

Factors that affect the employability of higher vocational college students: An analysis

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Abstract: *In the current fiercely competitive job market, vocational college students need to have comprehensive employment abilities in order to stand out and obtain ideal job opportunities. However, many vocational college students face various difficulties in the job search process, including the disconnect between employment skills and actual needs, insufficient personal qualities, limitations from family backgrounds, and competitive pressure in the job market. Therefore, in-depth analysis and understanding of the factors that affect the employment ability of vocational college students, seeking effective ways to improve, are of great significance for improving the employment situation of vocational college students.*

Keywords: *vocational colleges; Employability; factor analysis*

1. Introduction

With the development of social economy and the popularization of vocational education, the employment problem of vocational college students is increasingly receiving attention. As an important group in vocational education, the employment ability of vocational college students is directly related to their employment prospects and personal development. However, the employment ability of vocational college students is influenced by various factors. By implementing effective strategies, the employment ability of vocational college students can be improved, promoting their better adaptation to the needs of the job market and achieving sustainable personal career goals.

With the continuous expansion and deepening of China's education system, universities have been expanding their enrollment scale, and the massive number of graduates they provide to society every year has gradually led to the popularization of higher education. Although this trend has significantly improved the overall education level of the population, it has also exacerbated the supply-demand imbalance of college graduates in the job market, resulting in increasingly fierce employment competition and rising employment pressure year by year. According to the latest statistics released by the Ministry of Education, it is expected that as many as 11.79 million college graduates will enter the workforce in 2024, an increase of 210000 compared to the previous year, highlighting the severe situation of the domestic employment market.

In this context, the employment situation of college students in China is facing many challenges. Not only does the overall employment situation urgently need improvement, but the preference of enterprises for high-quality talents further exacerbates the difficulty of employment for graduates, leading to frequent new problems such as decreased employment stability. Therefore, in-depth exploration of the multiple factors that affect the employment ability of vocational college students is not only crucial for alleviating the current employment difficulties of college graduates, but also a necessary measure to promote social stability and harmony, and achieve a positive interaction between education and socio-economic development. Based on such a realistic background, conducting a systematic study on the influencing factors of vocational college students' employability has profound practical significance and urgency.

2. Significance of the Study

The Chinese Party and government put employment at the top of the "six stability" work and "six guarantees" tasks, and the report of the Party's 20th National Congress also pointed out: Implement the strategy of giving priority to employment, strengthen the policy of giving priority to employment, and promote high-quality full employment. This further emphasizes the importance of employment, puts

forward the new goal of employment, and provides the fundamental follow for the current employment work. The employment of college graduates is related to the national economy and people's livelihood. In May 2022, The General Office of the State Council issued the Notice on Further doing a good job in the employment and entrepreneurship of college graduates and other young people, clearly proposing to "broaden the employment space at the grassroots level". In June 2022, the Ministry of Education and other departments issued the Notice on the Release of Urban and Rural Grass-roots Employment Positions for college Graduates, which clearly stated that employment channels at the grass-roots level should be expanded, and various grass-roots jobs should be vigorously carried out, so as to smooth the follow-up growth and development channels for graduates who are employed at the grass-roots level in urban and rural areas^[1].

With the increase in the number of school graduate year by year, there are many phenomena of "slow employment" and "slow employment" among graduates of higher vocational colleges. Students' job-hunting initiative is poor, job hunting is delayed, and graduates with exam-type employment continue to prepare for the exam. The improvement of vocational students' employability is one of the core tasks of higher vocational education, and also the key to meet the needs of social and economic development. With the rapid advancement of social change, the competition in the vocational market is becoming increasingly fierce, and vocational students are faced with various challenges and changes in the employment process. Therefore, in-depth analysis of the factors that affect the employability of higher vocational students is of great significance to formulate more scientific educational strategies, improve the vocational competitiveness of students and promote the sustainable development of higher vocational education.

First, the study can guide educational reform. Through in-depth analysis of the factors affecting the employability of higher vocational students, it can provide guidance for the curriculum setting, teaching methods and evaluation system of higher vocational education, and help schools better cultivate students' practical skills and employability.

