



ORIGINAL

Research on Employability Enhancing Strategies for Students in Ordinary Undergraduate Colleges and Universities

Investigación sobre estrategias de mejora de la empleabilidad para los estudiantes de las universidades e institutos universitarios ordinarios

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: this study aims to analyze the various factors influencing the employability of students in ordinary undergraduate institutions and to propose targeted strategies for improvement.

Method: the research examines key determinants of employability, including educational background, vocational skills, and social resources. Through a comprehensive investigation of the employment status of college graduates, the study employs reliability testing and principal component analysis to identify pivotal variables affecting employability.

Results: the analysis reveals several key factors impacting the employability of ordinary undergraduate students. These include the alignment of educational curricula with market demands, the adequacy of vocational training, and the availability of social networks and resources.

Conclusions: in light of the findings, the study recommends strategies to improve employability, such as optimizing curricula, enhancing career guidance services, and promoting personalized training programs. These recommendations aim to bolster the employment competitiveness of graduates from ordinary undergraduate colleges and universities, providing a theoretical framework for educational reforms and supporting graduate employability initiatives.

Keywords: Employability; Employment Ability; College Student; Undergraduate; Normal Undergraduate Universities.

RESUMEN

Introducción: este estudio tiene como objetivo analizar los diversos factores que influyen en la empleabilidad de los estudiantes en instituciones ordinarias de educación superior y proponer estrategias de mejora.

Método: la investigación examina los determinantes clave de la empleabilidad, incluyendo antecedentes educativos, habilidades profesionales y recursos sociales. A través de una investigación exhaustiva de la situación laboral de los graduados universitarios, el estudio emplea pruebas de confiabilidad y análisis de componentes principales para identificar variables fundamentales que afectan la empleabilidad.

Resultados: el análisis revela varios factores clave que afectan la empleabilidad de los estudiantes universitarios ordinarios. Estos incluyen la alineación de los currículos educativos con las demandas del mercado, la adecuación de la formación profesional, y la disponibilidad de redes sociales y recursos.

Conclusiones: a la luz de los resultados, el estudio recomienda estrategias para mejorar la empleabilidad, como la optimización de los planes de estudio, la mejora de los servicios de orientación profesional y la promoción de programas de formación personalizados. Estas recomendaciones tienen por objeto reforzar la competitividad laboral de los graduados de las universidades y centros de educación superior ordinarios,

proporcionar un marco teórico para las reformas educativas y apoyar las iniciativas de empleabilidad de los graduados.

Palabras clave: Empleabilidad; Capacidad De Empleo; Estudiante Universitario; Licenciatura; Universidades Normales.

INTRODUCTION

Post-secondary education plays a vital role in enhancing a nation's competitive edge by promoting lifelong learning and preparing job seekers with essential skills for economic growth. The evolving concept of employability, influenced by personal characteristics and subjective elements, necessitates governmental clarity on its definition.⁽¹⁾ In China, the decline in economic growth and restructuring has intensified calls for quality employment opportunities among regular undergraduate graduates. Although the government has implemented numerous initiatives to improve their employability, several policies face implementation challenges, leading to a dire job market situation for graduates.⁽²⁾

In contrast, the UK has managed its university expansion through rigorous quality audits and funding evaluations, with the government significantly influencing educational structures and practices.⁽³⁾ Employability has become central to university missions, driven by the need to demonstrate quantifiable economic benefits. Institutions have adjusted their curriculums to integrate practical skills alongside academic knowledge to enhance students' job prospects.^(4,5) However, this focus on quantifiable outcomes often prioritizes technical training over critical thinking, reducing the educational experience to mere skill acquisition.⁽⁶⁾

Universities are thus urged to adopt a vocational orientation in their programs, but challenges remain in ensuring that students acquire relevant skills transferable to the job market. Despite recognition of the importance of employability, many students lack self-motivation and proper career planning, viewing university years as merely a time for relaxation.⁽⁸⁾ With the rapid advancement of the knowledge economy, students must develop adaptability and resilience to succeed in the job market.⁽⁹⁾

