

# A Survey and Research on the Employment Awareness of Vocational College Students

Yonglin Chen<sup>1,\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*School of Foreign Language, Dehong Teachers' College, Dehong, China*

\*Corresponding author: 461272411@qq.com

**Abstract:** *There is a correlation between the employment awareness and employment level of vocational college students. In order to gain a deeper understanding of the employment intentions and related situations of vocational college students, a survey was conducted on the employment awareness of 24 major in a vocational college students. The study adopted a sampling survey method, conducted in the form of questionnaires and interviews, combined with daily employment experience and feedback from employers, to collect data on students' employment awareness. By comparing and analyzing relevant data, the study further understands the employment awareness of students, summarizes the current employment awareness of vocational college students, and proposes suggestions to cultivate their positive employment awareness, in order to improve the quality of employment for vocational college students.*

**Keywords:** *Vocational College Students, Employment Awareness, Survey and Research*

## 1. Related Research Theories

The employment situation in universities is severe, and the number of college graduates in China has exceeded 11 million. In this context, various universities provide employment services and guidance for graduates. At present, with the continuous improvement of the employment guidance system for college students, students have gained a certain understanding of the employment situation, and their enthusiasm and initiative for employment have increased to a certain extent. However, there are still some aspects that need to be improved and enhanced in the employment of vocational college students in China. For instance, there are certain issues with student employment confusion, professional ethics, career planning awareness, and employment initiative. Faced with the difficulties in employment in universities at that time, various universities have proposed relevant measures, such as employment guidance, visiting enterprises to expand positions, improving student job abilities and professional qualities, etc., in order to promote the development of student employment work.

Through literature review and daily employment work summary, the study believes that students' awareness and attitude towards employment are crucial for the development of employment work. As the main body of employment work, students' subjective initiative and attitude in job preparation and the job seeking process are the internal factors that determine the level of employment work. The guidance and other related work carried out by schools and families to enhance student employment are external factors that can promote the development of related work, but cannot ultimately determine its development. Cultivating students' awareness of employment subjectivity is of great significance for improving their employment level and promoting employment in vocational colleges. Ye Yan and Mo Jianyi (2013) believe that cultivating the employment subject awareness of vocational college students is of great significance for promoting the reform of moral education and employment guidance in vocational colleges.[1] Subjective consciousness refers to the conscious understanding of one's subject status, subject ability, and subject values as the theme of cognitive and practical activities. It is a manifestation of subjective initiative such as human autonomy, agency, and creativity. Personal professional competence includes physical and mental qualities, communication and expression abilities, teamwork skills, job seeking skills, professional ethics and professional abilities, and continuous learning abilities.

Ruan Meifei (2009) holds that employment subject consciousness refers to the independent and comprehensive awareness and understanding of the physical and mental state of college students in the process of cultivating their employability, as well as the changes in the environment. It can stimulate students' independent and creative spirit. Therefore, conducting education on subject consciousness with

autonomy as the core is an indispensable part of the process of cultivating students' employability.[2] Employment awareness is a component of personal professional competence, which refers to the psychological activities of college students that control their actions during the learning stage and job search process, with a certain employment purpose and willingness. It is a conscious ability to judge things, cooperate with teams, have a professional attitude, and achieve employment goals in this process. Mel Fugate et al. (2004) introduced the structure of employability, defining it as a multidimensional collection of occupational identity, individual adaptability, social capital, and human capital.[3] Employability encompasses the conceptual commonalities between these dimensions as they are related to proactive adaptability in the workplace. Employability is considered as a proactive adaptability specific to work, built upon and expanded upon relevant research. Suzuki Miyuki et al. (2015) also believe that there is a relationship between college students' employment awareness and employment adaptation. [4]

## **2. Analysis of The Basic Situation of Employment Awareness Among Vocational College Students**

In order to understand the employment awareness of vocational college students, this study conducted a survey on multiple vocational college students in a vocational school, involving forms such as questionnaires and interviews, combined with the experience of summarizing employment in daily life and feedback from employers.

### **2.1. Research methods and objects**

To gain a deeper understanding of the employment intentions and related basic information of vocational college students, by analyzing their employment intentions, we can further understand their employment awareness. The study used a sampling survey method to conduct a questionnaire survey on vocational college students in Dehong Teachers' College. The questionnaire focuses on several aspects of students' employment intentions, attitudes towards employment prospects, salary expectations, employment locations, and employment preparations, in order to comprehensively understand their employment attitudes.

