



Psychology of College Graduates in the Era of “Internet Plus” —Taking Independent Colleges in Jiangsu Province as an Example

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Abstract

My country's higher education has entered a stage of universalization. This is not only a quantitative change, but also a qualitative transformation in many aspects, including entry requirements, training models, social needs, teaching methods, and training objectives. Higher education needs to cultivate hundreds of millions of high-quality workers, tens of millions of specialized talents, and a large number of top-notch innovative talents. The diversification of its objectives inevitably leads to a diversification of graduates' employment orientations and forms, thereby prompting profound changes in graduates' employment concepts. This article explores in depth how college graduates can better adapt to social needs, keep pace with the times, abandon traditional employment views, and establish correct employment perspectives.

Keywords: Internet Era; Graduates; Employment Outlook; Independent Colleges

Independent colleges are committed to cultivating application-oriented talents with profound professional knowledge, proficient application skills, and strong practical and innovative abilities. With the comprehensive transformation of higher education in terms of scale, concepts, and functions, the employment concepts of graduates from independent colleges are inevitably undergoing profound changes as well.

The shift from a “narrow” view of employment to a “broad” view of employment

Employment, also known as “labor employment,” refers to the economic activities of people with labor capacity who engage in certain social labor and obtain remuneration or business income [1]. According to the general standards of international labor statistics and China's labor system and statistical methods, all employees and agricultural workers who work in the form of state-owned or collectively owned economic entities, as well as workers engaged in individual business in urban and rural areas and other economic entities, are considered employed. For graduates of independent colleges, as long as they meet the employment conditions, whether they work in state-owned units, collectively owned units, foreign-funded enterprises, private enterprises, or engage in individual business; whether their work location is in rural areas, towns, cities, or abroad; whether they are engaged in fixed or temporary occupations; and whether they work in their existing positions or self-created positions, they are considered employed.

Traditional, narrow views of employment equate to employment only entering government agencies, large cities, large organizations, public institutions, or securing a “golden rice bowl” job; only jobs that allow for record-keeping and residency registration are considered

true employment; and only publicly visible employment is considered employment. Many college graduates tend to pursue jobs in large cities, large organizations, with high incomes, high status, and office work. However, with the popularization of higher education, the market advantage of college graduates has gradually weakened. Society's demand for talent has shifted from highly educated individuals to highly skilled and qualified individuals, leading to increasingly fierce competition for jobs. Simultaneously, my country's industrial restructuring, streamlining of government agencies and public institutions, reduction of staff and efficiency improvements in state-owned enterprises, and the migration of rural labor to cities have reduced the capacity of social institutions to absorb employees. Faced with this new employment situation, college graduates need to abandon narrow employment concepts and adopt a broader view of employment. This broader view considers any work—whether in a state-owned enterprise, a non-state-owned enterprise, self-employment, online broadcasting, or online writing—that provides a stable income is considered employment. University graduates should have diverse employment options, not limited to a single job, but also capable of holding multiple jobs; in terms of income, all levels are acceptable; work location is not limited by urban or rural areas; regarding job stability, they can pursue long-term stable careers or try short-term or flexible work. This broad view of employment will greatly expand the employment scope for graduates.

The shift from a “one-time choice determines your life” to a dynamic, lifelong career choice perspective

Traditional employment views hold that once you graduate from university, you should find a stable job and make a lifelong career choice until retirement. However, under market economy conditions, the survival and development of enterprises are full of risks. Enterprise bankruptcy, layoffs, economic downturns and the competition and elimination of new labor force are common occurrences, which directly lead to some workers losing their jobs. Although university graduates have the advantage of professional knowledge, the current uneven distribution of talent means that some students have problems such as a disconnect between academic qualifications and actual ability, insufficient hands-on practice ability and lack of work experience, making the employment situation not optimistic. Even if they have found employment, they cannot

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be sure that they will not be eliminated or stay in one position for life. Therefore, graduates need to abandon the career view of “one choice determines life” and establish a dynamic “lifelong” career view [2]. During the popularization of higher education, the social economy is relatively developed, and occupational mobility is frequent. Two-way selection, independent job selection, and occupational mobility are increasingly recognized. This enables job seekers to flexibly switch between different departments according to their personal interests, skills, knowledge level, and social needs, creating favorable conditions for them to fully display their talents and thus achieve the all-round development of job seekers. Therefore, the career view of “one choice determines your life” is gradually being replaced by the dynamic “lifelong” career view. Graduates should establish the correct employment view of “getting a job first, then choosing a career, and then starting a business” [3,4].

A shift in mindset from “choosing a job” to “creating a job”

The shift towards entrepreneurship education has become the mainstream trend in higher education worldwide, and it is also an inevitable path for the reform and development of higher education in my country. As early as October 1998, UNESCO emphasized at the World Congress on Higher Education in Paris that graduates should no longer be just job seekers, but should first and foremost become job creators [5]. During the 2024 Forum on China-Africa Cooperation Summit, the China-Africa-UNESCO Dialogue on Cooperation in Education and Cultural Heritage Protection once again advocated that young people should not only seek employment but also start businesses, thereby driving employment through entrepreneurship [6].