Secondly, this study can improve the vocational competitiveness of graduates in higher vocational colleges: understanding the impact of different factors on students' employability can help students better plan their career development path and prepare the skills and qualities required for careers in advance, thus enhancing their competitiveness in the workplace.

Third, this study can optimize the structure of talent supply: through in-depth understanding of the factors that affect the employability of students, higher vocational education can be more in line with the needs of the workplace, and provide the society with more technical talents with strong adaptability and high professional quality.

At the same time, the importance of this study is as follows:

Can fill research gaps. Although the research of employability plays an important role in the field of education, the in-depth research on the factors affecting the employability of higher vocational college students is still relatively insufficient. This study will fill this research gap and provide new theoretical and empirical support for this field.

Can promote higher vocational education upgrade. Through in-depth analysis of the factors affecting employability, higher vocational education can better adapt to the needs of industrial upgrading and innovation, improve the quality of training, and train outstanding talents more in line with the requirements of The Times for the society.

The beneficiaries of the research and how they will benefit are as follows:

For vocational college graduates, this study can help vocational college students understand the key factors affecting their employability, guide them to better plan their career development, prepare the required skills in advance, and increase their employment competitiveness.

For higher vocational colleges, the research results will provide reference for higher vocational schools on education reform, help optimize education and teaching mode, improve training results, and adapt to the needs of the vocational market.

For the government and education authorities, by understanding the factors that affect the employability of higher vocational students, policy makers can more accurately formulate higher vocational education policies and promote the organic combination of talent training and economic development.

For the society and the market, this study is helpful to optimize the structure of talent supply, provide

more high-quality and adaptable talent resources for the vocational market, and promote industrial upgrading and social progress.

Through in-depth analysis of the factors that affect the employability of higher vocational students, this study will have a positive impact on the field of higher vocational education and career development, and provide useful reference and guidance for relevant interest groups at different levels.

3. Population and Locale of the Study

The research population of this study will mainly include human resource managers recruited in Nanjing Transportation Vocational and Technical College. I will randomly select 300 of these HR managers to conduct a questionnaire survey. These HR managers are directly involved in the recruitment and selection process, have extensive industry experience and are able to provide a practical perspective on the employability and needs of vocational students. The selection of the human resource manager recruited in Nanjing Polytechnic of Communications as the research object is helpful to deeply understand the training of vocational students and the docking with the needs of enterprises.

The location of this study will be mainly concentrated in Nanjing, with special attention to the job market near Nanjing Transportation Vocational and Technical College. As a vibrant city with diverse industries and enterprises, Nanjing offers a wide range of career opportunities for vocational students. At the same time, Nanjing Vocational and Technical College of Transportation, as a research location, can have a more in-depth understanding of the training of students and cooperation with enterprises.

Through the questionnaire survey with the human resource managers recruited by Nanjing Transportation Vocational and Technical College, this paper aims to explore the factors that affect the employability of vocational students, understand their expectations and evaluation of vocational students from the perspective of enterprises, and provide practical suggestions for the improvement of vocational education. At the same time, the selection of research sites will make the research results more regional characteristics, and provide targeted references for local education departments and schools.

Face-to-face questionnaire survey will be adopted in this study. Through face-to-face questionnaire survey and data analysis, this paper will obtain rich information on the impact of vocational college students' employability, so as to deeply reveal the relationship between various factors and the mechanism of action, and provide strong support for the improvement of vocational education and the promotion of students' employability.

4. Factors affecting the employability of vocational college students

4.1 On the level of personal qualities

At the level of personal qualities, enterprises first focus on the spiritual aspect of college students. Work attitude is considered the most important employability factor by enterprises. In the study, 46.82% of companies prioritize the work attitude of major student job seekers. Personal moral cultivation is also an indispensable factor in employability. 30.34% of companies value the moral cultivation of major student job seekers the most. Honesty and trustworthiness are the most fundamental qualities in any workplace. If vocational college students can demonstrate a high level of honesty and credibility, they will be more likely to gain the trust and respect of others. Respecting the opinions, opinions, and feelings of others is the foundation for establishing good working relationships. Vocational college students should learn to respect others, which will help them establish good cooperative relationships in the team. A high sense of responsibility is the key to completing work tasks and achieving goals. Vocational college students should cultivate their sense of responsibility and take full responsibility for their work.