The questionnaire is in the form of an online questionnaire, set up through Questionnaire Star, and distributed with the assistance of the class teacher and counselor to supervise students to complete. The survey was distributed to 24 graduates from vocational colleges in 2023, covering accounting, horticultural technology, urban rail transit operation management, arts and crafts design, application of Thai language, civil aviation safety technology management, automotive inspection and maintenance technology, economic information management, art design, computer application technology and other vocational majors. Through sorting, a total of 611 valid questionnaires were collected.

The questionnaire question setting takes into account multiple aspects of students' employment intentions, and analyzes from dimensions to fully understand their employment awareness. The research subjects cover a wide range, including graduates from 24 majors, and the questionnaire survey results have certain universal significance and objectivity. In order to gain a deeper understanding of students' employment intentions and better analyze their employment awareness, the study set interview questions based on a questionnaire survey.

### **2.2. Questionnaire and interview questions**

The questionnaire involves two parts: multiple-choice questions and subjective questions. There are a total of 6 objective multiple-choice questions and 2 subjective multiple-choice questions. In the objective multiple-choice question, research and design answers for question 1, such as upgrading to university, employment in enterprises, and enlistment; Question 2, the study has set four options for answers: general, pessimistic, optimistic, and unclear; Question 3: According to the income level of college students, the questionnaire has set some income options accordingly; In question 4, based on the intention of graduates to find employment, the questionnaire was set with three answers: local, within province, and outside province; In question 5, there are two answers to the questionnaire: yes and no, regarding whether to prepare for college promotion and job seeking; Question 6: Regarding the employment environment, the questionnaire has four answers: bad, average, very good, and unclear. Please refer to the Table 1 for details.

*Table 1: Questionnaire on Employment Intention of Vocational College Students*

| Number | Number Question   | Answer Options   |
|--------|---|--|
| 1      | What is your main employment intention?   | Graduation, employment in enterprises, enlistment, entrepreneurship, civil service examination |
| 2      | What is your attitude towards your employment prospects?                          | General, pessimistic, optimistic, and unclear  |
| 3      | What is your salary expectation for your first job after graduation?              | Within 2000 yuan, 2000-3000 yuan, 3000-4000 yuan, 4000-5000 yuan, and above 5000 yuan a month. |
| 4      | Where do you hope to find employment after graduation?                            | Local, within province, outside province   |
| 5      | Are you currently preparing for further education and job search?                 | Yes, No  |
| 6      | How do you evaluate the current environment for further education and employment? | Not good, average, very good, unclear  |

The subjective question setting mainly considers the survey results from two dimensions: the difficulties faced by students in employment and the support provided to students in school employment work, in order to analyze and understand students' employment awareness. The specific issues are shown in the Table 2 below.

*Table 2: The difficulties faced by students and the support provided to students in school employment work*

| Number | Number Question                                     | Answer Options   |
|--------|---|--|
| 1      | What are the main difficulties faced in employment? | Misalignment of employment majors, lack of job seeking skills, blocked employment information channels, insufficient personal abilities, insufficient interpretation of policies, impact of the epidemic, job seeking anxiety, and failure to meet expected job salaries |
| 2      | Suggestions for school employment work?             | Self improvement, employment guidance, upgrading guidance, recommending enterprises and job fairs  |

In addition, in order to have a more comprehensive understanding of the employment situation of students and better understand their employment awareness, the study conducted some random interviews with some students who participated in the questionnaire, including the following questions. The specific issues are shown in the Table 3 below.

*Table 3: Interview Questions for Student Employment Intention.*

| Number | Questions   |
|--------|---|
| 1      | Do you have a clear sense of employment awareness?  |
| 2      | Do you have a clear study and employment plan during your studies?  |
| 3      | Do you think that personal abilities (physical and mental fitness, communication skills, team collaboration, etc.) meet the job requirements? |
| 4      | Do you think your professional skills meet the job requirements?  |
| 5      | Do you think the employment environment is good?  |
| 6      | Have you received any neglect from higher vocational education during your job search process?  |
| 7      | Have you encountered unfair treatment during your employment process?   |

### 3. Research Survey Results and Analysis of Results

#### 3.1. Survey results of objective multiple-choice questions in the questionnaire

Question 1: What is your main employment intention?

