

Research on the Practical Dilemmas and Guidance Strategies of Employment Concepts among Students in Applied Technical Universities

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Abstract: Due to the national policies on developing applied undergraduate education and enhancing the quality of vocational education, the employment perspectives of students in applied technology colleges are closely connected with the extent of school-enterprise cooperation. At the same time, they are significantly related to the regional industry's demand for skilled personnel. By analyzing previous studies and collecting some survey data, our investigation focuses on Lanzhou Institute of Technology as the main subject. We investigate the major influencing factors on students' employment views from four aspects: personal conditions, the college, the family and the society. These factors affect each other. Consequently, several issues arise. The issues involved are unclear career orientation, a preference for stable employment, and insufficient appreciation of applied positions. Based on these results, we suggest a four-in-one guiding approach for employment perspectives. This strategy comprises 'social guidance, university support, family cooperation and individual effort.' The purpose is to offer useful guidelines for assisting students in forming reasonable and scientific employment ideas.

Keywords: Applied Technology University; Employment Concept; Realistic Dilemma; Guiding Strategy; Collaborative Education

1. Background and Significance of Research on Employment Concepts of Applied Technology University Students

With the entry of higher education in China into a new phase of extensive popularization and high-quality development, differentiated and classified development has gradually become the main approach and the basic guideline of the current higher education reform. Colleges of technology play an important and essential role

in the modern higher education system. They are responsible for training high-quality, applied, technical and skilled personnel meeting the requirements of regional economic restructuring and industrial advancement.

In recent years, with the increasing college enrollment, the total number of university graduates in our country has been rising annually. This situation puts considerable pressure on the domestic job market. For instance, the graduation group in 2025 consisted of 12.22 million people, which showed an increase of 430,000 compared to the previous year. The graduate group in 2026 is estimated to reach 12.70 million, indicating a year-on-year growth of 480,000. Therefore, the competition in the labour market has become more intense. Moreover, students from technical universities have to encounter more obvious difficulties in employment because of their special institutional position.

College students' employment behaviors are mainly affected by the employment perception which determines their career selection, job-hunting methods and final employment outcomes. In recent years, the employment perceptions of students from applied technology colleges have become more varied and complicated. Some students have unclear career concepts and have a strong tendency towards government-owned or public sector jobs. They also lack identification with applied positions and neglect the chances in the grassroots and new industries [1]. These problems result from various factors at individual, institutional and social levels. Not only is it significant for their individual career advancement and the attainment of life values, but it also influences the accomplishment of the talent training objectives of the university, the effective implementation of industry-education integration and the necessary talent supply for the regional industrial transformation and upgrading. Hence, studying the actual difficulties and

corresponding guidance strategies concerning the employment perceptions of students from applied technology colleges holds great theoretical and practical importance.

2. Employment Perception Dilemmas among Students at Universities of Applied Technology

According to the previous research background and theoretical study, the present investigation is conducted on the undergraduate students from Lanzhou Institute of Technology. They are considered as the key objects for the empirical research. In order to guarantee the reliability, validity and applicability of the research data, a standardized questionnaire survey was conducted formally. The survey covered students with different personal backgrounds which include gender, academic year, major and urban or rural household registration type. This diversified sample can avoid the difficulty of obtaining data from a single type of population. Thus, the collected data can reflect the whole employment cognition status of the student group adequately. It also ensures the representativeness and credibility of the sample. By organizing the systematic data, performing statistical analysis and conducting an in-depth empirical discussion on the valid questionnaire data obtained from the survey, the present study ultimately discovers and summarizes the main practical difficulties and typical cognitive problems existing in the current employment perceptions of the students in the local technical universities.

2.1 Vague Career Orientation and Lack of Clear Planning

The survey shows that only one-third of the students have a definite career direction and can determine their future careers based on their academic subjects and personal abilities. The rest show an unclear position in their career, having little awareness of their vocational interests and strengths and being uncertain about the suitable occupations. A small number of students do not have any career orientation, without making advance arrangements for employment and remaining in a passive waiting state. This lack of clear career position leads to indecisiveness in choosing employment, making the students easy to be influenced by external information and peer opinions, thus hindering them from making decisions which are

appropriate to their individual characteristics and development requirements.

2.2 Obvious “Establishment Complex” and Misalignment with Market Demand

Due to the main purpose of universities of applied technology in providing technical and skilled workers for enterprise production, a large number of students still prefer to work in government departments and public organizations as their ideal careers, showing a low evaluation of private enterprises, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and frontline technical jobs. The investigation shows that most students hope to get "establishment" (bianzhi) positions, whereas few are willing to consider working in private enterprises, SMEs or starting their own business. This strong "establishment complex" is obviously inconsistent with the present situation of the job market [2].

