

Slow Employment: Phenomenon, Causes and Solutions

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Abstract: In recent years, more and more college graduates joined the slow employment group after graduating, instead of looking for a job or pursuing further education, they procrastinate. This paper analyzed the causes of slow employment from the aspects of individual, society and country, and puts forward corresponding countermeasures for various factors, to help college graduates establish a correct employment consciousness, which is undoubted of great significance for improving college students' employment quality, implementing talent development strategy and promoting the healthy development of economy and society.

Keywords: slow employment, college students, graduate, solution paths

1. The rise of "slow employment"

With the transformation of China from the period of the total demographic dividend to the era of structural talent dividend, the number of working-age population aged 15-64 has peaked in 2011. It means that, the period of rapid economic development supported by labour and export advantages has gradually passed, followed by the decline of labour force and the rise of labour cost. Under the background of technology-oriented development, the employment and job selection has not only attracted the great attention of the society, our party and government also paid great attention to this aspect.

The report of the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China clearly pointed out that "employment is the biggest livelihood of the people. We should adhere to the employment priority strategy and active employment policy to achieve higher quality and fuller employment. We should provide all-around public employment services and promote youth groups such as college graduates and migrant workers to start businesses through multiple channels.[1] In recent years, with the advent of the graduation season. While many young college students have embarked on jobs through their efforts, some students do not consider employment or continue their further study, but are doing nothing or planning matters unrelated to employment. This is the phenomenon of "slow employment" under the background of current employment difficulties. Analyzing the employment data of college students in 31 provinces in China in 2021, it is found that by October, the proportion of unemployed graduates in Inner Mongolia, Xinjiang, Hubei, Qinghai, Hunan, Shaanxi and Jilin is 10%. The proportion of unemployed graduates in developed provinces and cities such as Beijing, Jiangsu and Shanghai is about 5%. As shown in Figure 1, the number of graduates in China has increased year by year in recent years. Coupled with the participation of previous graduates, returnees and other groups, the number of employees has exceeded 10 million.

Facing such a competitive situation, many graduates choose to join the "slow employment" group. They are either eager to find a job, or intend to graduate before considering employment. In a word, they have no intention of employment and fall into employment confusion. At present, the proportion of such students is increasing year by year. For this phenomenon, most people hold a negative attitude and believe that slow employment is lazy psychology. Boomerang kids under the guise of slow employment fear and escape from the unknown prospect after graduation. There are also some people hold a favourable view that this is the manifestation of the awakening of College Students' independent consciousness, and the prudence in choosing their first career is also a rational manifestation.

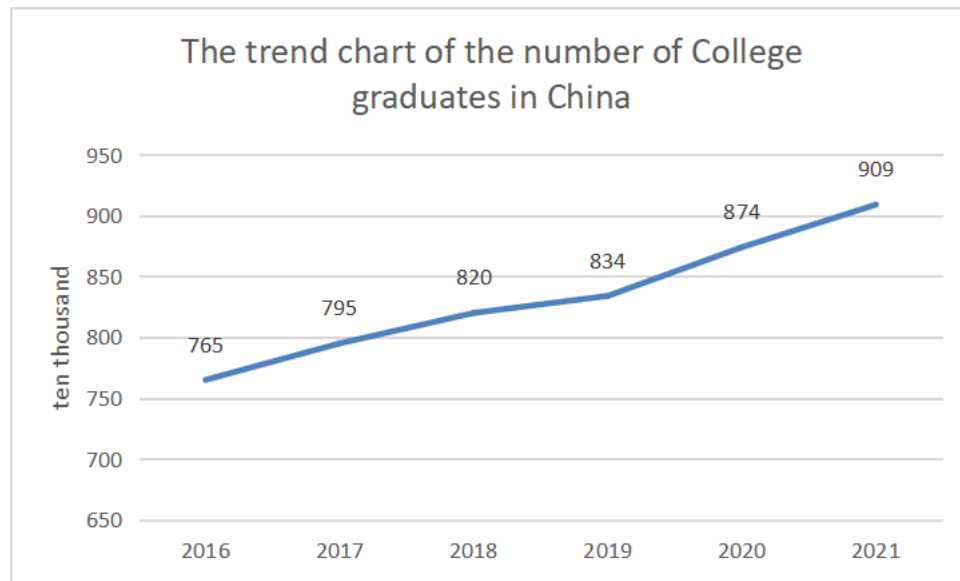


Figure 1: Change trend of the number of college graduates in China from 2016 to 2021

With the continuous growth of this team, it has become a major inducement of employment difficulties. Compared with accusation, it is more important to analyze the causes of slow employment, and explore the correct solution to the problem of slow employment according to these reasons.

