

## Analysis and Strategy Research on the “Slow Employment” Phenomenon among College Students in the New Era

Yu Dong\*, Xueting Lv, Wanze Gan

*School of electrical engineering, Lanzhou Institute of Technology, Lanzhou, Gansu, China*

*\*Corresponding Author*

**Abstract:** With the improvement of material living standards, the increase in the number of graduates, and the structural imbalance of talent demand, the problem of “slow employment” for college students has become increasingly prominent. The phenomenon is a concrete manifestation of the current social development contradictions in universities. This manifestation mainly includes the mismatch between graduates’ employment expectations and employers’ actual requirements, the contradiction between the growth of the number of college students and the decline in the quality of talent cultivation, and the contradiction between employment structure problems and the difficulties college students face in finding employment. Its essence reflects the pursuit and expectations of contemporary college students for high-quality employment, as well as their needs and aspirations for a better future life. To solve the “slow employment” problem, we should emphasize the priority of employment and jointly advance strategies such as strengthening ideological education, enhancing talent quality, and optimizing employment resources should be jointly advanced to promote high-quality and sufficient employment for college students.

**Keywords:** College Students; Slow Employment; Contradiction; Strategy

### 1. Introduction

With the continuous expansion of higher education, the number of college graduates in China has been increasing year by year [1]. In addition, the current socio-economic situation is complex, and the imbalance between supply and demand and structural problems in the job market has gradually become prominent, which has led to increasingly prominent employment contradictions among college students and a more severe employment situation. According to

the “2026 College Student Employ ability Survey Report” released by Zhilian Recruitment, the number of college graduates in 2026 is expected to reach 12.7 million nationwide, an increase of 480,000 compared with the 2025 cohort; The proportion of slow employment and freelance work has further increased from 19.1% and 13.7% last year to 20.3% and 14.2%, respectively. It is obvious that the number of college students choosing to delay employment is increasing year by year, and more and more graduates have actively or passively entered the ranks of “slow employment”. This will slow down or affect the employment process of college graduates, leading to increasing employment pressure at the social level. Therefore, in order to solve the problem of “slow employment” among college students, it is crucial to deeply analyze the essence and core contradictions of this phenomenon, and explore coping strategies and solutions for it. This approach holds significant importance for promoting high-quality and full employment of college graduates and implementing talent development strategies in universities.

### 2. Current Situation of “Slow Employment” among College Students

“Slow employment” among college students refers to the situation where graduates slow down the process of job hunting and temporarily refrain from working [2,3]. Currently, “slow employment” among college students mainly manifests in two forms: “active slow employment” and “passive slow employment”. “Active slow employment” refers to the situation where college students delay finding employment due to their subjective dissatisfaction with job requirements or their reluctance to seek employment.

#### 2.1 Active Slow Employment

“Active slow employment” refers to the slow employment of college students due to their

subjective dissatisfaction with employment demands or unwillingness to work. It can also be divided into two forms: one is “positive slow employment”, which refers to some college students who are dissatisfied with potential working environments and quality of life, and improve their own qualities through further education, exams, or practice, in order to find satisfactory jobs or start their own businesses. The other is “negative slow employment”, which mainly refers to some college graduates without career planning who are afraid of employment and lazy to work, thus refusing to participate in employment.

## **2.2 Passive Slow Employment**

“Passive slow employment” refers to the situation where college students are unable to find employment due to objective reasons related to their own conditions that fail to meet the job requirements of employers. However, regardless of the type of “slow employment”, it will inevitably affect the personal career development of college students and the overall employment process of universities, thereby exerting a certain negative impact on economic growth and social stability [4].

## **3. An Analysis of the Essence and Contradictions of the “Slow Employment” Phenomenon**

### **3.1 The Essence of the “Slow Employment” Phenomenon**

The emergence of the “slow employment” phenomenon is a comprehensive result of economic, social, educational and individual factors. The phenomenon fundamentally reflects students’ pursuit and expectations for high-quality employment, as well as their needs and aspirations for a better future life. From the perspective of social and economic development, the essential factors behind the phenomenon can be explored from three aspects.

(1) Improvement of material living standards  
From the perspective of social development, the phenomenon of “slow employment” among college students is a product of the times when society and economy have reached a certain stage of development. After graduation, college students should have achieved economic and life independence when entering society, but most parents are still willing to continue providing financial support for their children, which is the

direct reason for the emergence of the “slow employment” concept among college graduates [5]. The material conditions of affluent families provide economic security for college students’ “slow employment”, so college students have longer cycles and higher requirements for job choices, and their attitudes towards employment will also be more open and inclusive [6]. Graduates pay more attention to the nature of work, the development prospects of the career, salary and compensation, and the location of work in the process of career selection and employment, rather than blindly accepting employment for the sake of making a living. For some college students, employment is no longer the only goal and choice after graduating from higher education.