2.3 The Intertwining of the Graduate School Aspiration Trend and “Delayed Employment” Reflects a Prominent Avoidance Mindset

In the period of fierce competition for qualifications, most students consider the postgraduate entrance examinations as an important route to their careers. They even regard these examinations as a means to postpone job search. This indicates a tendency towards passive further study. They prefer to attend more schools to escape from the job market. When they fail to obtain desirable jobs, some students intend to delay their employment. It suggests that they are lacking in career adaptability and active job-hunting attitudes.

2.4 Lack of Proactiveness in Job Seeking and Heavy Reliance on External Support

Survey indicates that half of the students do not take an active part in the job search. They prefer to wait for job offers and seek employment mainly during the graduation time. Besides, they seldom collect information about the labour market. Moreover, these students do not attempt to enhance their job-searching abilities. Some students depend too much on job information and chances provided by their university or family. Their career planning is not fully independent. They do not exhibit an energetic attitude towards job search. Only a few students pay close attention to the variation of the labour market. They participate in internships and

practical experiences. They also make determined efforts to increase their own suitability for employment.

3. Multidimensional Factors Influencing Employment Perceptions of Students at Universities of Applied Technology

The development of students' employment perspectives is not based on a single factor but results from the combination of several aspects. These aspects involve the social and cultural surroundings, the guidance given by the university, the family background, and the individual characteristics of the students.

3.1 Macro-Social Factors

People have positive opinions on academic records and stable positions in society. Such social views affect the employment decisions of the students and their occupation selections. Nevertheless, technical and vocational abilities were not regarded as important and highly respected before. Thus, the students do not give much importance to ordinary technical work. Moreover, the frequent alterations in industries send evident signals to the market. The newly developed fields need more people with multi-disciplinary and comprehensive technical skills and strong practical abilities. However, there are still some discrepancies in some respects between the local colleges and enterprises. In addition, the real job demands are different from the course materials in the universities. All these problems make the students doubtful about their future careers. Hence, most students tend to choose 'secure' ways. These selections mainly include taking graduate examinations or entering civil service examinations.

3.2 University-Level Factors

From the perspective of university talent training and curriculum planning, most university courses emphasize the instruction of theoretical knowledge too much [3]. The practical teaching sessions and real enterprise projects are not sufficiently incorporated into the regular teaching timetable. This results in a significant difference between the learning in class and the requirements of the workplace.

This phenomenon commonly occurs and makes many students unable to use the knowledge learned in class in their work, leading them to understand that their professional competence

and practical abilities are not adequate for the real job market. Therefore, their confidence in seeking jobs decreases. To compensate for the supposed shortage of practical abilities, they decide to continue their education rather than start working directly. Moreover, at present, most higher education institutions have not established a perfect closed-loop evaluation system for teaching. Especially, there are few scientific and quantitatively assessed indicators concerning the career cognition and employment concepts of the students. In this situation, it is difficult for the teachers to evaluate objectively and accurately the effectiveness of the employment-oriented education carried out on campus. Thus, many students may develop one-sided employment attitudes and usually give priority to salary, benefits and material advantages when selecting jobs.

3.3 Family-Level Factors

The socioeconomic background and parents' original career views have a great effect on the gradual establishment of children's job selection standards and actual job-hunting behaviors during their growth [4]. Some parents are greatly affected by the long-standing traditional career views and tend to give more importance to the stability of the occupation and social reputation. They also have obvious stereotyped attitudes and inherent cognitive biases towards the lower grade front-line positions and jobs in private enterprises. These fixed ideas gradually influence the career cognition and values of the students through daily family education and verbal instructions, thus strengthening their preference for 'establishments'. As a result, the young students are more likely to compete for stable positions like civil servants, public institutions and state-owned enterprises. However, they do not have enough recognition and acceptance for the lower grade jobs and positions in private enterprises, which actually contain many development opportunities and practical challenges.

During this time, the economic conditions of the family affect the students' final job selection. Families with better economic situations provide more financial assistance. They usually approve or support the students' decision to delay employment. Consequently, the students are given enough time to choose a career, improve themselves and gain some working experience. Therefore, the job search process takes longer.

On the other hand, families suffering from serious financial problems are greatly restricted due to lack of funds. Firstly, they expect their children to find a job as soon as possible to decrease the family's financial burden. Secondly, they have very high standards for "high-quality and stable" jobs. However, these two requirements do not coincide with each other. This contradiction is the main obstacle for the students to obtain suitable positions. It influences their ability to make reasonable choices in job selection. Moreover, it causes some difficulties for the university's career guidance and employment services which are intended to assist the students.

3.4 Individual-Level Factors

Students' self-awareness, independent career planning ability and on-the-job practical experience play an important role in affecting their comprehensive career cognition and final employment decisions [5]. Many students have not been given any organized training on self-exploration and career planning during their study period. They have a very vague idea about their personal career preferences, their own strengths, weak points and future career plans, thus unable to formulate a definite and practicable career development plan. Consequently, they often make employment choices blindly and passively. Their judgments are easily influenced by external public opinions and the career paths chosen by their classmates, which makes it difficult for them to follow their own development direction.