From Table 4, it can be seen that the proportion of students who are willing to improve themselves through upgrading to higher grades is the highest, reaching 62.40%. The second ranked is employment in enterprises, which is related to vocational majors. The third ranked is employment in public institutions, with 32 people interested. The number of people participating in the Western Plan and the Three Supports and One Assistance program is 3 and 2 respectively. In addition, 5 people indicated that they are temporarily unemployed. Overall, students have a strong enthusiasm for employment, with a small number of students having weak employment awareness, and a small number of students having a weak willingness to serve at the grassroots level.

Table 4: Results on students' employment intention

| Employment intention              | Number | Proportion |
|-----------------------------------|--------|------------|
| Three supports and one assistance | 2      | 0.33%      |
| Public institutions               | 32     | 5.24%      |
| Enterprise employment             | 95     | 15.55%     |
| Enlist in the armed forces        | 9      | 1.47%      |
| Civil servant                     | 6      | 0.98%      |
| Upgrade                           | 381    | 62.40%     |
| Special position teacher          | 16     | 2.61%      |
| Self-employed                     | 18     | 2.95%      |
| Freelancing                       | 24     | 3.93%      |
| Western Plan                      | 3      | 0.49%      |
| Temporarily unemployed            | 5      | 0.81%      |
| Other                             | 20     | 3.27%      |

Question 2: What is your attitude towards your employment prospects?

Table 5: Results on students' employment intention

| Employment attitude | generally | not optimistic | not clear | optimistic |
|---------------------|-----------|----------------|-----------|------------|
| Number              | 280       | 119            | 30        | 182        |
| Proportion          | 45.83%    | 19.48%         | 4.91%     | 29.79%     |

From Table 5, 29.79% of students expressed optimism. Overall, the employment prospects of students are uncertain. Most students expressed "average" employment prospects, 11.94% expressed "not optimistic", and 4.91% expressed "unclear".

Question 3: What is your monthly salary expectation for your first job after graduation?

Table 6: Results on students' monthly salary expectation

| Expected salary | Within 2000 yuan | 2000-3000 yuan | 3000-4000 yuan | 4000-5000 yuan | Above 5000 yuan |
|-----------------|------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Number          | 12               | 134            | 249            | 146            | 72              |
| Proportion      | 1.96%            | 21.93%         | 40.75%         | 23.90%         | 11.78%          |

From Table 6, the expected salary for most students is between 3000 to 5000 yuan, which is generally in line with the current income level of college students.

Question 4: Where do you hope to find employment after graduation?

Table 7: Results on students' employment location

| Employment location | Local  | Within province | Outside province |
|---------------------|--------|-----------------|------------------|
| number              | 81     | 450             | 80               |
| Proportion          | 13.26% | 73.65%          | 13.10%           |

From Table 7, the vast majority of students are willing to stay in Yunnan Province for employment, accounting for over 80%. From this perspective, students lack the willingness to venture outside.

Question 5: Have you started preparing for further education and job search?

Table 8: Results on students' preparation for further education and job search

| Answers    | Yes    | No     |
|------------|--------|--------|
| Number     | 545    | 66     |
| proportion | 89.20% | 10.80% |

From Table 8, nearly 90% of students stated that they have started preparing for their future development, indicating a more proactive employment orientation in the school.

Question 6: What is your views on current environment for education and employment?

Table 9: Results on students' views on current environment for education and employment

| Answers    | Not good | Generally | Good   | Unclear |
|------------|----------|-----------|--------|---------|
| Number     | 70       | 423       | 70     | 48      |
| Proportion | 11.46%   | 69.23%    | 11.46% | 7.86%   |

From Table 9, students believe that the current employment environment is "average", which is more in line with the reality. This is more consistent with the survey results of question 2.

**3.2. Survey results of subjective questions in the questionnaire**

Question 4: Main difficulties faced in employment.