(2) The number of college graduates has increased

According to data statistics, there were 10.76 million college graduates in 2022, 11.58 million in 2023, 11.79 million in 2024, 12.22 million in 2025, and an estimated 12.7 million in 2026. The number of college graduates is increasing year by year. However, according to the statistics of the job market, the growth rate of the number of college graduates far exceeds the growth rate of the employment capacity of various enterprises and units. Due to the mismatch between the number of graduates and the demand for employment, the phenomenon of “slow employment” among college students has become more prominent [7].

(3) The structural imbalance of employment talent demand

After entering the information age, China has experienced rapid development in technologies such as artificial intelligence, internet of things, new energy, and biological sciences. The economic structure has been continuously adjusted, and the industrial structure has been rapidly upgraded. In the new era and new economic situation, in order to break free from the constraints of traditional economic models and meet the development requirements of high intelligence, high energy efficiency, and high intelligence, it is necessary to accelerate the development of new-quality productive forces mainly based on technological innovation, which places higher demands on the quality of talents. The relationship between high-quality and full employment and the development of new-quality productive forces is close and mutually complementary. The development of new

quality productivity requires high-quality and high-level talents as support, and high-quality talents provide the driving force and guarantee for the sustainable development of new quality productivity forces. This will inevitably lead to continuous changes in the talent demand and structure of various enterprises and units. In addition, China's economic structure has regional imbalances, which will lead to structural imbalances in the supply and demand of talents nationwide. This is also the main reason for the increasingly serious "slow employment" phenomenon [8].

### **3.2 The Core Contradiction of the "Slow Employment" Phenomenon**

In the new era, China's principal social contradiction has shifted to the contradiction between the people's ever-increasing pursuit of a better life and unbalanced and inadequate development. From the perspective of the main contradiction in social employment, with the advent of the market economy era, due to the increasing number of college graduates in China and the structural problems between the cultivation of college students and social employment, the employment contradiction of college students has become increasingly prominent, which has also led to the increasingly serious "slow employment" phenomenon. The employment contradiction of college graduates is mainly manifested in three aspects: the contradiction between their employment expectations and the mismatch with employers, the contradiction between the growth of the number of college students and the quality of talent cultivation, the contradiction between employment structural problems and the difficulty of college students' employment.

(1) The contradiction between college graduates' employment expectations and the quality of job positions

College graduates' employment expectations are often reflected in the nature, location, salary, benefits, and working conditions of the job. In the job search and recruitment process, graduates are prone to misjudge their own value and cannot rationally match job positions that are equivalent to their own abilities. Instead, they ignore the value matching of their own strength and the development prospects of their career, and only blindly seek ideal job positions with high salaries, good environment, and high levels. Some college students have vague employment

concepts, which leads to their employment expectations not matching the job positions provided by employers. The existence of a certain value difference between the two is the direct cause of the phenomenon of "slow employment".

(2) The contradiction between the increase in the number of college students and the decline in the quality of talent cultivation

Against the backdrop of expanding enrollment in universities nationwide, the number of college students has been increasing year by year. This makes it impossible to guarantee the quality of talent cultivation. The abilities of college students do not meet the recruitment needs of employers. Because the comprehensive qualities of college students do not match the talent expectations of recruiting units, it further increases the difficulty of employment for college students. However, the decrease in the quality of talent cultivation in universities is caused by multiple factors. Firstly, the national higher education is gradually transitioning from elite education to mass education, and the decrease in the quality of talent cultivation is a necessary path in the transformation of educational models; Secondly, in the process of expanding enrollment in universities, there will inevitably be problems such as insufficient teaching staff, chaotic student management, and shortage of teaching resources, which result in the training process of college students not meeting the quality requirements of talent cultivation; Thirdly, outdated training models and curriculum structures do not meet the actual needs of employers, and schools do not provide sufficient training for innovative and entrepreneurial practical abilities, which also leads to a lack of social employment competitiveness among college students; Finally, some college students have strong autonomy and personality awareness, but poor self-discipline and learning awareness lead to low personal comprehensive quality.