2. Causes of "slow employment" of college students

2.1 Personal factors resulting from slow employment

The idea of slow employment of college graduates mainly comes from their own psychological factors. Conceited mentality, paranoid mentality and ostrich mentality will result in slow employment behaviour.

The first is the ego mentality. College graduates often regard themselves too high because they are born in Colleges and universities, in these senses of superiority, graduates always have blind self-confidence and optimism about the employment prospect. Such graduates difficult to accurately conduct self-evaluation and analyze the employment situation. Most of them go after soft-intensity and high treatment jobs blindly, conflict with high-intensity and soft pay jobs, think themselves above their business. [2] It is hard to find a favourite job, and degenerate into a slow employment member in the attack of reality.

The second is the paranoid mentality of some students. Some graduates are paranoid in the process of job hunting. They blindly require their posts to match their majors, completely ignore the occupations unrelated to their majors, only pay attention to the immediate interests and ignore the long-term significance of career development. In the one hand, such students are not willing to try positions outside their majors. In the other hand, they always lack of professional backgrounds or abilities, so they naturally become a member of the slow employment group.

Thirdly, the ostrich mentality of graduates to avoid employment. Some graduates act according to their parents' wishes from childhood, lack independent ideas, and misunderstood the severe employment situation. When they need to make employment choices, they don't know what to do. They don't even realize how to choose jobs, nor take the initiative to understand the situation. These student pretends to turn a blind eye and wait for employment passively. They are the leading force in the slow employment group and need to be adjusted psychologically.

2.2 Competitive factors in the process of social transformation

Fundamentally speaking, the employment problem of college graduates is the contradiction between supply and demand. The increase or decrease of supply and demand has an essential impact on the balance. With the steady growth of the total number of suppliers, the economic development directly affects the employment situation of graduates. [3] The economic development trend is good, the

employment posts are also increased accordingly, and the employment of graduates is relatively easy. On the contrary, the economic development is terrible the employment posts are reduced therefore, and it is more difficult to obtain employment after graduation.

At present, China's economic structure is undergoing significant adjustment, the mode of economic growth has changed from extensive to intensive, the demand for college graduates in traditional industries has decreased, high-tech industry has become a new economic growth point, and there is a greater demand for innovative high-quality talents. At the same time, the recruitment of state-owned enterprises has decreased significantly, the government and public institutions have reduced personnel, and private enterprises have become an important choice for graduates' employment. With the continuous reform of the economic system, a large number of rural surplus labour force is transferred to non-agricultural industries, which virtually increases the employment pressure. In addition, the current downward pressure on the economy has increased, and Sino US trade frictions have intensified.

According to the data released by the Chinese government network, the decline of the national economy from January to February 2020 is reflected in the decline of industrial production, service production and fixed asset investment. Data over the same period showed that the unemployment rate increased, especially in February, the unemployment rate reached 6.2% and 5.3% in January. The main reason for the rise in the unemployment rate in February was the impact of the epidemic. The production and operation activities of enterprises were affected, the demand for employment decreased, and the number of employees decreased. Although the overall unemployment rate rose in February, the employment situation of some critical groups was generally stable. For example, the employment unemployment rate of the primary age population aged 25-59 was 5.6%, 0.6 percentage points lower than all. The unemployment rate of people aged 20-24 years and above with junior college education decreased by 0.4 percentage points over the previous month.[4]

The combined action of multiple factors makes college graduates face a more severe employment situation, employment competition incentive and huge employment pressure. In the face of such encouraging competition, many graduates are profoundly unable to find a suitable job at the time of graduation, they are forced to become a slow employment group.

2.3 Contradiction between talent training policy and social demand

In recent years, China's universities have expanded their enrollment, resulting in a high gross enrollment rate, resulting in a sharp increase in the number of graduates and prominent employment problems. With the continuous reform of the economic system, the requirements for graduates have also changed significantly. Employers pay more attention to post needs, start from reality, look for graduates who meet their actual needs, and gradually change from paying attention to academic qualifications to paying attention to competence. This has high requirements for students' innovation ability, knowledge structure and ability to solve practical problems, as well as specific requirements for graduates' basic quality and personality characteristics.

