

Returning to One's Hometown for Employment: A New Option for "Homecoming" Students

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Abstract: With the increasing number of graduates year after year, the difficulties of working and living in first-tier cities are also on the rise. Returning to one's hometown for employment has emerged as an alternative option for graduates. By examining the characteristics of this trend, this paper analyzes the factors influencing graduates' decisions to return home for work, including local sentiment, hometown return policies, and levels of development. Furthermore, it provides insights into choosing a university location based on employment opportunities and pressures, quality of life and cost of living, as well as the sense of regional belonging.

Keywords: Returning to Hometown Employment, Employment Intention, Influencing Factors, Geographical Choice.

1. Characteristics of the Phenomenon of Returning Home for Employment

1.1. The Number of Graduates Has Soared, Making Employment more Difficult.

With the continuous enrollment expansion of colleges and universities, the popularization of higher education is accelerating, and the number of college graduates is also on the rise. According to official statistics from the Ministry of Education, the number of graduates of the class of 2023 reached a record high of 11.58 million, an increase of 820,000 from last year. At a press conference held by The State Council Information Office in March 2023, a spokesperson said that the employment situation will continue to pick up and maintain overall stability in 2023. However, the current pressure on total employment is still great, and the structural contradiction in employment is more prominent. At the same time, there are two contradictory phenomena of employment difficulty and labor shortage, which are specifically manifested in the shortage of young talents in most manufacturing and service industries.

1.2. The Willingness of College Students to Return to Their Hometowns for Employment and Entrepreneurship Has been on the Rise.

The Mycos Research Institute released a survey report in 2022 on college students returning to their hometowns for employment. This report outlines the findings based on the institute's tracking evaluation of the training quality of undergraduates six months after graduation in 2022, as well as the employment quality of college graduates over the past five years. The report indicates that an increasing proportion of college graduates are choosing to return to their hometowns for employment. More and more graduates are heading back home in search of job opportunities, with non-first-tier cities and grassroots positions emerging as new preferred choices.

Over the past five years, there has been a growing trend of college graduates who studied elsewhere returning to their hometowns for work within six months of graduation.

Conversely, the percentage of students aspiring to relocate to first and second-tier economically developed cities has gradually decreased. Numerous employment quality reports from colleges and universities reveal that returning to one's hometown for employment has become a significant option for college graduates.

1.3. The Proportion of Students Returning to Their Hometown Immediately after Graduation is Higher in Eastern China

With the deepening implementation of the strategy of coordinated regional development and the promotion of Chinese-style modernization, the central and western regions, small and medium-sized cities and rural areas have made remarkable progress, attracting more industrial transfer and investment, forming a number of emerging industries and service industries, and providing more quality jobs and platforms for innovation. Although first-tier cities have more resources and opportunities, they also have higher thresholds and requirements. With the number of college graduates increasing year after year, the number of college graduates in first-tier cities is also increasing. However, the job opportunities do not keep pace with the growth rate of graduates, and the competition for job positions is becoming more and more fierce, and the degree has gradually become "worthless". At the same time, the cost of first-tier cities has also caused huge pressure on graduates. Behind the high income is high consumption, high rent and high housing price, and the high living cost affects the quality and stability of life. Many young people who have already worked in first-tier cities have begun to review their lives and pay more attention to life quality and family stability.

1.4. There are Differences in the Proportion of Returning Home Workers among Provinces, Cities, Counties and Rural Areas

Generally speaking, among different provinces, provinces with higher level of economic development and more universities and enterprises have a lower proportion of graduates returning to their hometowns for employment; While provinces with lower level of economic development

and fewer colleges and enterprises have a higher proportion of graduates returning to their hometowns. If the university is located in a city that meets their expectations, college students will often find a job directly in the city where they live, rather than returning to their hometown. At the same time, even if they choose to work back home, college students are more inclined to choose the prefecture-level city where their hometown is located, rather than returning to the countryside for employment. Research statistics show^[1] that most college students prefer to work in their own prefecture-level cities, accounting for 66.4 percent. County-level cities followed, accounting for 25.4 percent. In contrast, township employment accounts for only 6 percent, rural employment intention is even lower, only 2.2 percent, and the rural employment rate is not even 10 percent. It can be seen that in addition to the first-tier cities, the majority of students choose to work in the prefecture-level city where their hometown is located, while the proportion of returning to rural employment is relatively low.

1.5. Tend to Choose Stable Employment Units

Returning college students have an obvious mentality of seeking stability in employment. Some studies made statistics^[1] on the willingness of college students to return home, and civil servants and public institutions accounted for the highest proportion, accounting for 44.4%; Followed by state-owned enterprises, accounting for 24.6%; Those who returned to their hometowns to work as village officials accounted for 17.9 percent, while only 3.7 percent chose private enterprises. At the same time, the proportion of students with a sense of self-employment is also low, accounting for only 9.3 percent. The above data shows that college students who choose to return to their hometown for employment generally prefer stable public institutions and state-owned enterprises, with better welfare benefits and slower work pace in most jobs in their hometown. At the same time, these institutions also have a vocational education and training system, as well as a complete training, assessment and promotion system, job stability but also have a certain room for growth and development. By improving their professional ability and management level, college students can have the opportunity to obtain a broader career platform, so as to achieve the balance between personal ideals and social reality.

