

Study on the Status Quo and Reform Measures of Employment Guidance in Universities

Liping He

Chengdu Vocational College of Agricultural Science and Technology

Chengdu 610000, China

Tel: 86-028-8273-2146 E-mail: 583467638@qq.com

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Abstract

As a new discipline, employment guidance is aimed at the study of employment and how to solve the problem in employment every individual meets. It offers an effective approach to the problem in employment for university graduates. This article starts with the importance of conducting employment guidance and makes an analysis of the status quo as well as the existing problems in employment guidance services in universities at present. It also puts forward several countermeasures which can change the current situation and reform the employment guidance services specifically.

Keywords: Employment Guidance, Problem, Countermeasure

Before the practice of the reform and opening up policy, basically all the university graduates in China were subjected to the Tongzhaotongfen (uniform enrollment and dispatch) system, which meant that the employment of university graduates has to be taken into consideration in the entire plan of the state. Since the 1990s, with further reforms in the economic system and the quickening pace of marketization, as the Ministry of Education pointed out in *China Education Reform and Development Program* (1993), the employment system of university graduates had to be an important part of the education reform and it stressed that most students would choose their jobs through labour markets under the guidance of State Policy and Guidelines. The adjustment of the policy gave birth to a brand-new subject in higher education — employment guidance (also called career guidance) (Employment and Training Department of Ministry of Labour and Social Security & China Employment Training Technical Instruction Center, 2005).

Employment guidance is not only the key to the problem in employment, but also the objective goal of the sound development of the universities themselves. Employment guidance offers good guidance and a lot of help to the university students in such aspects as analyzing themselves objectively, collecting the information for employment, offering job-hunting tips, adjusting job-choosing attitude, having a right conception toward jobs, setting the direction for their career and avoiding job myths, etc. At the same time, it is also the responsibility of a better development of the universities to provide career guidance, which, if not handled early, will influence the recruitment of new students directly and thus have a negative effect on the vitality of the university or even the entire development of higher education as a whole.

1. Status Quo and Difficulties of Employment Guidance in Universities

Employment guidance is still a new-born baby in universities. Since the 1990s, for the sake of enhancing the ability to offer employment guidance services to university graduates, the Ministry of Education (MOE) as well as the administrators of graduate employment departments from all the universities in China invited many experts from America, Taiwan, and Hong Kong etc. to give the training courses to the staff members that do the employment services. MOE also organized part of the staff to learn the advanced ideas and practices of employment guidance in these countries and areas. Despite this fact, the employment guidance services are still on the borrow-in stage in most universities at present. That is, we are copying the experience of employment guidance from developed countries and areas. This motivation is definitely good, but many problems also rise during this process, such as indigestion and acclimation in the practice of foreign experience in China's universities. China has its own actual conditions that differ from the western developed countries in economic development periods, cultural concepts and running systems of social mechanism. Employment guidance is not merely a guidance of skills. It needs a fundamental theoretical basis. Just from this perspective, we can see that there is still a long way to go for

employment guidance in China. According to the current situation, we can see many problems in employment guidance services provided in universities, the main ones of which are listed as follows:

1.1 The Ignorance and Marginalization of the Systematic Function of Employment Guidance in Universities.

At present, the organizational function of employment guidance in universities are not closely linked to the government departments and other related social organizations, and there are only few cooperative programs. There also exists a lack of significant information exchanges. Thus, the employment guidance services are generally formalistic things. In fact, employment guidance services in universities are systematic engineering projects of the whole society which need the functional integration of the schools into the greater society--especially the government departments, the family and the enterprises with the universities. These organizations should work together to provide a favorable platform for the employment guidance in universities and to promote the employment of students effectively.

