

# Research on the Employment Status and Solution Strategies of College Graduates under the Background of the New Normal

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**Abstract:** Employment is the biggest livelihood issue, and the employment problem of college graduates has always been the focus of social attention. Affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, the inherent balance between economy and society has been broken, and the employment problem of college students has become increasingly severe. In the era of normalized epidemics, the number of college graduates continues to increase, economic growth slows down, industry development is unbalanced, and there is a structural imbalance in college students' employment. Alleviating the employment pressure of college graduates requires the coordination and cooperation of the entire society. This study hopes to sort out the employment problems of Chinese college graduates, analyze the research on employment ability at home and abroad, clarify the reasons for the employment difficulties of college graduates, and explore countermeasures to solve the employment problems of Chinese college graduates from multiple dimensions and perspectives such as economic development strategies, management departments, society, colleges and universities, and college students, so as to provide a good environment for social stability and development.

**Keywords:** New Normal, Employment Strategy for College Graduates, Research.

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## 1. Introduction

The report of the 13th National People's Congress clearly stated that "employment is the foundation of people's livelihood", highlighting the role of employment in the macro-economy and placing the employment priority policy at the macro-policy level. It can be seen that employment is not only related to personal happiness, but also closely related to social and economic development and stability.

After nearly two decades of rapid development, China's higher education has entered the stage of popularization from the elite stage. In 2021, 9.09 million people graduated from colleges and universities nationwide, and in 2022, the total number of college graduates nationwide reached 10.76 million, setting a new historical high. The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, coupled with the severe macroeconomic situation at home and abroad, the uneven development of the industry, the difficulty and slowness of employment for college students have become increasingly prominent, there is a problem of structural imbalance, and the employment situation is very severe.

In 1963, the Robbins Report proposed that one of the goals of higher education is to provide teaching in general skills suitable for the labor field. Therefore, cultivating students who match social development is one of the important functions of colleges and universities. College students not only have important responsibilities for knowledge innovation and social progress, but are also a vibrant group of young people. If college graduates cannot find sufficient and high-quality employment, it will directly affect the development and stability of society. Therefore, ensuring the employment of college graduates and optimizing the employment structure of graduates have always been issues of great concern to the society. It concerns the interests of thousands of households, and even more so public security issues such as the healthy and stable development of the country's economy and the stability of social order.

Researching and solving the employment problem of college graduates is not only a popular project involving the fundamental interests of thousands of households, but also can effectively promote the continuous development of China's higher education, and has practical political significance and far-reaching historical significance.

## 2. Analysis of Employment Status and Problems

### 2.1. Current Situation Survey

① In 2020, a comprehensive survey was conducted on the employment situation of 2,280 college graduates across the country during the epidemic. These employed graduates showed the following characteristics: domestic employment was the main direction of employment; the overall matching rate between employment positions and majors was relatively high; half of the graduates had a monthly after-tax salary of 3,001-5,000 yuan; overall employment satisfaction was high; fewer people were told to terminate their contracts or have their salaries reduced under the impact of the epidemic; there were more diverse ways to successfully find a job; and their job stability was relatively high.

② More and more college graduates actively or passively become the "slow employment" group. A research and analysis of 1,500 students in Shanghai found that the main factors affecting graduates' "slow employment" are: wanting to continue their studies, having different career plans, expanding self-efficacy, being dissatisfied with the quality of employment, the influence of friends around them, the influence of online media, and financial support from their families.

③ A questionnaire survey on the employment attitudes and concepts of college graduates born after 1995 and 2000 was conducted, and the following findings were found: the employment selection criteria tend to be rational and pragmatic (development space is the most important, income

ranking is rising, and income expectations are generally increasing); employment preferences are towards the system or big cities (the attractiveness of employment within the system is increasing, 211 university students prefer foreign companies, undergraduates prefer civil servants, junior college students love to start their own businesses, and employment in big cities continues to be popular); both practical responsibilities and ideal values are given equal importance (attaching importance to responsibilities to the country and the family, pursuing ideal values, undergraduates value the spiritual value of work, and junior college students value the material value of work); in the era of normalized epidemics, employment confidence is low, and employment elasticity is magnified (salary and benefits are the most rigid).

## 2.2. Analysis of Employment Issues

In recent years, the employment problems of Chinese college graduates have been prominently manifested in the two aspects of "difficult employment" and "slow employment". Difficult employment means that it is difficult for college graduates to find matching jobs. The number of college graduates has been increasing year by year, but the matching professional and technical capabilities are generally insufficient, and the employment competition in the labor market is becoming increasingly fierce. Corresponding to this is the phenomenon of "slow employment" of graduates. "Slow employment" is specifically manifested in the fact that the enthusiasm and initiative of graduates to participate in job applications have begun to weaken. Some graduates choose to postpone employment or wait for the opportunity to start a business for various reasons after graduation. They are not in a hurry to find a job, or hesitate between studying and working. In response to these problems, I analyze the following specific reasons:

① The expansion of college enrollment has brought employment pressure

With the implementation of the policy of expanding enrollment in colleges and universities since 1999, China's higher education has rapidly achieved the development process from elite education to mass education. The expansion of college enrollment has its positive aspects, generally improving the academic level of young students and cultivating and reserving valuable talent resources for national construction. However, on the other hand, the number of college graduates has increased year by year, while the labor market is unable to provide the corresponding number of jobs, resulting in a contradiction between supply and demand, and ultimately leading to employment difficulties for graduates.