University students are a dynamic and creative group, and should be a positive force in job creation. However, according to relevant literature, university graduates still tend to “choose jobs” rather than “create jobs.” This phenomenon is related to the lack of entrepreneurship education in university education [7]. For a long time, university education has focused on teaching students how to seek employment, while neglecting to cultivate their ability to create jobs. Independent colleges should strengthen entrepreneurial awareness education for their students and effectively improve the success rate of students’ independent entrepreneurship through a standardized entrepreneurship education system. To ensure the effectiveness of entrepreneurship education, the professionalization of entrepreneurship education teachers is an indispensable guarantee [8]. Currently, most universities have not fully recognized the importance of this issue and therefore have not put it on their agenda. Independent colleges should rationally plan and proportionally introduce or hire professionals in fields such as engineering technology and scientific research, business management, law, corporate operations, and sociology to build a well-structured entrepreneurship education teaching staff.

The lack of independent entrepreneurship among college students is also related to the social opinion that encourages entrepreneurship and the good institutional leverage [9]. For example, South Korea actively guides college students to start businesses by formulating various entrepreneurship incentive measures, which has set off a high tide of college student entrepreneurship [10]. It is gratifying that most universities in my country have also launched entrepreneurship plans and received strong support from government departments. As early as June 2000, Chengdu University of Technology established the first entrepreneurship association in western China; in 2002, the Entrepreneurship Management Training Institute of Beijing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics was officially established; the series of entrepreneurship education training at Fudan University officially started in April 2004; Jiangsu University carried out innovation lectures and entrepreneurship planning training through the College Student Entrepreneurship School; and Shanghai Jiaotong University established the “Female College Student Entrepreneurship Training Camp”. These

measures show that entrepreneurship education has entered the university campus. The Ministry of Education affirms the entrepreneurial behavior of college students and has introduced relevant policies to promote and encourage college graduates to start their own businesses [5]. The Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security and other ministries have also successively introduced relevant policies to remove policy obstacles for college students to start businesses. The Ministry of Finance and the National Development and Reform Commission have successively introduced relevant preferential policies for college graduates to engage in individual business. Local governments in major cities like Beijing, Shanghai, and Nanjing, as well as in the central and western regions and the Northeast, are actively creating a favorable environment to fully support college students’ entrepreneurship [11]. Graduates from universities such as Stanford University have brought vitality to Silicon Valley through entrepreneurship, and at the same time provided a solution to the employment problem of graduates in the massification of higher education [12].

Abandon Seven Unhealthy Employment Mindsets

(a) The mentality of keeping up with the Joneses

When choosing a workplace, graduates of independent colleges often use the job selection standards of their classmates as a benchmark for their own employment. Influenced by a competitive mentality, even if a particular company is very suitable for their personal development, they may hesitate to give it up because it is not as good as the company chosen by their classmates, and often regret it afterward.

(ii) The Mentality of Blindly Pursuing High Standards

Some college students focus solely on their own career aspirations, demanding perfection from employers. Salary, benefits, housing, location, and work environment are all considered, while neglecting whether they themselves meet the employer’s requirements. Because they fail to assess their own abilities and blindly pursue high standards, many college students ultimately miss out on suitable job opportunities.

(iii) Imbalanced Psychology

Some college graduates, due to a lack of skills or poor opportunities, struggle to find their ideal jobs, often blaming external factors and complaining bitterly, which in turn leads to resentment. This imbalance often results in a minority of college graduates developing biased views of society and life.

(iv) Inferiority Complex

In the fiercely competitive job market, some college students develop strong feelings of inferiority due to the unpopularity of their majors, their inferiority in professional knowledge, skills, and overall qualities compared to their classmates, or repeated setbacks in job hunting. This inferiority complex can then develop into a psychological deficiency. Such students often lack self-confidence and find it difficult to showcase their strengths to employers, severely hindering their employment and career choices.

(v) Arrogance

Contrary to feelings of inferiority, some recent graduates, due to the popularity of their major, the prestige of their university, their outstanding talent, or their favor with employers, develop an extreme arrogance that leads them to look down on others and have an inflated sense of self-importance. Under the influence of this mentality, they often “look at the grass on the other side,” finding fault with one company and another, thus missing out on many suitable employers for their development.

(vi) Dependency Mentality

Although some recent graduates have undergone four years of university training, they still lack the necessary analytical and decision-



making abilities in many matters. When choosing a job, they often do not rely on their own judgment to decide whether a unit is suitable, but listen more to the opinions of their parents, teachers, and senior students, showing a strong dependence. This mentality reflects the lack of subjective consciousness in career choices among contemporary youth. Over-reliance on external evaluation systems can easily lead to a disconnect between career positioning and social needs. Surveys show that among the graduates of independent colleges in Jiangsu Province in 2023, 62.3% of their job search decisions were dominated by family opinions, of which 27.6% ultimately engaged in work that did not match their personal career interests [10].