The job seeking mentality of college students is also quite important. The survey results show that 28.84% of companies believe that the difficulties encountered in campus recruitment are due to graduates not recognizing grassroots employment, 21.35% of companies believe that graduates have high salary requirements, 23.97% of graduates have high requirements for work areas, and 17.98% of graduates have high requirements for work environments. In the current employment environment with conflicting supply and demand structures, the employment concept of college students will also directly affect the display of their employability. Students with a positive mindset are more likely to see opportunities rather than obstacles. They will actively seek job opportunities, be brave enough to try and challenge themselves, thereby increasing their chances of success.

Self awareness is also an important factor affecting the employment ability of vocational college students. Self awareness refers to an individual's understanding of their strengths, weaknesses, interests, values, and so on. This kind of cognition can help vocational college students better understand themselves and find the most suitable career path. In the survey, we found that there is a deviation between the employment values of many students and the actual needs of enterprises. 21.35% of companies believe that there is a significant gap between the abilities of newly hired students and the requirements of the company. So graduates need to have a profound understanding of their strengths and weaknesses, and establish correct values in order to better choose a job that suits them.

The individual's learning ability, self-awareness, and career planning ability have a significant impact on the employment ability of vocational college students. Through a survey, researchers found that 28.09% of companies believe that the ability of graduates to solve problems is very important. The learning attitude of vocational college students directly affects their knowledge and skill acquisition, as well as their understanding and application of professional skills. A proactive learning attitude can encourage students to actively explore and acquire new knowledge, study hard, and continuously improve their professional skills and theoretical knowledge. Only in a state of curiosity and thirst for knowledge can students truly immerse themselves in learning, actively learn and master new knowledge and skills to adapt to the constantly changing demands of the job market.

Career planning ability is another key factor, which refers to the ability of individuals to set career goals, plan career development paths, and implement career development plans based on their own conditions and market demands. Vocational college students need to have clear career goals and know what kind of position they want to achieve in their future career. Then, students need to plan the path to achieving this goal, including selecting suitable learning courses, searching for internships or job opportunities, etc. Through effective career planning, vocational college students can enhance their employability more targeted and move towards their career goals in a more directional manner. Therefore, vocational college students should focus on improving their learning attitude, self-awareness, and career planning abilities in order to enhance their employability.

4.2 At the level of school education

School level factors play a crucial role in enhancing the employability of vocational college students, and many factors, including education quality and employment guidance, may affect their employability^[2]. 19.48% of companies believe that students' majors are particularly important in their school experiences. 16.48% of companies believe that obtaining skills certificates is particularly important for students. 20.22% of companies believe that professional skills are the most important when recruiting students. 18.73% of companies prioritize practical skills when hiring graduates. The acquisition of these abilities mainly depends on the quality of school education, especially the faculty, teaching facilities, and teaching methods, which play a crucial role in cultivating professional skills for vocational college students. High quality teachers can provide students with the guarantee of knowledge depth and breadth. The progressiveness of teaching facilities can provide a material basis for the cultivation of students' practical ability. Scientific teaching methods can enable students to develop good learning methods and habits while acquiring knowledge, and enhance students' self-learning ability and innovation ability. Only in a high-quality educational environment can vocational college students comprehensively enhance their professional skills and enhance their employability.

In addition, the employment guidance and internship training opportunities provided by schools also have a direct impact on the employment ability of students. 20.97% of enterprises consider oral expression skills to be particularly important when hiring graduates. This is a training program specifically designed for students in our employment guidance. Good employment guidance can not only help students understand the job market and career needs, but also provide practical job seeking skills and resources to help students understand and adapt to the employment environment, thereby enhancing their employment competitiveness. Internship and practical training opportunities are an important feature of higher vocational education. They provide students with the opportunity to transform theoretical knowledge learned in the classroom into practical skills, enhance their practical abilities and work experience, and further enhance their employability. Therefore, schools should continuously improve the quality of education and teaching, enrich and optimize employment guidance services, and fully utilize and expand internship and training resources to comprehensively enhance the employment ability of vocational college students.