② Excessive expectations bring employment pressure

After years of hard study, college graduates overestimate their social value, thus raising their employment expectations. College graduates prefer to obtain stable or high-paying decent jobs with development potential, and look down on private enterprises and small and medium-sized enterprises. College graduates hope to work in big cities or economically developed areas such as the eastern coastal areas, and are unwilling to work in underdeveloped areas in the central and western regions or at the grassroots level. The increase in employment expectations has intensified employment pressure.

③ Misalignment between professional settings and market demand

With the transition from a planned economy to a market

economy in China, the employment policy for graduates has implemented a "two-way choice, self-selection of employment". Market demand and the employment demands of college students need to match each other. However, the professional settings of many universities are misaligned with market demand, resulting in a contradiction between supply and demand in the employment market. On the one hand, some majors in universities have an oversupply of talents, which makes it difficult for a large number of college students to find employment; on the other hand, with the continuous optimization and adjustment of the industrial structure, the labor market has a more urgent need for high-level technical and skilled talents, but the professional and technical skills of current university graduates are insufficient, and it is difficult to match the market demand.

④ The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated employment pressure

The sudden outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 has had a significant impact on our economic development. The employment of workers under the COVID-19 pandemic is facing a severe test, especially in industries that absorb a large number of workers, such as tourism services, catering and entertainment, and transportation. Facts have proved that the employment environment under social crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic is worrying, and it will also aggravate the experience discrimination in the labor market. The market has been impacted, the demand for personnel in enterprises has declined, the job market is sluggish, and it is difficult for the labor market to accept college graduates without work experience, which also makes job-seeking college graduates have poor psychological expectations.

⑤ Unbalanced economic development exacerbates employment pressure

Unbalanced industrial structure: Since the reform and opening up, the proportion of employed people in agriculture and animal husbandry has gradually declined, and industry has become the leading industry to solve employment. However, in recent years, with the continuous optimization and adjustment of the industrial structure, the industry's ability to absorb labor has weakened, and the service industry with stronger absorption capacity has gradually risen. However, the development level of the domestic service industry is still not high, and the potential of the service industry to absorb labor employment has not been fully released. This structural imbalance has aggravated the employment pressure of college graduates.

Unbalanced regional development: Due to geographical and human resources advantages, the eastern coastal developed regions have accumulated greater economic development advantages. Many college graduates in the underdeveloped central and western regions prefer to work in economically developed regions such as the eastern coastal regions, rather than working at the grassroots level in the underdeveloped central and western regions. This imbalance in regional development has led to an imbalance in intellectual human resources, exacerbating employment competition in economically developed regions such as the eastern coastal regions, while the underdeveloped central and western regions cannot retain valuable talent resources.

## 3. Research on Employability at Home and Abroad

In the 1960s, some developed countries analyzed the

elements of employability and found internationally recognized employability elements through comparative studies. The United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, and the United States have common indicators in terms of employability indicators. These countries pay more attention to the communication skills, learning ability, teamwork ability, high-level thinking and problem-solving ability, and personal behavior characteristics of the workforce. Compared with the employability elements of college graduates from the perspective of Chinese employers, the employability indicators that these developed countries pay attention to also have a high degree of overlap with the employability elements of college students in demand in the Chinese market.

① The British Industry Confederation believes that employability includes: basic ability to handle text and numbers, communication skills, problem-solving skills, personal skills, digital skills, information skills, learning ability, adaptability skills, career management skills, and lifelong learning ability. Among them, the six key skills are the core skills to improve college students' employability.

② The employability skills published by the Canadian Business Federation have identified three major competency areas. Basic skills include communication, information management, digital applications, thinking and problem-solving skills; personal management skills include positive behavior and attitude, responsibility, adaptability, continuous learning, and safe work; teamwork skills include the ability to collaborate with others, participate in projects, and complete tasks.

③ The Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry has proposed an employability framework suitable for vocational education and higher education sectors. The framework includes individual characteristics, key skills, and key skill elements. Individual characteristics include: loyalty, commitment, honesty, self-esteem, etc.; key skills include communication skills, teamwork, problem-solving skills, enthusiasm and enterprising spirit, planning and organizational skills, self-management skills, learning, and technology; key skill elements are proposed for specific jobs.

④ As a strong country in education, the United States also has a sense of crisis in cultivating the employment ability of the workforce. The National Academy of Sciences of the United States has conducted a study on employment ability from the perspective of employers in collaboration with employers, scholars, and educators. The study believes that employment ability includes two categories: basic skills and extended basic skills. Basic skills include language skills and mathematical skills. Extended basic skills include reasoning, interpersonal relationships, teamwork, information system operation, priority determination, personal work skills, sense of responsibility, and skill proficiency.