Employers now demand graduates who not only possess field-specific knowledge but are also proficient in essential soft skills and competencies such as communication, teamwork, and problem-solving.⁽¹⁰⁾ Despite this, many graduates from ordinary colleges remain unprepared for the workforce, often focusing narrowly on their professional studies.⁽¹¹⁾ Current realities reveal that even qualified graduates struggle to secure suitable employment, necessitating a comprehensive look at labor market dynamics and their role in graduate employability.⁽¹²⁾

As mass education expands, employers need effective collaboration with higher education institutions to maximize workforce readiness. The expectation for graduates to exhibit agility and responsibility in their roles is increasing, whereas critical thinking is often deprioritized.⁽¹³⁾ Employers frequently seek "perfect" candidates who demonstrate not only technical proficiency but also the capacity for immediate impact in the workplace.⁽¹⁴⁾ Unfortunately, gaps between university curricula and employer needs persist, exacerbated by a tendency to favor graduates from elite institutions and overlooking the capabilities of those from ordinary colleges.⁽¹⁵⁾ Despite significant changes in educational approaches, employers continue to express concerns over the preparedness of graduates for the demands of the modern workforce.

Through the systematic analysis of various factors affecting the employability of ordinary undergraduate college students, this paper discusses how to enhance their professional competitiveness more effectively to adapt to the changing market demand. This not only helps to provide theoretical support for the formulation of educational policy, but also provides practical suggestions for colleges and universities to improve teaching content and methods.

METHOD

In this study, we adopted a quantitative research method aimed at exploring the influencing factors and improvement strategies of the employability of ordinary undergraduate and vocational college students through questionnaire surveys and statistical analysis. The research subjects are graduates from ordinary colleges and universities. We have set clear inclusion and exclusion criteria to ensure the pertinence and representativeness of the sample. Specifically, the inclusion criteria include regular undergraduate and vocational college students who have graduated and are currently seeking employment, while the exclusion criteria exclude non regular undergraduate and vocational college graduates, such as students with part-time education backgrounds in adult education, online education, etc. Through convenient sampling methods, we distributed a total of 500 questionnaires and ultimately collected 403 valid questionnaires, with a response rate of 80,6 %. Based on the overall size and sample size, we believe that the obtained sample can represent the research population.

The research variables include independent variables such as educational background, vocational skills, and social resources, as well as dependent variables such as students' employability. In order to collect relevant

data, we designed a questionnaire consisting of 16 questions and conducted data collection through an electronic questionnaire system. In terms of statistical techniques, we have adopted methods such as reliability testing and principal component analysis. The reliability test results show that the half score coefficient of the questionnaire is 0,884, indicating that the questionnaire has high reliability. The KMO value of principal component analysis is 0,914, the approximate chi square value of Bartlett's sphericity test is 1391,91, the degree of freedom is 116, and the P-value is 0,000. These results indicate that the data is suitable for factor analysis.

In terms of ethics, this study strictly adheres to ethical standards. The research has been reviewed by the relevant university ethics committee and has obtained ethical approval. During the data collection process, all participants fully understood the research objectives and procedures, and provided informed consent on a voluntary basis.

RESULTS

Reliability test

Reliability refers to the consistency and stability of questionnaire measurement, that is, whether the questions in the questionnaire can accurately reflect the real situation of the respondents. As shown in table 1, the number of items in the first half of the questionnaire is equal to that in the second half of the questionnaire, which is 2,0. Therefore, the reliability of the questionnaire is evaluated by the halving coefficient of equal length. After calculation, the half coefficient is 0. 884, which shows that the reliability of the questionnaire is very good, the design of the questionnaire is reasonable, the consistency and stability of the questions are high, and the respondents can accurately express their views and opinions when answering the questions, which can ensure the reliability and validity of the survey results.⁽¹⁶⁾

Split reliability analysis			
Cronbach's alpha coefficient	The first half	Value	0,705
		Number of items	2
	The second half	Value	0,904
		Number of items	2
		Total number of items	4
The numerical value of the correlation between the two parts.			0,810
Half factor		Equal length	0,884
(Spearman-Brown coefficient)		0,884	
Unequal length			
Guttman split-half coefficient			0,874