Although universities continue to implement enrollment expansion policies, they basically expand enrollment within the framework of the original professional structure according to the existing conditions of the University. [5] For example, science and engineering majors cannot recruit a large number of students due to the restrictions of the original experimental equipment, while liberal arts majors with low requirements for teaching equipment expand enrollment on a large scale, resulting in an imbalance in the proportion of specialty settings and mismatch with social needs, Causing a relative surplus of graduates and employment problems; The implementation of a single training mode, unreasonable curriculum, monotonous content and single means, seriously lags behind the market development, ignores the training of applied and innovative talents urgently needed under the market economy, and lays hidden dangers for the employment of graduates.

At the same time, with the implementation of the large-scale enrollment expansion policy, the education funds continue to rise, and the economic pressure of the school is huge, so that the school infrastructure and the quality of teachers cannot keep up with the pace of enrollment. Most of the teachers come from fresh master's or doctoral students, lack practical work experience, and only pay attention to the indoctrination of teaching theory, It is not conducive to the development of students' practical ability and innovation ability, and cannot meet the actual requirements of the market. It is more difficult for graduates to obtain employment, so they have no choice but to become a member of slow employment.

2.4 Awakening of College Students' awareness of rational job selection

In addition to choosing "slow employment" due to the above passive factors, with the development of the national economy, the groups that actively choose "slow employment" are also gradually growing. Similar to the popular gap year for foreign students, active "slow employment" is mostly manifested in that students do not enter the workplace immediately after graduation, but enrich their experience through studying abroad, volunteering and tourism in a short time (usually more than a year).[6]This choice can improve students' independence, cultivate students' ability of rational thinking and social participation, help to improve personal career planning, and make students have a better orientation in employment.

According to the actual situation in China, college students' active choice of "slow employment" mainly has the following two aspects of background and reasons: On the one hand, the rapid economic growth promotes the continuous improvement of people's material living standards. More families have the conditions to provide certain economic support for college students after leaving school and provide material guarantees for their choice.[7]The post-95 families generally have few children, and contemporary parents pay more and more attention to the development of their children's spiritual world. Therefore, college students' choice of "slow employment" will rarely be pressured or hindered by their parents, but can get some spiritual support. At the same time, with developing new economy and business forms, the concept of youth has changed.[8]Just as youth groups try to satisfy their spiritual consumption needs in spiritual ways, [9]they also show their emphasis on "spiritual satisfaction" in choosing jobs. According to the survey results, current youth no longer pursue "stable" work in the traditional sense. In the face of diversified forms of employment, contemporary youth pay more attention to "work experience" and "personal development".[10]It can be seen that in addition to salary, the post-90s pay more attention to the improvement of personal skills and interest, which reflects their attention and consideration of self will in career choice. Although these students choose to delay employment based on various factors, they are also an essential part of expanding the "slow employment" group.

3. The solution of college students' slow employment

College graduates are the country's valuable human resources. The employment of graduates is related to the vital interests of millions of students and families. It is a livelihood project related to the whole society. It is of far-reaching significance to ensure social harmony and stability.

Since 2020, the Chinese government has repeatedly issued relevant guidelines to safeguard and promote employment. At present, the comprehensive strengthening of steady employment measures and the implementation of the task of ensuring residents' employment has become an essential task for the whole country. As comrade Xi Jinping said: We should do adequate support in youth employment, focusing on college graduates, and support and help them take their first steps into society. On December 1, 2020, the Ministry of education and the Ministry of human resources and social security held the 2021 national network video conference on employment and Entrepreneurship of college graduates in Beijing. The meeting pointed out that the total number of college graduates in 2021 is expected to be 9.09 million, an increase of 350000 year-on-year, facing a severe and complex employment situation. On the same day, the Ministry of Education issued a notice on doing an excellent job in the employment and Entrepreneurship of 2021 national college graduates.