⑤ The subjects of China's analysis of employability factors are mostly college students who are entering the workforce for the first time. Professional knowledge is the cornerstone of college students' employability, skills are the external manifestation of employability, and self-efficacy is the driving force. It includes the application and innovation of professional knowledge, awareness of work operations, preparation and confidence in career, interpersonal communication and teamwork skills, coordination skills, leadership, problem-solving skills, and learning ability.

## 4. Discussion on Employment Solution Strategy

① Adhere to the development strategy of employment as the foundation of people's livelihood

China is in a critical period of transformation and upgrading of its industrial economy. During the 14th Five-Year Plan period, my country will move towards a stage of high-quality development. We must achieve sustained and healthy economic development on the basis of improving quality and efficiency. We cannot separate economic development from promoting employment, and we must always adhere to the development strategy of employment priority. Promoting employment should be a hard task for administrative departments at all levels to achieve high-quality development. The assessment of the performance of management departments and the evaluation of policy effects should take the resolution of employment issues as a criterion. At the same time, we should vigorously develop small and medium-sized enterprises and the tertiary industry to increase more employment opportunities. The survey results show that employment pressure is relatively small in areas with many small and medium-sized enterprises and developed tertiary industries.

② Improve the employment service system and employment policies for college graduates

From the perspective of college graduate employment, administrative departments need to play their own guiding role and adopt more active policies for college students' employment and entrepreneurship. Administrative departments at all levels should, through macro-control, introduce policies that are more conducive to promoting the employment of college graduates to ensure the quality of college students' employment. Relevant departments also need to play the role of macro-control and policy guidance to ensure that human resources can achieve an ideal balance and ultimately achieve effective allocation of human resources. Administrative departments need to gradually improve the labor market system and relevant laws, reduce the occurrence of employment discrimination, and create a good employment environment for college students. Build a stable employment statistics plan to show the guiding role of data information in the market as a whole. Colleges and universities also need to gradually adjust the mechanism for cultivating college students to make college students more in line with employment conditions. Society needs to actively adjust the employment channels for college students and improve the quality of college students' employment by increasing employment positions.

③ Guided by market demand, combining major with employment

Colleges and universities should take the initiative to change outdated teaching concepts, adhere to the market-oriented school-running policy, match teaching majors with actual social needs, closely link education and teaching with employment, focus on social needs, and cultivate practical talents suitable for the market. According to the needs of the social talent market, colleges and universities should flexibly adjust talent training programs and strengthen the training of high-quality, compound and practical talents. It is necessary to set up majors to train talents urgently needed for industrial development, adjust and optimize major settings and resource allocation. For majors with low employment rates, the enrollment scale should be reduced or enrollment should be

stopped. It is also necessary to strengthen the ability of graduates to adapt to environmental changes, cultivate innovation awareness and innovation ability, and enhance interpersonal communication and expression skills.

④ Establish a correct employment outlook and change employment concepts

College graduates must establish a positive employment concept, "get a job first, then choose a job". There is a direct connection between employment issues and employment intentions. College students are in an immature development stage of values and are easily affected by other external factors. After entering society, college students' employment values will gradually change. Therefore, only by ensuring the correctness of employment values can the quality of employment be gradually improved. College graduates should reasonably evaluate their own abilities, recognize the employment situation, adjust the gap between ideals and reality in a timely manner, and actively cultivate the ability to adapt to job requirements.

⑤ Improve the quality of education and enhance comprehensive abilities

The knowledge that college graduates learn in school is difficult to meet the actual needs of society, which is one of the main reasons for the difficulty of college graduates finding employment. If we want to improve the employability of college graduates, the higher education mechanism needs to make positive reforms to adapt to changes in the talent market and meet social and economic development and employment needs. Colleges and universities also need to pay attention to the comprehensive quality training of college students. In addition to professional knowledge and skills, they should also pay attention to the cultivation of communication skills, teamwork, problem-solving skills, enthusiasm and enterprising spirit, planning and organizational skills, and self-management skills. In this way, students can cope with fierce professional competition after entering society.

## 5. Future Development and Prospects

At present, Chinese college graduates face difficulties in finding employment and low employment quality. There is a large deviation between college students' employment expectations and social job demands. In general, to solve these problems, it is necessary to further improve the five-in-one talent training framework of "market-management department-enterprise-university-individual". Gradually establish a market-based system; management departments play a guiding and regulatory role in policies; enterprises integrate resources to establish a long-term incentive and

constraint mechanism; colleges and universities should focus on improving comprehensive capabilities and education and guidance on employment outlooks in the process of talent training; college graduates should actively adapt to and grasp changes in the employment situation to improve their comprehensive competitiveness.

College graduates are the hope for the future development of the motherland and the rejuvenation of the nation. The employment of college students not only concerns the vital interests of thousands of households, but also concerns the development of China's social and economic structure and the stability of social order. In the context of the normalization of the epidemic, alleviating the employment pressure of college graduates plays an important role in social harmony and stability and promoting high-quality economic development, which requires the coordination and cooperation of the whole society to solve.

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