Intelligence-assisted teaching

Through descriptive statistics, the employment situation and influencing factors of 103 college graduates are deeply understood. According to the statistical indicators of 16 questions (table 2), the maximum and median of all questions are 5, which means that most respondents give the highest evaluation to each question. The minimum distribution is between 1 and 4, indicating that there are still some respondents who have a certain degree of dissatisfaction or low degree of identification with certain issues, which may involve personal experience or feelings in specific areas, and may also reflect some structural problems, such as employment difficulties, wage level and education level mismatch. The average value of each index is higher than 4,2; the standard deviation is about 0,6 and the variance is about 0,4, indicating that the interviewees' evaluation of each problem is relatively concentrated, and the evaluation results are relatively consistent, indicating that the consistency of the sample data is good, and the results are more reliable. Considering the questionnaire questions and the actual situation, we can draw the following conclusions, that is, most college graduates generally believe that the education they receive has a positive impact on their work, has a strong correlation with their major, is satisfied with the vocational guidance and employment services provided by colleges and universities, and that their education level has an important impact on their employment competitiveness. They believe that they have the professional skills, communication skills and teamwork skills to meet the needs of the work, and that personal willingness and career planning have an important impact on career development. In terms of factors affecting employment, respondents believed that the economic situation had a greater impact on employment, and also recognized the importance of interpersonal relationships, skills and knowledge updating, as well as personal wishes and career planning for career development.⁽¹⁷⁾ At the same time, there are still some respondents who are dissatisfied or worried about the employment difficulties and the mismatch between wage level and education level. It is necessary to further study these problems in order to provide more effective employment guidance and support for college graduates.

Table 2. Results of descriptive statistics

Variable name	Maximum value	Median	Minimum value	Mean value	Standard deviation	Variance
How do you think your education has influenced your current job?	5	5	3	4,683	0,482	0,232
Do you think your major is relevant to your current job?	5	5	2	4,574	0,651	0,424
Are you satisfied with the career guidance and employment services provided by colleges and universities?	5	5	3	4,625	0,541	0,293
Do you think your education level has an important impact on your employment competitiveness?	5	5	2	4,619	0,574	0,329
Do you think your professional skills meet the needs of the current job?	5	5	1	4,378	0,932	0,869
Do you think your communication skills play an important role in your work?	5	5	1	4,427	0,857	0,734
Do you think your ability to work as a team is critical to your career development?	5	5	1	4,456	0,834	0,695
Do you think your self-management ability is important for career development?	5	5	2	4,582	0,618	0,382
Do you feel that it is difficult to find a job at present?	5	5	2	4,543	0,658	0,433
How satisfied are you with your current job?	5	5	2	4,495	0,789	0,623
Do you think your salary level is in line with your education and professional background?	5	5	2	4,508	0,681	0,464
Are you optimistic about your future career prospects?	5	5	3	4,592	0,599	0,359
How do you think the economy has affected your employment situation?	5	5	2	4,525	0,673	0,453
How do you think interpersonal relationships affect your career development?	5	5	1	4,349	0,980	0,961
How do you think the renewal of skills and knowledge will affect your career development?	5	5	2	4,446	0,721	0,520
How do you think your personal wishes and career planning affect your career development?	5	5	2	4,504	0,674	0,454

Principal component analysis

The main factors affecting the employment of college graduates are further discussed with the help of principal component analysis. Validity analysis is the basis to ensure that principal component analysis can be carried out. The results of KMO test show that the KMO value is 0,914 (the KMO value is between 0 and 1, and the closer the value is to 1, the better the applicability of factor analysis), indicating that there is a high correlation between the variables. It is suitable for factor analysis. The result of Bartlett sphericity test shows that the significance P value is 0,000, which is significant. The null hypothesis is rejected, which means that there is correlation between variables, and factor analysis is supported (table 3).

Table 3. Results of validity analysis

KMO test and Bartlett test		
KMO value	0,914	
Bartlett sphericity test	Approximate chi-square	1391,91
	df	116,001
	P	0,000***

Note: *** represents a significance level of 0,01

The variance interpretation table presents the results of the factor analysis used for evaluation, including the eigenvalue, variance interpretation rate and cumulative variance interpretation rate of each principal component (or factor). There are three principal components in the questionnaire, which are educational background, personal ability and career planning. The eigenvalue is a measure of the variance of the principal components, that is, the variability explained by the principal components. The eigenvalues of educational background, personal ability and career planning in this questionnaire are 9,234, 1,402 and 1,056 respectively (table 4). The larger the eigenvalue is, the more information the corresponding principal components contain.