Standing at the starting point of the new journey of the 14th five year plan, in the first year, employment is the most considerable livelihood and the most basic support for economic development. During the 14th Five Year Plan period, achieving fuller and higher quality employment is an internal requirement for promoting high-quality development and building a socialist modern country. It is an important foundation for practicing the people-centred development thought and solidly promoting shared prosperity. Therefore, we can guide the "slow employment" of college students from the following aspects:

3.1 Change ideas and adjust employment mentality

Graduates' employment mentality cannot adapt to the current employment situation, which is an important factor leading to slow employment behavior.[11]Therefore, graduates should first start from themselves, establish a sense of autonomy and responsibility, actively understand the employment situation, maintain self-confidence, be down-to-earth, strive to improve their ability to adapt to

employment, correctly evaluate themselves, correct their employment mentality, correct their employment attitude, and establish a correct concept of employment. Adequate preparation is an important condition for overcoming slow employment. Outstanding ability is the decisive factor for realizing fast employment. To overcome the problem of slow employment, we should start to cultivate our employment outlook when we enter the University, combine our interests and hobbies with our major and career planning, tap our potential, develop personal advantages, and always pay attention to the differences and adjustments of social work posts, and constantly update their knowledge reserves according to their changes, to gradually improve their employability, maintain a good employment mentality and avoid the problem of slow employment.

Secondly, it is also crucial to determine a feasible goal according to their needs. Integrate the plan into the actual situation of daily life and learning, and fit their true ability. Combine short-term goals with long-term objectives and implement them step by step. In this way, you can not only implement your plan, but also benefit your future life plan. Finally, whether studying or working, the courage to go out of the comfort circle is the necessary for progress. Actively participate in social practice, get to know different people, exercise their communication and expression skills, and improve their cognition of society. In this way, we can not only broaden our communication circle, but also increase employment opportunities. The so-called "forging iron needs to be hard". Only when our ability is continuously improved, can we grasp more initiative in the job selection market.

3.2 Devoted to intervening psychological and planning career guidance

Under the novel coronavirus pneumonia situation, for the graduates who are to be employed, the employment season in recent years seems more challenging. And personality plays a mediating role in employment. [12] Plan their career in advance and actively participate in recruitment activities. Many college students choose to win offers early in the autumn; Some college students no longer blindly follow the trend and pursue "iron rice bowl" and "first-tier cities", hoping to create a world at the grass-roots level with their ability.

At the same time, if the school lacks the guidance of students' employment psychology and the education of career planning, and ignores the effective combination of students' interests and career development, it will also lead many students to find that they cannot effectively adapt to the occupation they are engaged in or have no interest in the major, significantly reduce their work enthusiasm, even produce negative slack psychology, and become slow employees. In this regard, colleges and universities can strengthen employment guidance, which can be implemented from the following two aspects:

First, set up employment guidance courses, with employment psychological education and career planning education as the main course contents. [13] Teach proper employment knowledge, enhance students' psychological adjustment ability, help them accurately locate and evaluate themselves. At the same time, we can try to guide students to plan their future career, fully understand themselves and choose appropriate jobs.

Secondly, we should focus on the transformation process from students to professionals, and establish a system covering the whole process of employment and entrepreneurship. According to the characteristics of solid mobility, diversified and flexible. Carry out targeted education and guidance according to the psychological factors of students in different growth stages.

For example, newcomers should focus on the adaptation of university teaching mode. For them, career planning is all they need to know. For sophomores, they should pay more attention to the development of professional ability and the accumulation of theoretical knowledge. For junior students, it is necessary to choose and plan their career direction, and make targeted preparations for it. For graduates, we can direct their employment and career choices by building information platforms and collecting employment intentions [14].

3.3 Actively practice and enhance competitiveness

Facing such an employment competition, many graduates are not willing to become a member of the slow employment group. Still, they are forced to choose slow employment because of the employment difficulty. For this reason, we should strengthen the cultivation and development of graduates' employability, improve graduates' employment competitiveness and solve employment problems.

Firstly, colleges and universities can strengthen practical teaching and encourage students to actively participate in practical activities to cultivate their practical ability and innovation ability by establishing practice bases on campus according to social needs. We can also establish long-term cooperative relations with enterprises, governments and public institutions. According to the employment goals of students in different colleges, we can set up practice bases in different units with different learning contents and implementation methods, so as to help students develop employability suitable for their own majors and overcome employment problems.

Secondly, actively encourage students to participate in all kinds of community activities, community activities can improve students' ability to express communication, organization and leadership, cultivate students' sense of innovation and teamwork, which is of great significance to improve students' employment ability. Actively encourage students to communicate with other universities at home and abroad, broaden their global vision, improve their cross-cultural understanding and communication ability, help students accumulate employment and improve their employability.

