly trains talents for front-line positions such as social production, construction, and services. Its main task is not only to enable students to make a living, but also to enable enterprises to recruit suitable people. Employability from the perspective of market demand not only enables students to have the ability to continue to be employed, but also meets the employment standards of employers. Therefore, higher vocational colleges should implement the competency-based education concept, determine the basic training positioning with employability as the training goal, and adhere to this training goal as an action guide in the subsequent talent training process.

3.2. Strengthen the Construction of High-quality Vocational Education Characteristic Courses

Increase skills training and workplace practice courses, and strengthen the practical and vocational characteristics of vocational education courses. Compared with general education, vocational education is a type of education that is more closely related to employment. It focuses on teaching students the knowledge needed for a certain occupation or production labor, which determines that vocational education courses should highlight the characteristics of professionalism, application and practice more clearly. First of all, vocational skills training courses can be appropriately added to the curriculum, that is, relevant skills training elective courses can be set up according to the positions that students may engage in in the future, and students can choose the skills courses they want to learn. Secondly, in addition to professional courses, vocational college courses can also add workplace practice courses, or integrate workplace practice scenarios into practical training courses to provide students with workplace experience close to the real state. In the overall arrangement of the course, it is necessary to strengthen the correlation with the vocational content, increase the proportion of practical courses, and deepen the integration of theoretical courses and practical courses. Strengthen the construction of the integrated curriculum of science and practice.

3.3. Give Full Play to the Role of Practical Teaching in Cultivating Employment Ability

Formulate practical teaching plans scientifically and enrich practical teaching content and teaching methods. First of all, scientific teaching plans are the prerequisite for the smooth development of all teaching activities. When formulating teaching plans, the teaching objectives, content requirements, teaching methods and time arrangements should be clearly defined. Among them, the teaching objectives must be reasonable and clear as the basic basis for teachers to implement teaching plans. Practical teaching should serve the cultivation of students' employment ability as the basic goal. Therefore, when formulating teaching objectives, it should focus on the employment ability elements of higher vocational college students, that is, with the cultivation of employment ability as the core goal, it should focus on the improvement of students' practical operation ability, students' cognition and understanding of occupations, and their professional emotional experience. Secondly, in order to promote the achievement of teaching objectives, the teaching content and teaching methods should be more diversified. In addition to operational exercises, the content of practical teaching should also include the teaching of professional habits and work norms, methods and ideas for solving practical problems, and the cultivation of innovative consciousness, so that students can develop good professional habits and work norms in practice, and cultivate their problem-solving ability and innovative thinking.

3.4. Build a High-quality Employment Service System for Higher Vocational Colleges

Employment services should be provided throughout the entire training process, and a one-stop employment service platform should be provided. The core object of employment

service work in higher vocational colleges is students. They should serve the establishment of students' employment outlook and sustainable employment ability training, and this service goal cannot be achieved by service work during the graduation season alone. Therefore, employment services should be provided throughout the entire process of student training, and different service contents can be determined according to different stages. For example, from the time students enter school to the year before graduation, they should be mainly guided to establish correct employment concepts and help students plan their careers in advance. In addition to providing job information and test-taking skills sharing when students are about to graduate, they can also provide students with employment psychological guidance to help them enhance their psychological quality. Although schools have special employment offices, employment guidance centers and other departments, due to personnel, time, venue and other restrictions, there is a certain pressure to provide comprehensive and convenient services for a large number of students. With the help of modern information technology, a campus intelligent employment service platform can be created to provide students with one-stop services including career guidance, career planning, career testing, employment psychological guidance, recruitment information sharing, and interactive exchanges with past graduates on the platform, so as to strengthen students' attention to employment knowledge and career concepts.

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