1.2 The Inadequacy of Relevant Organizations and the De-regulation of Employment Guidance.

The administrators of universities fail to pay enough attention to the employment guidance services. They place too much emphasis on the study of specialized knowledge and skills while neglecting the employment guidance for the students. They have the erroneous idea that "excellence in study means good employment." Due to this idea, most universities do not have a comprehensive organization for employment guidance. For these universities, the employment guidance services are provided arbitrarily without clear regulations about who, how and when to be performed. Though some universities have founded certain employment guidance centers, their functions are not clearly defined. For example, some employment guidance centers fail to undertake the corresponding task of offering employment guidance services but merely providing employment information, organizing in-campus recruitment fairs and handling relevant procedures for graduates. This is far from the requirements of all-round employment guidance.

1.3 The Imperfection of Curriculum System and the Lack of Systematicness in Employment Guidance.

Employment guidance is a systematic program that requires the guidance of both practice and theory. The vast majority of universities do not treat the employment guidance course as a compulsory subject. Instead, employment guidance is provided in the form of lectures or optional courses, or even job-hunting instruction. Few universities which take the employment guidance course as a compulsory course still fail to provide comprehensive and systematic guidance for students. Take Dongguan Nanbo Polytechnic as an example. This college pays much attention to employment guidance services and provides employment guidance centers as well as teaching-and-researching departments for employment guidance courses. Furthermore, such organizations, staff and funds in this college are guaranteed according to certain documents of criteria and the teachers who are in charge of employment guidance courses are well-trained. However, because it is still at the very beginning without much experience, employment guidance course is restrained to the graduate-oriented mode to a large extent. As some materials show, quite a number of universities in Sichuan province also have the similar problem (Ma, 2002).

1.4 The Shortage of Experienced Qualified Teachers for Employment Guidance Courses and the Lack of Standardized Guidance.

At present, most teachers who are in charge of employment guidance courses in universities have not received formal training in employment guidance. As the statistics show, since 1999 when the Career Guidance Personnel Qualification Exam was firstly introduced, there are only 10,000 people who have passed this exam by far, only fewer than 400 of whom are advanced employment counsellor, while the number of those who require employment guidance surpasses a hundred million. That is to say, one employment counsellor should account for over 150,000 people. Officials from a training center in Guangdong province claimed that ten thousand job-hunters, on average, are supposed to be assigned to one employment counsellor in Guangdong. This phenomenon is even more serious in universities where fewer people can get the employment guidance qualification certificate. Most teachers in charge of employment guidance are former administrators from the student administration departments or the employment service departments and the teachers of ideological and political education. These people are neither systematically trained in employment guidance nor experienced in practice, so when they conduct such classes, they can only follow the theoretical textbooks which are obviously not convincing enough. Take a university in Shenzhen as an example. In 2008, this university had over 4000 students on campus with only 2 full-time teachers to conduct employment guidance and the other teachers were part-time ones who bore administrative tasks. In contrast to the great shortage of full-time employment guidance teachers, the desire of the students to be given employment guidance is very urgent. *China University Students Career Guide* and *sina.com* conducted a survey called "An Investigation of Present Career Planning of University Students in China" in July, 2008, and the results showed that the percentage of students who once received systematic employment guidance services of career planning at least

once was only 8.3% and over 70% of students said that they needed some or a lot of employment guidance when facing employment puzzles. A questionnaire for the 2008 graduates carried out in Dongguan Nanbo Polytechnic shows that 65.98% students think that the employment guidance teachers should enhance their professional ability and 74.36% of students have the desire for practically effective employment guidance. All the examples and facts show that immediate attention should be paid to enhance the professional ability of the teachers who do employment guidance services in the university for the sake of the employment and placement of the students as well as a better development of the universities (Shi, 2001).

1.5 The Lack of Professional Textbooks.

The current textbooks for employment guidance education fail to go hand in hand with the industrial restructure, the ever-changing employment conditions and the modern enterprise management. Thus, there is no effective media to carry on the employment guidance work.