4.3 At the social and environmental level

The factors at the social environment level play an important role in determining the employment ability of vocational college students, among which conditions such as employment environment and employment opportunities have a significant impact on the employment ability of students. A study investigated the proportion of employees who graduated from vocational colleges in enterprises. Among them, 14.98% had a vocational education degree that accounted for over 80% of the total number of employees, 11.99% accounted for 60% to 80% of the total number of employees, 36.33% accounted for 40% to 60% of the total number of employees, 23.60% accounted for 20% to 40% of the total number of employees, and 9.36% accounted for less than 20%.

Researchers can see employment opportunities for college students in vocational colleges. On the one hand, the demands and trends of the industry have a profound impact on the employability of students. In certain industries, the demand for professional skills may be particularly high, so students need to have a high level of professional skills to meet their employment needs. On the other hand, the development trend of the industry will also have a profound impact on the employment of students. In the survey, 60.30% of enterprises come from the construction industry, but with the sluggish real estate economy in China, the number of employees employed by enterprises will gradually decrease. With the development of technology, many new industries and professions are emerging, while some traditional industries and professions will gradually decline. Therefore, students need to constantly monitor the development trends of the industry in order to be fully prepared for their future employment. In the fiercely competitive job market, only with excellent employability can students stand out among numerous job seekers. Students need to continuously improve their professional skills and comprehensive qualities through learning and practice, and enhance their competitiveness. If society has a high level of recognition for vocational education, vocational college students are more likely to have employment opportunities. On the contrary, if the recognition of vocational education in society is low, vocational college students will encounter more difficulties in the employment process.

5. Effective ways to enhance the employability of vocational college students

5.1 Strengthen personal ability development

In order to enhance personal abilities, vocational college students should actively improve their professional skills and knowledge level, while paying attention to cultivating comprehensive qualities and personal abilities. Vocational college students should continuously learn and improve their professional skills. They can accumulate practical experience and improve their practical abilities in the field of their studies by participating in practical courses, internships, and vocational training.

At the same time, pay attention to the development dynamics and latest technological trends of the industry, and maintain the updating and improvement of professional competence by learning and mastering new knowledge and skills.

Vocational college students should also pay attention to the cultivation of comprehensive qualities, including communication ability, teamwork ability, problem-solving ability, innovation ability, etc. By participating in team projects, organizing club activities, participating in debate competitions and other practical activities, cultivate one's communication and teamwork skills. At the same time, actively solving problems and facing challenges, exercising one's problem-solving ability and innovative thinking.

In addition, vocational college students should engage in career planning and goal setting. Students can develop personal career plans and set clear short-term and long-term goals by understanding their interests, strengths, and career tendencies. Career planning helps vocational college students clarify their development direction and goals, and helps them develop their abilities and prepare for employment more targeted. In the process of cultivating personal abilities, vocational college students can also actively utilize school and social resources. The various training courses, employment guidance, and internship opportunities provided by schools can help students acquire more professional knowledge and skills, and provide opportunities for practical exercise.

In addition, family is also the most powerful support for students to cultivate their personal abilities. Family is one of the most important environments for student growth, and parents play a crucial role in cultivating their employment awareness and abilities.

Firstly, parents should focus on cultivating students' positive attitudes and adaptability. During the

employment process, students may encounter various difficulties, and a positive attitude and adaptability are the key to helping them cope with setbacks and pressure. Parents can cultivate students' resilience and optimism when facing difficulties by providing them with positive encouragement and support. Meanwhile, parents can also provide adaptive training to help students gradually adapt to diverse environments and changes, enhancing their adaptability.

Secondly, parents should pay attention to their students' career planning and goal setting. Families should become important supporters and guides for student career planning. Parents can explore their students' interests, strengths, and values together, help them clarify their career goals, and develop reasonable career planning paths. At the same time, parents can also guide students to understand the employment prospects and requirements of different career fields, and help students make wise career choices.

Thirdly, parents can enhance their students' self-management and self motivation abilities through cultivation in their family environment and daily life. The improvement of employability requires students to have good self-management and self promotion abilities. Parents can encourage students to develop study plans and cultivate their self-discipline and sense of responsibility. In addition, parents can also give students a certain degree of autonomy and decision-making power, encouraging their ability to think independently and solve problems.