*Table 10: Results on students' difficulties faced in employment*

| Number | Questions   | Number | Proportion |
|--------|---|--------|------------|
| 1      | Professional mismatch   | 249    | 40.75%     |
| 2      | Insufficient job search skills  | 394    | 64.49%     |
| 3      | Employment information channels are not smooth                          | 315    | 51.55%     |
| 4      | Insufficient personal abilities   | 341    | 55.81%     |
| 5      | Lack of understanding or limited understanding of policy interpretation | 365    | 59.74%     |
| 6      | The impact of the epidemic  | 408    | 66.78%     |
| 7      | Job anxiety   | 285    | 46.64%     |
| 8      | Job benefits do not meet expectations                                   | 176    | 28.80%     |

From Table 10, it can be seen that the factors that lead to employment difficulties are multidimensional, ranked in order as the impact of the epidemic and insufficient job seeking skills, which account for over 60%. Next is the lack of understanding or insufficient understanding of policy interpretation, insufficient personal abilities, and blocked employment information channels, which account for over 50%. The last three items in the ranking are job anxiety, mismatched majors, and expected job benefits. From the survey results, it can be seen that the eight factors mentioned above have an impact on employment outcomes.

Question 2: Suggestions for schools mainly involve the following items based on their frequency of occurrence.

*Table 11: Students' suggestions for schools*

|   |                                |
|---|--------------------------------|
| 1 | Employment guidance            |
| 2 | Upgrade guidance               |
| 3 | Guidance for further education |
| 4 | Job fairs                      |

Based Table 11, students believe that schools can focus on four main aspects: improving student abilities, providing employment guidance, providing guidance for undergraduate students, and introducing job fairs to help students improve their employment efficiency.

**3.3. Survey results of interview questions**

This study conducted interviews through phone calls, WeChat, and visits, and organized the answers to the seven interview questions mentioned below on Table 12.

*Table 12: Interview questions on students' employment awareness*

| Number | Questions   |
|--------|---|
| 1      | Do you have a clear sense of employment awareness?  |
| 2      | Do you have a clear study and employment plan during your studies?  |
| 3      | Do you think that personal abilities (physical and mental fitness, communication skills, team collaboration, etc.) meet the job requirements? |
| 4      | Do you think your professional skills meet the job requirements?  |
| 5      | Do you think the employment environment is good?  |
| 6      | Have you received any neglect from higher vocational education during your job search process?  |
| 7      | Have you encountered unfair treatment during your internship and employment process?  |

From the answers, the study summarizes that students have a vague awareness of employment and do not have a clear development direction or a study plan formulated to complete the plan. In the interview, most students believed that there was a certain gap between their professional abilities and personal qualities and the job requirements. In addition, students have an objective understanding of the current severe employment environment and are dissatisfied with the unfair treatment encountered during the job search process.

**3.4. Summary of current employment awareness of vocational college students**

Based on the above data, it can be concluded that the current employment awareness of vocational college students is as follows.

1) Vocational college students have a relatively objective and rational understanding of the employment environment. From the perspective of understanding the environment for further education and employment, 69.23% of students believe that the environment for further education and employment is average, while 11.46% of students believe that the environment for further education and employment is not good. Overall, this is in line with the objective reality of the current severe employment environment. From the perspective of salary expectations, most students have a salary requirement between 3000 and 5000 yuan, which is in line with the market average.

2) Vocational college students have an increasing awareness of further education, but their employment opportunities are relatively limited. From the perspective of student employment intentions, the majority of students have the option to continue their studies, and 62.40% of students choose to solve their next step of employment problems through college to undergraduate programs. This trend is in line with the current job market's requirements for educational qualifications. However, the proportion of students considering other forms of employment, such as “Three Supports and One Assistance”, “Western Plan”, “Independent Entrepreneurship”, and “enlistment”, is less than. This single employment model, which mainly focuses on upgrading students, is also not conducive to the smooth employment of students and coping with the current severe employment situation.

3) Worried employment prospects and loss of confidence in employment prospects. From the data, 29.79% of students expressed “optimism” about their future employment prospects, the remaining students were more concerned about their employment prospects, 45.83% of students had “average” employment prospects, 19.48% were not optimistic about their employment prospects, and the proportion of students who expressed “unclear” about their employment prospects reached 4.91%.

4) Students have awareness of employment preparation, but there are insufficient measures to solve employment problems. 89.20% of students said they are prepared for further education and job search, but there are not many ways to cope with the harsh employment environment. For example, 73.65% of students plan to work within the province, 13.26% plan to stay locally for employment, and only 13.10% of students are willing to work outside the province. This awareness of local employment has little effect on effectively solving employment problems for students.