(3) The contradiction between structural issues in employment and difficulties in finding employment for college students

In recent years, in order to enhance the level of domestic industrial technological innovation and modernization, and accelerate the development of new-quality productive forces, China is actively promoting the rapid upgrading and adjustment of its industrial structure [9]. The upgrading of industrial structure will drive the

optimization of labor resource allocation, which will affect the change of employment structure and thus generate employment structural problems [10]. The structural problem of college students' employment is mainly manifested in the mismatch between industrial structure and talent structure. Some enterprises and positions have increasingly high requirements for the comprehensive quality of employees, but the current professional and technical level of college students is not suitable for these requirements. Therefore, there are vacancies in enterprise units and a situation where college graduates have no job after graduation. The specific problems mainly include the structural issues of employment areas for college students, the mismatch between industrial structure and talent structure, and the imbalance between talent demand and existing staffing. The regional structural issue of college graduates' employment essentially stems from the gap in regional economic and social development, which leads to an imbalance of employment positions in different regions, thereby affecting the employment structure of various regions. The problem of mismatch between industrial structure and talent structure refers to the fact that due to factors such as economic restructuring, the development of new-quality productive forces, industrial upgrading, and the research and development of new technologies, enterprises require college students to possess higher levels of quality. Nowadays, the comprehensive quality of college students does not match the requirements of enterprises, and graduates are unable to adapt to the requirements of enterprises, resulting in structural employment problems. The problem of imbalanced talent demand and existing staffing mainly manifests in unreasonable staffing, imperfect personnel systems, and constraints from systems and policies, resulting in an imbalance between talent demand and staffing quantity.

#### **4. Solutions and Strategies for Addressing the “Slow Employment” Phenomenon**

In response to the increasingly serious issue of “slow employment” among college students, we should prioritize employment and collaboratively promote the establishment of correct employment concepts, enhancement of employment competitiveness, and creation of favorable employment resources. Through these

strategies, we strive to resolve the problem.

##### **4.1 Strengthen Ideological Education**

Employment attitudes determine employment actions. To address the current issue of “slow employment”, it is crucial to first strengthen attitude education, improve the current “slow employment” mindset, and promote the establishment of a correct employment outlook among college students. The education of employment attitudes requires universities, families, and society to jointly fulfill their educational obligations and form a collaborative education community among universities, families, and society. Multi-party collaboration is needed to build a diversified employment education system for college students.

Universities, as the primary task bearers of college students' education, should integrate employment concept education into aspects such as ideological and political education, innovation and entrepreneurship education, and internship and practical education. In the process of college students' life and study, universities should actively leverage their educational capabilities to subtly complete employment education for college students.

Family is a key factor in the formation of students' concepts, and the positive guiding role of parents or families in college students' employment concepts should be fully utilized. The emergence of the “slow employment” mindset among many college students is largely influenced by their parents or family factors. Parents cannot act as decision-makers to make choices for their children, nor can they remain indifferent as bystanders. Instead, parents should provide their children with necessary guidance and support during the crucial moments of confusion and hesitation when choosing a career. They should objectively view their own conditions and social needs, and make employment choices based on reality.

Society is the ultimate destination of employment and also an important medium for guiding employment concepts and actions. With unprecedented reach, mass media have permeated all aspects of society, profoundly influencing social life, value systems, and ideological formation. In the education of employment concepts, the guiding role of social media should be strengthened, and positive public opinion should be created to guide college students who choose “slow employment” to

adopt a rational attitude towards employment and actively seek employment in a reasonable manner.

#### **4.2 Improve the Quality of Talent Cultivation**

The quality of talent determines the quality of employment. In the current context of rapidly increasing numbers of college graduates, the primary approach to addressing the challenge of “slow employment” is to coordinate efforts during talent quality cultivation, fostering comprehensive competencies in students, and enhancing their employability.

From the perspective of talent supply and demand, employment is demand-oriented. By establishing a dynamic talent cultivation model, universities need to adjust discipline construction and curriculum settings to cultivate high-quality talents that meet the needs of employment positions. Talent cultivation should closely revolve around social needs and enterprise adjustments. By dynamically updating talent training programs and optimizing subject and major settings, the alignment between subject curriculum construction and industry can be improved. By adding practical and innovative courses related to enterprises, we aim to enhance the overall personal qualities of college students. From the perspective of personal development, we should emphasize the vital role of academic competitions in fostering students’ comprehensive competence. Schools should advance industry-education integration, deepen university-enterprise cooperation, and strengthen students’ practical application skills. By integrating practical teaching with academic competitions, we can maximize their positive effects on talent development, nurturing students’ innovative awareness and hands-on capabilities. Furthermore, it is necessary to explore reforms in practical teaching, develop a practice-oriented talent training model, and elevate students’ overall quality.