Finally, parents can teach students employment skills and interpersonal skills through demonstration and guidance. Employment ability not only includes professional skills, but also a series of soft skills, such as communication ability, teamwork ability, and problem-solving ability. Parents can cultivate their students' good communication and interpersonal skills through their own behavior demonstrations and family interactions. In addition, parents can also encourage students to participate in social practice activities, take on club positions, etc., to enhance their leadership and teamwork abilities.

5.2 Improving the quality of school education and employment guidance

In addition to improving education quality, optimizing curriculum design, and providing internship opportunities, schools also need to increase their awareness of the employment environment, cultivate students' employment awareness, and have reasonable employment expectations.

Schools can enhance students' employability by improving the quality of education. High quality education means strict academic standards, high-level teaching staff, and advanced teaching methods. Schools should strengthen the professional development of teachers, provide teaching training and educational resources, to ensure that teachers can provide challenging and inspiring teaching content.

Meanwhile, schools can also encourage students to participate in academic research, innovative projects, and practical activities to cultivate their innovative thinking and problem-solving abilities^[3]. Schools should also optimize their curriculum to match employment needs and market trends. Schools can link students' learning content with their actual employment needs by collaborating with industries, offering practical courses, and offering career oriented elective courses. This can help students gain practical experience related to their profession, enhance their professional competitiveness and adaptability.

In addition, schools should strengthen their understanding of the employment environment and cultivate employment awareness. Schools can organize employment guidance courses, career lectures, and recruitment activities to help students understand the current situation and trends of the job market, provide job seeking skills and resources, and help students develop reasonable employment expectations^[4].

At the same time, schools can also establish close cooperation with enterprises to provide students with internship and employment opportunities, allowing them to better integrate into the employment environment and increase the chances of successful employment.

Innovation ability is a quality valued by the job market. Schools can stimulate students' innovation awareness and entrepreneurial spirit, cultivate their autonomy and innovation ability, and prepare for future employment by offering innovation and entrepreneurship courses, organizing innovation competitions, and entrepreneurial practices.

5.3 Pay attention to social needs and the job market

Vocational college students should closely monitor social employment needs and industry trends in

order to make wise career choices and improve their adaptability. Understanding social employment needs and industry trends is crucial for students to successfully find employment. Students can obtain relevant information through the following channels.

Firstly, students can read relevant industry reports and research reports. Regularly reading articles in industry professional magazines, newspapers, and websites can help you understand the latest developments and trends in various industries, and gain insights into the dynamics of the job market. These reports and reports provide information on the employment prospects, key skill needs, emerging fields, and career development paths of the industry, providing important references for students' career decision-making.

The second is to participate in industry exhibitions and job fairs. Students can participate in relevant exhibitions and job fairs, communicate with business representatives and industry experts, and understand the current situation and development trends of different industries. This kind of activity provides real-time industry information and employment opportunities, allowing students to get closer to industry practice and have a deeper understanding of their professional choices.

Third, students can use the Internet and social media platforms to obtain employment related information. Students can follow industry blogs, professional forums, and social media groups to get the latest industry trends and employment information.

In addition, many recruitment websites and professional social media platforms also provide employment information and communication opportunities within the industry. By actively participating in discussions in online communities and platforms, students can communicate with industry professionals and peers, and enhance their understanding of the job market.

In short, vocational college students should closely monitor social employment needs and industry trends by reading industry reports, participating in industry exhibitions and job fairs, following employment websites and social media, and other means. Such efforts can help students clarify their professional choices, choose majors that match market demand, and continuously update their professional skills to improve their adaptability. By actively acquiring and applying industry information, vocational college students can lay a solid foundation for future employment success.

6. Conclusion

In summary, improving the employability of vocational college students requires joint efforts from individuals, families, schools, and society. By strengthening personal ability cultivation, focusing on family education, improving the quality of school education and employment guidance, as well as paying attention to social needs and the job market, vocational colleges can create more favorable conditions for the career development of vocational college students. By comprehensively optimizing and innovating talent cultivation models, strengthening practical teaching and school enterprise cooperation, as well as providing career planning and employment guidance services, we can effectively improve students' employability and deliver more high-quality and skilled talents to society.

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