

Exploring Pathways to Enhance Internship and Employment Quality in Application-Oriented Universities

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Abstract: Internships are vital in bridging academia and the workplace, especially in application-oriented universities. The shift from traditional, single-position internships to interdisciplinary models reflects the evolving talent cultivation approach. Universities increasingly collaborate with enterprises to offer customized programs, providing exposure to advanced technologies and management practices. However, challenges remain, such as low-quality internships and a gap between theoretical knowledge and practical skills. Improving internship quality, enhancing university-enterprise collaboration, refining curriculum design, and strengthening government policy support are essential strategies for universities and policymakers.

Keywords: Application-Oriented Universities; Internship Quality; Employment Quality; University-Enterprise Collaboration; Employability

1. Research Background

1.1 Definition and Development Trends of Application-Oriented Universities

Application-oriented universities play a crucial role in China's higher education system, focusing on cultivating practical, skilled, and socially adaptable talents [1]. These institutions prioritize vocational skills, integrating "industry-academia-research" to align curricula with industry needs, distinguishing them from traditional research-oriented universities. As China undergoes economic transformation, these universities' role has become increasingly important. National policies, particularly in the "New Era of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics," emphasize their function in improving students' employability and social service capabilities [2]. Consequently, enhancing internship and employment quality is a critical

challenge.

1.2 Current Situation of Internships and Employment

Students at application-oriented universities face significant challenges in internships and employment. Internship quality is often inadequate due to limited enterprise resources, low engagement from faculty and students, and a gap between academic knowledge and practical experience. As a result, students gain insufficient industry exposure, weakening their job market competitiveness. Additionally, many graduates find themselves in jobs unrelated to their major, and even when employed, they struggle to apply their academic knowledge. Job satisfaction is low, particularly in remote areas with saturated job markets and high recruitment barriers, emphasizing the need for reforms in talent cultivation.

1.3 Promotion of Policies and Educational Reforms

Government policies have supported the reform of application-oriented universities, with initiatives like the "Double First Class" program and "industry-academia-research cooperation" to increase resource allocation. National and local governments encourage school-enterprise partnerships to enhance internship quality and student employability. Educational reforms have focused on fostering innovation and entrepreneurship, strengthening university-industry ties, and improving curriculum systems to nurture applied talents. Despite these efforts, improving internship and employment quality remains challenging, requiring further policy enhancements and better alignment with industry trends.

2. Literature Review

Application-oriented universities aim to cultivate high-quality, practically skilled graduates [3]. Internships play a crucial role in

employability and career development. Research on internship quality has focused on content design, process management, and outcome evaluation.

Domestically, while research on internship quality emerged later, it has gained attention. Scholars highlighted the low quality of internships in Chinese application-oriented universities, citing issues like poor integration with academic courses, insufficient guidance mechanisms, and limited corporate involvement [4]. Despite these findings, gaps remain, notably the absence of standardized metrics to define internship quality and a lack of comprehensive evaluation methods that consider the interactions among universities, enterprises, and government entities.

3. Analysis of the Current Situation of Internship Quality

3.1 Diversity in Internship Content and Formats

Internships bridge academic learning and the workplace, with content and formats significantly affecting internship quality. Traditional models often focus on single-role tasks, but modern internships are increasingly interdisciplinary. The "industry-academia-research collaboration" model, involving partnerships with enterprises and industry associations, leads to customized internship projects that allow students to engage with cutting-edge industry technologies. New internship formats, such as virtual and international internships, offer students broader learning opportunities. Ensuring the relevance and alignment of internship content with professional development remains critical.

3.2 University-Enterprise Collaboration Model

The effectiveness of university-enterprise collaboration directly impacts internship quality. Many universities have established stable partnerships with enterprises, focusing on joint talent cultivation. These collaborations often include regular internships, curriculum co-design, and enterprise mentorship. However, some collaborations remain superficial, with low-quality positions and formalized cooperation. Deepening these partnerships and increasing enterprise involvement in talent development is essential for improving

internship quality.

3.3 Knowledge and Skills Acquired During Internships

Internships help students acquire professional skills, vocational qualities, and social experience. Professional skills relate to field-specific knowledge, while vocational qualities include communication, teamwork, and responsibility. Social experience helps students navigate workplace dynamics. However, some students' internship experiences fail to connect with academic knowledge, hindering workplace adaptability. Strengthening the relevance of practical teaching and improving communication and collaboration between universities and enterprises are essential to enhance internship quality.

4. Analysis of Current Employment Quality

4.1 Employment Rate, Matching, and Salary

The employment rate of university graduates, especially those from application-oriented universities, has steadily improved. However, significant disparities persist in job matching and salary levels. While many graduates secure employment, only some find positions aligned with their academic training, impacting overall employment quality. Despite these challenges, the rising employment rates suggest a positive outlook.

4.2 Evaluation of Employment Guidance Services

University employment services are crucial in supporting students' job searches, yet many institutions face difficulties in providing effective and targeted support. Although standard services like resume counseling and interview preparation are available, students often experience information gaps and lack job-seeking skills. Enhancing the relevance and effectiveness of these services is essential.

4.3 Employer Demand and Graduate Evaluation

Employers increasingly seek graduates with practical skills, innovative thinking, and teamwork abilities. However, many graduates fall short due to limited practical experience and difficulty applying theoretical knowledge. This feedback highlights the need for

universities to adjust their talent cultivation models and employment guidance strategies, with a stronger feedback loop between employers and universities to improve employment quality.

5. Strategies for Improving Internship and Employment Quality

5.1 Deepening School-Enterprise Cooperation

Strengthening school-enterprise cooperation is key to improving the quality of internships and employment [5]. Universities should establish stable collaborative platforms based on industry needs, involving enterprises in curriculum design, internships, and employment opportunities. Collaborative projects can provide high-quality internships that align student skills with workplace requirements.

5.2 Optimizing Practical Teaching and Curriculum Design

Application-oriented universities should align curriculum design with market trends and industry demands. Practical teaching should enhance students' skills and innovation, while on-campus platforms such as laboratories and entrepreneurship centers should be strengthened to provide hands-on opportunities that improve employability.

5.3 Strengthening Government Policy Support

Government support is vital for improving graduate employment quality. Policies should promote deeper school-enterprise cooperation, enhance employment services, and create more internship opportunities. Financial and policy support can help address challenges faced by students during their job search.

5.4 Guiding Students' Career Development

Universities must guide students' career development by offering career planning courses and personalized counseling. Encouraging participation in social practices and industry exchanges will also enhance employability.

6. Conclusion

This study offers strategies for improving internship and employment quality in

application-oriented universities, focusing on school-enterprise cooperation, curriculum design, government support, and career guidance. These recommendations provide valuable insights for university administrators and policymakers and offer a roadmap for improving internship and employment outcomes.

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