#### **4.3 Enrich Employment Resources**

Employment resources determine the effectiveness of employment. In order to promote high-quality and full employment, we need to enrich employment resources and promote a more reasonable employment structure. In order to improve employment, we must adhere to the implementation of the employment priority strategy, thoroughly implement national employment related policies,

highlight the key role of economic development in talent supply and demand, achieve coordinated linkage between policies, universities, industries, and employment, promote and form a virtuous cycle of high-quality development and high-quality employment promoting each other. Enterprises should develop new quality productivity according to local conditions, cultivate emerging industries, lay out future innovative technology fields, strive to create more high-quality employment opportunities, and stabilize and expand employment capacity. This can build an employment friendly development model. By shaping modern human resources while fully promoting supply-demand matching, structural employment contradictions can be resolved.

Build and optimize employment service platforms, improve the service system, and enhance overall service capabilities. Leveraging Internet and artificial intelligence, universities and society can develop intelligent employment platforms to offer online career guidance and planning. These platforms enable job information sharing, accurate recommendation, progress monitoring and result feedback, thus upgrading employment information services for both society and institutions. The government should further develop a unified, standardized human resources and employment market, aiming to build an inclusive, accessible and efficient public employment service system.

Universities should timely understand graduates’ career intentions and employers’ talent needs, establish databases for graduate intentions and job requirements, and conduct enterprise outreach to expand employment channels. This supports precise matching between candidates and positions. Special attention should be given to graduates from disadvantaged backgrounds, such as poverty-alleviation households, low-income families and veterans, by providing priority guidance and job referrals.

#### **5. Summary**

To solve the problem of “slow employment” among college students, we need to clarify the connotation and causes of slow employment by analyzing the essence and core contradictions of the “slow employment” phenomenon. We emphasize the principle of prioritizing employment and propose a coordinated employment plan that integrates policies, universities, families, society, and students. The

plan fully promotes strategies such as establishing correct employment concepts, enhancing employment competitiveness, and creating good employment resources. This can resolve the “slow employment” phenomenon, promote high-quality and full employment of college graduates, and provide important support for economic construction and improvement of people’s livelihood.

### **Acknowledgments**

This paper is supported by the 2024 Special Project of “College Students’ Career Planning and Employment Guidance” under the 14th Five-Year Plan of Gansu Provincial Educational Science (No. GS [2024] GHBZX0043).

### **References**

- [1] Yan W, Xili R, Yinjun F, et al. Machine learning prediction model based on enhanced bat algorithm and support vector machine for slow employment prediction. *PloS one*, 2023, 18(11):e0294114.
- [2] Li X, Zeng Y. Research on the Phenomenon of “Slow Employment” of Chinese College Students. *Economics & Management Information*, 2025, 4(6):18-23.
- [3] Li Z, Hao M. Slow Employment: Phenomenon, Causes and Solutions. *Academic Journal of Business & Management*, 2022, 4(4):26-33.
- [4] Hongxin Xiao. Analysis of the Causes and Governance Paths of the “Slow Employment” Phenomenon among College Graduates. *Development Research*, 2023, 40(11):66-71.
- [5] Ji X .Research on the Impact Mechanism of “Slow Employment” on College Students’ Employment Behavior. *Modern Economics & Management Forum*, 2026, 7(1):41-48.
- [6] Yiliang Wang. The Current Situation, Causes, and Coping Strategies of “Slow Employment” Among College Students. *Ideological and Theoretical Education*, 2023, (11):106-111.
- [7] Haojia Z, Yingshan C, Shiyue Q, et al. Literature review and research prospect of digital inclusive finance and gig economy under the background of new quality productivity. *Financial Engineering and Risk Management*, 2024, 7(2):156-163.
- [8] Su, Yuan. Research on the Improvement of College Students Employment Ability under the Background of “Slow Employment”. *Education Research and Innovation*, 2025, 1(4):44-50.
- [9] Zou C. Interpreting and Governing the “Slow Employment” Phenomenon among College Students: A Perspective on the Transformation of Society’s Primary Contradiction. *Region - Educational Research and Reviews*, 2025, 7(2):11-17.
- [10] Hu B. Research on the Intervention Mechanism of Moral Education and Humanistic Quality Education in Colleges and Universities to the Phenomenon of “Slow Employment” of College Students. *Higher Education and Practice*, 2025, 2(5):29-35.