The percentage of variance explained by each principal component is the proportion of the total variability that can be explained by each principal component. The percentage of variance explained by educational background, personal ability and career planning is 57,567 %, 10,549 % and 7,882 % respectively, which means that the principal component of educational background can explain 57,567 % of the total variability. The personal ability principal component and career planning principal component can explain 10,549 % and 7,882 % of the total variability, respectively. The cumulative variance explanation rate refers to the cumulative proportion of the variance explanation rates of the first several principal components. The cumulative variance explanation rates of educational background, personal ability and career planning are 57,567 %, 68,116 % and 76,998 % respectively, that is, these three principal components can explain 76,998 % of the variability of the employment situation of the respondents. To sum up, the three principal components of educational background, personal ability and career planning can effectively summarize the key factors affecting the employment situation of the respondents, especially the principal component of educational background, which has a larger eigenvalue and a higher variance explanation rate, plays a vital role in explaining the variability of employment situation. These three principal components are the main factors affecting the employment of college graduates.

Ingredient	Characteristic root	Variance explanation rate	Cumulative variance explained rate
1	9,234	57,567 %	57,567 %
2	1,402	10,549 %	68,116 %
3	1,056	7,882 %	76,998 %
4	0,648	4,049 %	81,047 %
5	0,582	3,620 %	84,667 %
6	0,396	2,475 %	87,142 %
7	0,308	1,925 %	89,067 %
8	0,275	1,718 %	90,785 %
9	0,250	1,572 %	92,357 %
10	0,217	1,362 %	93,719 %
11	0,179	1,115 %	94,834 %
12	0,157	0,985 %	95,819 %
13	0,148	0,937 %	96,756 %
14	0,112	0,710 %	97,466 %
15	0,104	0,654 %	98,120 %
16	0,090	0,567 %	98,687 %

Improve professional competence

Improving the professional quality and skill level is the most basic and important one in improving the employability of ordinary undergraduate college students. During the university period, students should concentrate on the study of their major and master professional knowledge and skills. In addition to classroom learning, participating in internships, practice and extracurricular activities can also improve practical operation ability and cultivate their professional quality and practical experience.⁽¹⁸⁾ At the same time, taking part in the relevant vocational skills certification examination can also prove their skill level and professional accomplishment, and enhance their competitiveness in the job market. In addition to the professional knowledge and skills, ordinary undergraduate college students should also pay attention to improving their comprehensive quality, such as language skills, computer skills, communication skills, teamwork skills and so on. These qualities can not only help ordinary undergraduate college students stand out in the job market, but also improve the career success rate and career development space of ordinary undergraduate college students. Ordinary undergraduate colleges and universities should constantly optimize the curriculum system, increase the proportion of practical teaching, and provide students with more opportunities to operate and solve practical problems by themselves.⁽¹⁹⁾ Teachers are encouraged to adopt case teaching, project-driven teaching and other methods to enable students to better understand and apply professional knowledge in the learning process. Schools also need to strengthen the construction of hardware facilities such as laboratories and training bases to create good conditions for students to improve their professional quality. In addition, we should actively organize professional skills competitions to stimulate student's enthusiasm and initiative to improve their professional quality.

Enhance comprehensive quality

Improving the comprehensive quality is a very important aspect of improving the employability of ordinary