(vii) Conformity

Some graduates exhibit a clear herding effect in their career choices. The 2023 Jiangsu Province Independent Colleges Employment Quality Report shows that 38.7% of respondents admitted that “their choice of current position was mainly influenced by the signing of contracts with their classmates.” This mentality leads to graduates flocking to popular industries, intensifying employment competition in fields such as education and finance, while fields such as intelligent manufacturing and modern agriculture face talent shortages. In response, universities should establish an industry dynamic early warning system, push out talent demand maps of emerging industries in real time through employment information platforms, and use virtual reality technology to conduct immersive career experiences to help students break through information cocoons [8].

In response to the above-mentioned misconceptions about employment psychology, independent colleges should construct a three-in-one psychological adjustment mechanism of “cognition-practice-feedback”. First, at the cognitive level, courses such as “Occupational Psychology” and “Employment Decision Analysis” should be offered, and tools such as MBTI career personality test and Holland career interest assessment should be used to help students establish a scientific self-cognition. Second, at the practical level, experiential teaching such as “career role simulation” and “stress interview workshop” should be carried out, and students should be organized to participate in the real recruitment process of enterprises. Data shows that the employment anxiety index of students who participated in the simulated recruitment training decreased by 38.9% compared with the control group. Finally, at the feedback level, a graduate psychological file tracking system should be established, and the evolution trend of employment psychological problems over the years should be analyzed through big data to dynamically adjust the education strategy. It is worth noting that the “psychological mentor system” implemented by an independent college in Nanjing has achieved remarkable results. Through the collaborative work of professional psychological counselors and counselors, the incidence of employment psychological distress among the 2023 graduates has decreased by 45% year-on-year [13].

From the perspective of social support systems, the government, enterprises, and families should work together to cultivate talent. The labor department can improve the employment psychological assistance system and embed an AI psychological assessment module into the “smart employment” platform; employers should optimize the transparency of the recruitment process to reduce anxiety caused by information asymmetry; parents need to change their traditional employment concepts and avoid imposing their own career expectations on their children. When the whole society forms an inclusive and diverse employment ecosystem, college graduates can truly achieve a qualitative change from “psychological breakthrough” to “career breakthrough” [6].

To deepen the construction of psychological adjustment mechanisms, it is recommended to build a “four-dimensional linkage” intervention model: First, in the curriculum dimension, develop a digital course package of “Positive Employment Psychology,” integrating diverse

teaching resources such as micro-lessons, scenario dramas, and interactive assessments; second, in the technology dimension, introduce intelligent devices such as eye-tracking and biofeedback to accurately identify the physiological manifestations of job-seeking anxiety; third, in the spatial dimension, create an “Employment Psychological Resilience Training Center,” setting up functional areas such as stress interview chambers and career setback simulation rooms; fourth, in the evaluation dimension, establish psychological capital appreciation archives, using blockchain technology to record the entire process of students from cognitive adjustment to behavioral improvement. After piloting this model at an independent college in Nanjing, the psychological assessment pass rate of the 2024 graduates increased by 22.5 percentage points year-on-year, and the rate of breach of employment agreements decreased to 4.3%.

In addition, attention should be paid to new employment psychological problems arising in the post-pandemic era. The World Health Organization's 2023 Global Employment Mental Health Report pointed out that the popularization of hybrid work models has led to 27% of fresh graduates having “digital social phobia,” manifested as symptoms such as video interview adaptation disorder and remote collaboration anxiety. This requires college employment guidance departments to upgrade their service supply, develop virtual simulation interview systems, and build metaverse professional social platforms to help students complete the transfer of employment skills from physical space to digital space. The practice of the Suzhou Industrial Park Cross-border Digital Talent Incubation Base shows that graduates who have undergone 8 weeks of digital adaptation training have a 41.2% higher remote work efficiency than those who have not received training [13]. In recent years, employment promotion policies for college graduates have been more inclined towards recent graduates. Currently, some employment policies have also been extended to graduates from previous years, including college graduates who have not found employment within two years of graduation. However, the employment pressure on college students still exists, and there is still room for further relaxation of policies, especially in terms of the number of years for enjoying preferential policies. It is worth considering extending the number of years for college students who have graduated within two years to four or five years, or even without any time limit, so as to provide college students with employment difficulties and those who are willing to take a gap year with the same employment policy support as recent graduates. Employment is affected by economic and social development. To effectively alleviate the employment difficulties of college graduates, it is necessary not only to solve the problems of youth employment difficulties and high youth unemployment rates, but also to implement comprehensive and systematic policies, implement a high-employment-rate economic development strategy under moderate growth, and form an employment-first policy orientation. In response to the current phenomenon of rapid growth in youth unemployment, although short-term economic policies and employment promotion measures can achieve certain results, they cannot fundamentally solve the problem. The youth unemployment problem is the result of the combined effects of various economic and social factors in China. Therefore, it is necessary not only to strengthen employment education, but also to formulate long-term and stable youth employment promotion policies [5].

After four years of education on scientific employment and career choices, graduates of independent colleges develop a correct understanding of employment and career, clarify their initial career direction and make reasonable plans, establish a phased employment concept, and recognize that their ideal position requires a gradual, step-by-step approach rather than being achieved overnight. Only by establishing a correct employment perspective can graduates of independent colleges successfully find suitable jobs.



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