4. Construction of Guiding Strategies for Employment Concepts

According to the above analysis, this research suggests the establishment of a four-in-one guidance strategy for employment concepts, including "social guidance—university empowerment—family cooperation—personal initiative." For the practical difficulties and influencing factors mentioned above, the writer thinks that collaborative actions are required from the four aspects of society, university, family and individual to create a coordinated "four-in-one" guidance system for employment concepts.

4.1 Social Guidance: Fostering an Employment Culture That Respects Skills and Values Practical Work

The sociocultural background plays an important role in shaping students' employment concepts. In order to guide students' employment concepts effectively, it is necessary to establish a more rational and diversified professional value in society. The government and social organizations should improve the social prestige of technical and skilled jobs by means of media publicity, awards, policies and so on. For instance, highlighting the models like "master craftsmen" and "technical experts", and setting up examples of "success through skills" can change the technical positions, which are mainly aimed at vocational colleges, from being considered as "second-best choices" to "valuable choices". At the same time, social networks should present the real situation of job market competition. They should also promote the idea of "starting work early and growing early". Attractive delayed employment decisions should not be overestimated.

4.2 University Empowerment: Building an Employment Education System to Enhance Guidance Effectiveness

Universities play a significant role in promoting employment concepts. Applied technology universities ought to begin with the curriculum, practical situations and assessment approaches. It is important to spread the education of employment concepts throughout the entire training process of the talents. The curriculum of the universities should be modified. It would be preferable to shift the emphasis from theory to a combination of theory and practice. The enterprise projects, case-based instruction and internships should be incorporated into the teaching system. Furthermore, 'order classes' and 'industry colleges' can also be applied. This will enable students to know the actual job requirements and form a positive attitude towards technical and skilled positions. Additionally, the universities should invite famous past graduates and industrial experts to return to the campus. They can share their career development experiences. They can serve as examples for the students [6].

4.3 Family Collaboration: Updating Parental Concepts to Form Synergistic Educational Force

The family is the "first classroom" for the students and an important environment for them to learn about their employment attitudes and

career values. It is necessary for the cooperation between the families and the universities. The universities should bear the responsibility to establish a joint employment guidance system. To accomplish this, the universities should communicate with the parents in a scientific, reasonable and rational manner. This can be done through regular parent-teacher meetings, online WeChat groups and special employment guidance lectures. Thus, the parents can keep informed about the present industry situation and understand the different job requirements and talent evaluation standards. Consequently, they can change their traditional and fixed concepts about a "good job" and give up the one-sided employment views. At the same time, the universities should instruct the parents to hold a scientific educational attitude. The parents should respect their children's individual career preferences, specialties and long-term goals. The parents should not impose their own limited and result-oriented career expectations on their children. Instead, the parents should provide sufficient spiritual encouragement and positive guidance to their children. Such support enables the children to have the confidence to explore various job opportunities. Therefore, the children can actively investigate different career choices and choose proper career directions according to their own conditions [7].

4.4 Individual Initiative: Strengthening Subjective Awareness and Enhancing Self-Efficacy

External guidance is accomplished through the internalization of the students themselves. The essential change in the employment concept depends on the alteration of the students' attitudes. The students should take an active part in career assessment, career planning activities and other university programs. They should carry out a systematic investigation of their own career interests, ability strengths and developmental goals, thereby forming a definite career development plan [8]. Besides, the students should join internships and practical experiences during the holidays and free time voluntarily. By gaining firsthand knowledge of the industrial situations and job demands, they can improve their awareness and employment abilities. Moreover, the students should develop a positive attitude. Treat each interview and job-hunting chance as an opportunity for growth. Do not run away from difficulties because of

short-term failures [9].

5. Conclusion

We summarize the interview results and the case study findings. Then we find that the main problems encountered by the students from the applied technology institutions are caused by a basic issue. On the one hand, people generally hope for steady and reliable jobs. On the other hand, the labour market requires skilled and professional talents. These two requirements do not match each other well. Thus, this conflict leads to some obstacles and practical difficulties in the students' job search. To solve this common problem, persuasion is not sufficient alone. It is also inappropriate if only one party takes action. Joint actions and coordinated efforts from the four important aspects are needed: the society, the colleges, the families and the individual students. First, the society should build an open, multi-level and reasonable employment atmosphere. Second, the colleges should perform their educational duties to improve the students' all-round abilities and employment potential. Third, the families should offer consistent understanding, guidance and strong support. Finally, the individual students need to make positive changes in their career concepts and practical work. Only when these four parties form a good closed-loop system and communicate positively with each other can the students gradually change their attitudes towards employment from passive to active. In the end, this will be advantageous to achieve a better and more harmonious correspondence between the training objectives of the applied technology colleges and the students' actual career choices.

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