In addition, excellent students who are already employed can be invited to share their career experience, to provide students with career planning references. "Career planning" competitions can also be held to promote learning, mobilize students' enthusiasm for career planning, lead by goals and drive-by tasks, and grasp the "initiative" in career selection.

Finally, colleges and universities can strengthen the education and guidance of students' vocational qualification examinations based on the actual situation. Vocational qualification examination focuses on assessing professional personnel's innovative consciousness and application ability, which plays an essential role in the employment of graduates.

But now college students do not consider the actual situation on the road of textual research, have no independent opinion, blindly follow the trend, and obtain a lot of useless certificates, which wastes time and energy and cannot achieve the desired effect. CET-4 and CET-6 certificates and computer grade certificates have long been unable to meet the appetite of college students. Teacher qualification certificate, secretary qualification certificate, accounting certificate, driver's license, business English certificate, nutritionist qualification certificate, logistics qualification certificate and so on have almost become the "standard" in many college students' resumes.

Therefore, we should also strengthen the guidance of College Students' vocational qualification certification examination. Appropriately introduce vocational qualification certification examination training, or introduce examination contents in regular classes to help students obtain certificates conducive to work and help graduates obtain effective work.

3.4 Adjust talent training policies according to the relationship between supply and demand

The emergence of slow employment is closely related to national policies. To solve the problem of graduates' slow employment, government departments should introduce related policies to promote engagement, create more jobs, improve the employment security system, effectively allocate graduates' resources and create a stable employment environment.

The existing speciality setting in Colleges and universities has evident lag and repeatability, resulting in a relative surplus of graduates, a relative shortage of jobs and great difficulty in employment. In order to adapt to the new development situation, colleges and universities should carry out market research and planning, scientifically predict the demand for professional talents, to determine the enrollment scale; The adjustment of speciality structure should be combined with actual demands of the market, set up disciplines to adapt to the development of modern economy and science and technology, and focus on the development of new domains in the fields of life, information and other fields. Promoting diversified teaching mode, ensuring the practicality of curriculum and the advanced nature of professional setting, and developing their professional characteristics, will enable students to have vital competitiveness in the market.

At the same time, colleges and universities should also do a suitable job in Entrepreneurship enlightenment education. Increase the proportion of entrepreneurship courses, formulate different entrepreneurship training plans and entrepreneurship practice training according to different students, actively help students establish entrepreneurship awareness and entrepreneurship, promote students to form entrepreneurship quality and avoid slow employment ideas.

In addition, students should be encouraged to actively participate in "innovation and entrepreneurship" competitions. Taking the "Internet plus" College Students' innovation and

entrepreneurship competition as an example, the sample survey shows that the top five entries for the innovation and entrepreneurship competition for college students are more than 70 thousand, creating more than 600 thousand jobs and indirectly leading to over 4 million jobs. Nearly 90% of the projects of establishing companies after the competition was found in the first year after the competition, about half of the companies completed financing, and 19% of the projects completed funding of more than 50 million yuan. Various competitions are the most direct and effective way for college students to contact the project incubation channel.

In July 2021, the national development and Reform Commission and other 13 departments jointly issued the opinions on supporting the healthy development of new models, activating the consumer market and promoting the expansion of employment, which proposed to support the development of 15 new formats and new models, including "online education". In addition, new fields such as internet medical treatment, convenient online office, digital transformation of traditional enterprises, "unmanned economy" and sharing economy also deserve college students' attention. The new business format and new model will create more new employment opportunities and employment space for college students. These emerging areas also deserve the typical engagement of schools, teachers and students to develop a trinity professional ability development mechanism of training program, guidance mechanism and self-growth.

4. Conclusions and policy implications

To sum up, the emergence and popularization of "slow employment" is the result of today's social employment situation and is caused by the joint action of individuals, society and state forces. "Slow employment" can provide a buffer period for graduates, fully adjust their life trajectory and prepare their suitable working state, but it may not be ideal for everyone, nor may it be the best choice for college students to choose a job. If we want to alleviate the spread of slow employment, we should hold a rational attitude and jointly solve the phenomenon of "slow employment" of college students from multiple levels of individual, society and country.

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