1.6 The Disorientation and Degradation of Future Working Fields and Enterprises in Employment Education.

The universities take little control of the students' internship and few efforts are made to provide proper advice to the students in their views toward employment and job-choosing when they are out doing their internships. The students have long been isolated from the society and business. They are not acquainted with the working ethics and regulations, which leads to the disorientation and degradation of their choices when doing the internship.

1.7 The Simplification of the Evaluation Approaches in Employment Guidance Education.

The content of employment education courses is arbitrary rather than systematic. The evaluation approach to the effects of employment guidance teaching is too simple and is greatly restrained to the examination of the course and the abstract assessment of students' cognition toward the textbooks. There is no comprehensively quantitative standards for the scientific evaluation of employment guidance education. Furthermore, the evaluation criteria in universities differ from those in the society. The enterprises value a talented worker more for his or her performance in actual position and specific working ability than from his capacity of textual knowledge or scores in courses, while the university teachers do in the opposite way.

2. The Promotion and Practice of Employment Guidance in Universities

To solve the problems in promoting and practicing employment guidance in universities and to launch employment guidance feasibly, an effective mode has to be explored. With many years of research I have done and with the experience from my daily work, I make the following points as a summary to do this work:

2.1 Employment Guidance Services Should Shift to an "All-involved" Pattern.

This offers a solution to the problem of how to construct the platform for employment guidance services in universities. "All-involved" refers to the involvements of teachers, students, parents and the whole society. This concept, to be fully launched and practiced, should rely on the platform of employment guidance in universities. To shift the employment guidance to an all-involved pattern, four conditions are required. First, the school leaders should pay attention to it, take part in its research project, found the employment guidance center, and strengthen the leadership of employment guidance services. Second, full-time teachers should be in charge of the teaching activities in employment guidance. Third, the head teachers and assistant teachers of every class should take an active part in it and the teachers of other courses should penetrate employment guidance into their classes when passing on professional knowledge. Fourth, the psychological counseling center should be founded to provide relevant consulting. Thus a school-round network is formed with the intertwining vertical administration links. This, on one hand, guarantees the co-reaction of the whole school and the implement of the general goal and idea and on the other hand, it gathers the most basic experience and problems in the fastest way so that minor adjustments can be made to smooth the effective practice of employment guidance services in the school.

The key to an all-involved pattern of employment guidance is to develop a group of full-time professional teachers. According to the practice of employment guidance in developed countries, the workers of employment guidance and training services have received, more or less, extensive trainings in such subjects as pedagogy, psychology, administration, sociology and human resource and management and they do this work under the guidance of some relatively mature theories. At present, the full-time teachers for employment guidance services in universities are far from the standard requirements, either in their quantity or in their qualifications. More training programs should be carried out for these full-time employment guidance teachers to make sure that every teacher are certified.

2.2 Employment Guidance Services Should Shift to an "All-round" Pattern.

This offers a solution to the problem of how to construct the curriculum system of employment guidance. In the following part, the description of the curriculum system of employment guidance is given with the three-year

vocational and polytechnic college as an example.

2.2.1 In the first year, the guidance to job-choosing and career planning should be given.

For the freshmen, it is a great turning point from high school to college. Most students lack the knowledge of vocational education and feel at a loss toward the study in college. Though they have chosen a major, they may not yet have a good idea of it or have a great passion for it. They are even more confused about the qualifications for the corresponding occupation groups related to their majors. Therefore, while constructing the curriculum system of employment guidance, we should start with an introduction to their majors and lead the students to get an idea of employment and occupation, such as the prospect and trends of their major, of the society and of the qualifications required for their future career so as to give them an over-view of themselves through the assessment and analysis of their abilities. Thus, the students can have a positive attitude toward study, a definite direction of what to study, a professional idea of their major, reasonable career expectations which will drive them to enhance their abilities and qualities to meet the career requirements and to prepare for their future occupation. This will lay a foundation for the following education of establishing the students' own business or of getting a job. The main contents of an employment guidance course are: to know and to acknowledge the major; to know and to search for a job; to know and to improve the self in order to determine their own career as soon as possible (Maoming Ministry of Labour and Social Security, 2011).