undergraduate college students. Comprehensive quality includes humanistic quality, social responsibility, language expression ability, interpersonal communication ability, innovation ability, leadership and other aspects. These qualities are not only valued by enterprises and employers, but also one of the important factors to improve their competitiveness and career success. College students can enhance their comprehensive quality through a variety of ways.⁽²⁰⁾ For example, participating in various activities in literature, art, sports, science and technology can cultivate their artistic accomplishment, sports ability and scientific and technological literacy. Joining student associations and organizations can improve their organizational coordination ability, leadership ability and communication ability. Participating in voluntary service activities can exercise their sense of social responsibility and service consciousness. At the same time, they can also improve their language expression ability, innovation ability and technical ability by self-study or participating in training courses. Ordinary undergraduate colleges and universities should attach importance to the cultivation of students' comprehensive quality, optimize the curriculum, and increase the elective courses and practical links related to the cultivation of comprehensive quality. In the process of teaching, teachers should also pay attention to cultivating student's comprehensive quality, adopt diversified teaching methods, and stimulate students' innovative thinking and team spirit.⁽²¹⁾ For students themselves, they should establish a correct sense of self-improvement and take the initiative to make up for the shortcomings of their own quality. We should not only be satisfied with classroom learning and school activities, but also pay attention to social hot spots and industry trends, and constantly broaden our horizons and ways of thinking.

Conduct career planning

For ordinary undergraduate college students, career planning and employment awareness training is very important, it can help ordinary undergraduate college students to better plan their career, improve employability and competitiveness. First of all, students of ordinary undergraduate colleges and universities should understand the employment prospects and development trends of different industries, including the needs and changes of the job market. Understanding this information can help ordinary undergraduate college students to better grasp career opportunities, choose their own development direction, and make wise career planning. Secondly, students in ordinary undergraduate colleges and universities should make their own career plans reasonably. Career planning should be a long-term process, which needs to be formulated according to one's own interests, professional abilities, professional values and other factors.⁽²²⁾ The goal of career planning should be feasible and realizable, and should be adjusted in time according to the actual situation. It is also very important to strengthen employment guidance and employment skills training. Schools and society have provided a variety of employment guidance and skills training opportunities, ordinary undergraduate college students should actively participate in, improve their professional quality and skills, and enhance their employment competitiveness. The job market is constantly changing and can be subject to a variety of unexpected circumstances and challenges. With good adaptability and adaptability, students can quickly adjust their career planning and job-hunting strategies in the face of changes. Ordinary undergraduate colleges and universities should also pay more attention to the cultivation of students' career planning and employment awareness. More targeted courses and lectures can be offered, and successful alumni or industry experts can be invited to share their experiences, so as to provide students with richer resources and more targeted guidance.

Build new relationships

In the process of improving the employability of ordinary undergraduate college students, it is also an important strategy to actively expand human relations. By establishing and maintaining relationships with classmates, teachers and alumni, we can get more employment information and opportunities, understand industry trends and broaden employment channels. In addition, participating in various social activities and career salons can make more like-minded friends, establish more interpersonal relationships, and lay a solid foundation for future employment.⁽²³⁾ Therefore, college students should pay attention to the establishment and expansion of human relations, and constantly strengthen the maintenance and development of human relations. In addition to strengthening the establishment and maintenance of human relations, students in ordinary undergraduate colleges and universities can also expand their human relations by participating in professional associations and industry forums. In the activities, students of ordinary undergraduate colleges and universities can actively communicate with professionals and business representatives in the industry, learn more about the information and trends within the industry, and at the same time show their talents and abilities, so that more people can know themselves and lay a solid foundation for their future career development. Participate in various activities organized by the school, such as academic lectures, community activities, job fairs, etc. These activities allow you to meet classmates, teachers and business representatives of different majors and expand your circle of contacts.⁽²⁴⁾ Join student associations or organizations, actively participate in community activities, and hold certain positions. In this way, you can exercise your leadership and teamwork skills, and at the same time, you can meet more like-minded people. Build good relationships

with teachers and counsellors. They can provide you with professional guidance and advice, and recommend internships and employment opportunities.