5) Insufficient motivation to learn professional knowledge and skills. Through interviews, it can be seen that students believe that professional skills and personal qualities are of great significance for employment. However, in terms of student school performance, there is insufficient action for self-improvement among students. Overall, students have an objective understanding of the current employment environment and job requirements, which is in line with reality. However, there is a lack of awareness in improving one's own qualities and enhancing one's own initiative.

#### **4. Reflection on the Cognitive Methods of Employment for Higher Vocational College Students**

##### **4.1. Personal factors of students**

Through questionnaire surveys, interviews, and personal employment work summaries, the study suggests that students have biases in their employment cognition in the following aspects.

(1) Lack of career planning, or unrealistic or unreasonable career planning. Students do not have clear career development plans and cannot arrange scientific and reasonable self-improvement during their school years. At the same time, some students make unrealistic career plans, and their career development plans are detached from the requirements of the talent market.

(2) Proactively raising awareness biases and insufficient self-improvement actions. Students have an objective understanding of the severity of the employment environment, have a willingness to actively seek employment, and also recognize the influence of personal comprehensive abilities in job seeking. However, from the survey, it can be seen that the vast majority of students lack initiative in self-improvement during the semester.

(3) Self cognitive bias. From the survey, it can be seen that students have biases in their self-awareness, mainly manifested in two aspects: firstly, they have a sense of inferiority and lack confidence in the job search process. On the other hand, students tend to have a “conceited” mentality during the job search process, making them picky about work.

(4) Unreasonable employment strategy. In the face of a harsh employment environment, employment is the first priority, and the career selection strategy is in line with the employment requirements of

students. However, during the job search process, students are persistent in “getting it right at once” and insist on selecting the most desirable job position.

(5) Inaccurate grasp and recognition of the professionalism and service of higher vocational education, low professional ethics, and insufficient sense of responsibility. Some students lack professional ethics, arbitrarily violate agreement requirements, and have insufficient sense of responsibility and collective consciousness in the process of employment cognition.

In summary, the career planning, self-awareness, self-awareness, employment strategy selection, and professional ethics of students directly affect their employment and need to be improved.

#### **4.2. Suggestions for schools to enhance students' employment awareness**

The school should consider the following aspects to help students objectively understand employment and promote employment development, taking into account the existing problems in their employment cognition.

(1) The school should make good career planning education for students, targeting their personalities, strengths and weaknesses, and positioning them well. Through career planning courses, do a good job in student career planning.

(2) The school should enhance students' awareness of proactive improvement, guide them to exert their subjective initiative, and through professional course teachers, class teachers, and counselors, do a good job in student ideological work, forming a proactive and enterprising consciousness. Students take the initiative to improve their personal abilities and cultivate abilities that meet the requirements of the job market.

(3) The school should carry out effective employment counseling, including systematic employment services such as job seeking skills, employment environment analysis, and employment psychological counseling.

(4) The school should pay attention to internships and practical training work, improve the clarity of students' understanding of market conditions and job requirements, help students adjust in a timely manner, better adapt to the transition from school to society, and avoid inconsistencies between what students learn in school and market requirements.

(5) The school should promote employment channels for school entrepreneurship, enlistment, enterprises, and the three supports and one assistance, and cultivate awareness of employment through multiple channels.

(6) The school should conduct insufficient vocational training for students, especially in terms of education on service awareness, responsibility awareness, and collective consciousness.

#### **4.3. Family aspect**

Schools should mobilize parents to participate in the school's employment guidance work, help students establish correct career and employment concepts, and actively face various problems encountered in the employment process. Ye Tan (2023) believes that in order to promote the employment of vocational college students, parents and schools should actively cooperate. Parents have an important influence on the formation of students' worldview, outlook on life, and values.[5] In the process of students seeking employment, students are more likely to have an impact on their own employment views due to the influence of their parents. Judith M.S. et al. (2015) also emphasized the positive relationship between families and student employment awareness. [6]

### **5. Conclusions**

It is very necessary to enhance the employment awareness of vocational college students. Starting from their employment awareness, promoting the development of vocational college student employment work has certain practical and theoretical significance. From the research results, it can be seen that the employment awareness of vocational college students still needs further improvement. To enhance the employment awareness of vocational college students, in addition to their own factors, supports from various aspects such as schools, families, and society are needed.

### Acknowledgements

This paper is a phase achievements of the 2022 Delong Teachers' College's school-level project "Research on the Cognition of Vocational College Students' Employment Environment"(2022XJ11)

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