2.2.2 In the second year, the cultivation of professional qualities and the guidance of how to establish a business are offered. This point mainly deals with the problem of career developing and comprehensive quality. During this period, the education should fix on the instruction of professional ethics, interpersonal relationships, social mores, perception and attitudes. Some extracurricular and off-campus activities should be added to regular teachings as a recheck and recognition of the students' professional knowledge so that they can have a clearer goal when choosing a job with the consideration of their expertise and hobbies.

The present employment policy in China advocates the university students to establish their own business which will not only perfect the students but also benefit the society. With the times pacing forward, it is necessary for the business venture guidance to be part of the employment guidance course. Because nowadays the majority of the university students are single child of their families, they do not have many chances to go through hard times as the previous generations in China and they lack the consciousness, the entrepreneurial spirit and the ability of establishing a business. A questionnaire for the 2007 graduates carried out in Dongguan Nanbo Polytechnic shows that 81.73% of students in their college hope to get some help from the school in employment, which, in another sense, shows their lack of awareness of self-chosen job or business venture. This phenomenon also holds for most university students. Therefore, it is of great necessity to conduct the education on venturing business in the second year. The key points of this course should be the consciousness, the qualities, the knowledge and the ability of establishing a business. The main contents of the guidance to business venture focus on the education part with the relevant guidance about the significance, the basic qualification requirements, the psychological concerns, the methods, the elementary conditions and procedures of establishing a business, especially a small enterprise.

2.2.3 In the third year, the guidance on job-hunting skills and attitudes should be offered. The key problem that the employment guidance course wants to solve is the employment of the students. This is also an urgent task facing the society and the school. If a student wants to get a job, he or she should hold a proper attitude toward employment besides necessary professional knowledge and skills. Therefore, employment guidance course should take employment as the goal, job-hunting tips as the methods, development of a professional attitude as the strategy. With this information, the students can know the employment situation well and change their conceptions of employment; they can deal with the relationships between individual and society, ideal and reality properly; they can master some basic tips and skills of employment and job-hunting; they can make a decision of their career according to their own situation after analyzing the local economic characteristics and job market; they can adapt to the society and shift their role from a student to a worker within less time and find their position in a career. At the same time, the students should be given the guidance on life-long study, life-long education and sustainable development.

2.3 *Employment Guidance Services Should Shift to an "Encouraging Overall Development" Pattern.*

This offers a solution to the problem of sustainable development of the students. The fundamental goal of employment guidance is to encourage the students to learn to survive which requires a foundation of overall development beforehand. The fast development of modern society sets a higher and higher demand for the employees who should be equipped not only with the professional knowledge and skills for corresponding positions, but also the comprehensive working ability for other positions and occupations as well. As the statistics show, in the 15 years from 1950 to 1966, more than 8000 kinds of occupations disappeared from the western labour market along with the birth of over 6000 new types of work. The employees in APEC member countries change their jobs every 5

years on average. The employees in America change their jobs for 12 times in average in their lifetime and for the Americans between 16 and 65, 36 years in their life is actually in a state of job-transferring or waiting-for-a-job state. From this we can see that with the continuously updating technology, modern occupational structure shows its characteristics of intensified knowledge-work and mobility. The inter-disciplinary talents who are endowed with comprehensive qualities and multiple advanced skills become the new favourites of the enterprises. This trend highlights the urgency and importance of such higher education and employment guidance that teaches the students how to survive, to study, to adjust and to cultivate an overall lifetime pattern of development. All the major countries in the world have started to reform the contents of vocational education from the former skill-training mode to the cultivation of comprehensive ability. The corresponding employment guidance should also follow the reform. It should not only provide the guidance for the students on how to choose a job, how to be employed, how to establish a business, but also to cultivate their ability of sustainable development which is necessary for them to further study and occupation-shift in the fierce and fast-changing employment environment and help them to secure an ideal position.