Obtain employment information

Obtaining employment information through multiple channels is one of the important strategies to improve the employment ability of students in ordinary universities. With the development of information technology and the popularity of the Internet, more and more employment information is published on the Internet, which provides more ways for ordinary college students to obtain employment information. Students of ordinary undergraduate colleges and universities can obtain the dynamics of the employment market and employment opportunities by attending job fairs, browsing recruitment websites and paying attention to recruitment information publishing platforms. In the process of obtaining employment information, the initiative and enthusiasm of students are also very important. Instead of just passively waiting for information to be pushed, we should take the initiative to build our own professional network. For example, through alumni resources, the recommendation of colleagues or teachers in internship units, we can obtain some internal recommendations or employment opportunities that have not yet been made public. At the same time, ordinary undergraduate colleges and universities should also assume the corresponding responsibility to provide effective employment information guidance services for students.⁽²⁵⁾ The school's employment guidance center regularly holds campus recruitment fairs, inviting many enterprises to come to the school to recruit. You can learn about the time, place and participating enterprises of the job fair through the school's employment information network, publicity boards and other channels. Participating in campus recruitment fairs can communicate face to face with business representatives, understand the needs of enterprises, and also send resumes to increase job opportunities. Special employment information analysis courses can be offered to help students master the skills of screening and utilizing information. Employment information consultation centers can also be set up to answer the problems encountered by students in the process of obtaining and processing employment information.

DISCUSSION

It is very important to improve English proficiency and cross-cultural communication ability for the employment and career development of ordinary undergraduate students. With the deepening of globalization, more and more enterprises and organizations need talents with good cross-cultural communication skills and English proficiency. Therefore, ordinary undergraduate college students with these abilities will be more competitive in the job market. There are many ways to improve English, such as attending English training classes, learning English by oneself, listening training, oral practice, reading English materials and so on. Besides English proficiency, the ability of cross-cultural communication is also very important. College students can improve their ability of intercultural communication by understanding the customs, cultural traditions and social habits of people with different cultural backgrounds. College students can also expand their cross-cultural communication experience by participating in cross-cultural communication activities, internships or volunteer projects. International exchange programs in colleges and universities provide opportunities for students to study and practice abroad, which not only enable students to use English in a practical environment, but also enable them to experience different cultures first-hand, thus enhancing their ability to communicate across cultures. Students should actively seek out and take advantage of these opportunities to enhance their international perspective. College students can also improve their English listening and speaking skills by watching English movies, TV series and news, and listening to English songs and podcasts. These resources not only provide opportunities for language practice, but also help students better understand the cultural background of English-speaking countries by transmitting cultural elements through entertainment content. College students should cultivate an open mind and value respect for diversity. In the context of globalization, people who can accept and respect different cultures will find it easier to connect and communicate with people from different backgrounds. This attitude is essential for future employment and career development.

Social practice and volunteer activities are important ways for ordinary college students to improve their professional ability and sense of social responsibility. By participating in social practice and volunteer activities, students in ordinary undergraduate colleges and universities can better understand the society, expand social vision and social cognition, and cultivate innovative consciousness and team spirit. In addition, social practice and volunteer activities can also help students in ordinary undergraduate colleges and universities to improve their interpersonal skills, communication skills and leadership, and enhance their psychological quality and adaptability.⁽²⁶⁾ For ordinary undergraduate college students, participating in social practice and volunteer activities can provide practical opportunities for them to better understand their career development direction and hobbies, and at the same time, they can enrich their resumes and prepare for future employment. At the same time, social practice and volunteer activities are also a social opportunity to make friends with like-minded people, establish relationships, and expand their social resources and career opportunities.

Furthermore, social practice and volunteer activities give students the opportunity to apply their knowledge to solve practical problems, which is very important for cultivating the ability to solve complex problems. By participating in these activities, students can test their theories and skills in a non-academic setting, gaining valuable self-knowledge and career insight. The activities also encourage students to develop self-driven and self-directed learning, which is essential for lifelong learning and career development. In practice, students may face unexpected challenges and need to learn new skills or adapt to new environments quickly. Such experiences help them grow into more independent and confident individuals.

CONCLUSIONS

This paper deeply analyzes the influencing factors and current situation of students' employability in colleges and universities, and reveals the significant influence of educational background, personal ability and social resources on graduates' employment. The results show that innovative educational methods such as intelligent assistant teaching play a positive role in improving students' employability. Therefore, this paper puts forward a series of practical promotion strategies, including optimizing the curriculum, strengthening vocational guidance and personalized training, aiming to help students better adapt to the changing employment market. In the future, colleges and universities should actively respond to the needs of society, promote the reform of education and teaching, and pay attention to the improvement of student's comprehensive quality. By deepening the integration of industry and education and school-enterprise cooperation, we can promote students' practical ability and innovative ability, and comprehensively enhance their professional competitiveness.

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