Besides in-class teaching, employment guidance courses should also be closely related to the actual situation and try to enhance students' comprehensive ability of employment through various approaches. For example, we can adopt the following several ways to carry on employment guidance education: to set up simulation labs and finance companies; to guide the students to do the social practice; to lead the students to do on-the-spot investigations; to invite experts of human resource departments to give lectures; to hold the graduates' exhibitions.

The promotion and practice of employment guidance in universities has great significance on increasing the employment ratio of university graduates and on solving the structural contradictions in job market. While conducting employment guidance, we should combine theory with practice and cultivate good professional ethics and proper views toward employment in various flexible ways among students so as to enhance the comprehensive ability of them in a well-rounded way.

2.4 Employment Guidance Services Should Shift to a "Joint-effort" Pattern.

This offers a solution to the problem of who to construct the employment guidance for university students. University teachers are the main force to be responsible for this work in the dominant places as the campus and the class. They should pioneer to build appropriate platforms for the students to set up, to run, and to practise their own businesses. They should create an enterprise-oriented cultural atmosphere in the university to instill in the students in the ideas, cultures and understanding of the enterprises. Family plays an important role in conducting employment guidance education; so does society. The opinions and expectations from parents as well as the social consensus in the views toward employment do have some influence on students' views toward employment and on the improvement of their working ability, though they may do so in an implicit way. By bringing the cultures of enterprises into employment guidance education, the students can have a better understanding toward the enterprise and the society. This can in turn offers more chances for them to know the working ethics, regulations and qualifications, to set up an ideal for their future career and to promote a successive employment (Huang, 2005).

2.5 Employment Guidance Services Should Shift to a "Comprehensive Evaluation" Pattern.

This offers a solution to the problem of how to evaluate the employment guidance education. A system of comprehensively quantitative standards for the scientific evaluation of employment guidance education for university students is bound to be set up. The universities should try every means to evaluate the effects of employment guidance education which can in turn promote the education of employment guidance.

2.5.1 Making a good combination between "quantitative evaluation" and "qualitative evaluation" with the considerations of the criteria, the contents and the forms of the evaluation as well as the development of the students in the long run. The examination system of employment guidance course should be designed to improve into such mode as the integrity of textual knowledge testing, assessments from students and practical capability testing.

2.5.2 Building comprehensive evaluation system which includes the criteria for theory testing as well as the criteria for integrated ability testing with the focuses on the students' attitudes toward life, professional skills, major proficiency, the spirit of sacrifice, innovation ability and the concept of offering services etc. It means that: firstly, to unify the testing of both theories and practice; secondly, to specify the formula of working ethics assessment of students' internship; thirdly, to evaluate from multiple perspectives; fourthly, to cast an eye on the details of students' working capability; fifthly, to take the feedbacks from the society into consideration.

This article makes an analysis on the current problems of conducting employment guidance in universities and probes into some new approaches to employment guidance. It also puts forward some effective proposals to solve the problems in promoting and practicing employment guidance in universities. Certainly, as time is limited, there is

still a lot to be improved in these approaches and proposals. For example, the idea of creating an “encouraging overall development” pattern involves many aspects in higher education and education reform. The theoretical study as well as the actual practice of this idea is not sufficient enough. I hope these questions can be a rough “brick” that attracts more valuable “jades” afterwards, that is to arouse more attention and researches on employment guidance among my fellows. I believe that, as time goes on and the research goes further, the questions and problems mentioned above will be further analyzed and studied (Wang, 2005).

To sum up, the discussion and study on the effectiveness of conducting employment guidance education among university students go through every stage of employment guidance education. How to promote employment effectively and practically is both the starting point and the goal to be achieved in employment guidance education.

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