2. Analysis of Factors Affecting Returning Employment

2.1. Local Sentiment is an Important Factor to Promote Returning Employment

Local emotion plays an important role in promoting the factors of college students returning to their hometown for employment. The sense of belonging to their hometown and the sense of responsibility to take care of their parents are both important factors influencing graduates' willingness to return home to develop their careers. Parents' thoughts on their children's job choices will also affect their return to their hometown. Nowadays, parents generally hope that their children can get a stable job, and it is more respectable to find a job in their hometown, which is known as the "iron rice bowl". Such family expectations and support also have a positive impact^[2] on returning home to find employment. In addition, there are other factors that can affect returning to work, such as having extensive interpersonal connections in

the hometown, and having parents or relatives in the hometown who can help them find a job.

2.2. The Return Policy is a Key Factor to Enhance the Willingness to Return

In recent years, many local governments have introduced supportive policies, including preferential measures in terms of internship, housing, taxation and employment positions, to attract talents studying abroad to return to their hometowns for employment and entrepreneurship. In the process of rural revitalization, returning college students are a force that cannot be ignored. It is necessary to form a good atmosphere for returning to work, systematic policies and measures, and corresponding policy guarantee system^[3] as soon as possible. The Yanreturn program in Qingyuan, Guangdong province, has achieved remarkable results since it was launched one year ago, Guangzhou Daily reported. As of July this year, 4,446 local college students in Qingyuan had returned to their hometowns to work or start businesses, and more than 70 percent of them are urgently needed talents in agriculture, water conservancy, animal husbandry and other agriculture-related majors, further strengthening the grassroots strength. Some local governments have issued policies to return to their hometowns, including solving the problems of housing for college students returning to their hometowns, providing employment opportunities and other policies, continuously improving the local employment environment, enhancing the attractiveness of talent policies, and encouraging college students to return to their hometowns for employment.

2.3. Development Level is the Main Factor Affecting Returning Employment

The willingness to return is significantly related to the level of economic development in the hometown. If the economic development level of the hometown gradually improves, the employment opportunities continue to increase, the development space gradually expands, and the working and living environment continues to improve, then the hometown will be more attractive for graduates to return to their hometown to work. If the development of the hometown is backward and the welfare treatment is not good, while there are more job opportunities and higher wages in other areas, it will prevent graduates from returning to their hometown to find employment. Considering that some jobs are not in line with their major and other factors, some graduates cannot find ideal jobs in their hometown and have to go to other places for further development. Big cities have more job options and higher income than their hometowns, which is a practical reason to hinder returning to work. These economic rational angles affect the pace of graduates returning to their hometowns. Based on these practical reasons, some local governments rely on local colleges and enterprises to establish internship bases, build returnee employment assistance service centers, popularize information infrastructure, promote the development of information technology such as the Internet of things and big data, form a diversified and market-oriented promotion pattern, and enhance the possibility^[4] of college students returning to their hometown for employment.

3. When Filling Out the College Entrance Examination Volunteer Application, Consider Three Perspectives of University Region

3.1. Job Opportunities and Pressure

The report of the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China pointed out that "employment is the most basic people's livelihood", and employment is the biggest thing for a family. When choosing the city or region where the university is located, it is necessary to consider employment opportunities and development prospects, taking into account factors such as the industrial structure, economic environment and policy support of the region. The economic characteristics and development tendency of different regions determine the distribution of employment opportunities in the region. Some regions may be more developed in manufacturing, e-commerce logistics, etc., with more job opportunities in related industries; While others may have more development opportunities and higher salaries in emerging industries such as information technology, biomedicine and new energy. With the number of college graduates increasing year by year, while the job opportunities are relatively limited, the competition is becoming more intense. When graduates consider job opportunities, they can't ignore the influence factor of employment pressure. When looking for employment opportunities, graduates may face multiple challenges such as job selection pressure, social pressure and psychological pressure. When the difference between reality and ideal is large, it is easy to appear the situation of "high is not enough, low is not enough", and produce psychological problems such as inferiority and paranoia, which may lead to the deviation of employment direction. Nowadays, more and more graduates choose to return to their hometown for employment, which can make use of the advantages of hometown resources and contacts to create more employment opportunities and reduce employment pressure. Therefore, when choosing the city or region where the university is located, college examinees need to consider factors such as job opportunities, development prospects, and personal abilities and interests. While actively looking for employment opportunities, they should also have a clear understanding of the employment pressure, and adopt corresponding coping strategies, and strive to achieve their own employment goals and development concepts.

3.2. Quality of Life and Cost

When considering a university, it is necessary to consider not only the comprehensive strength and professional setting of the school, but also factors such as the cost of living, social environment and welfare benefits where the university is located. The cost of living in big cities is higher, which is reflected in the relatively high transportation, entertainment and living expenses, but provides more living convenience; Smaller cities have a lower cost of living and less pressure, making it easier to live and study, but lack economic vitality and business development. College entrance examination candidates need to weigh factors such as personal economic strength and adaptability, taking into account the differences

in living standards and consumption levels, as well as the cost of transportation, diet and other aspects. At the same time, the social environment is also one of the factors to be considered. Social atmosphere, cultural environment, recreational activities and other factors will also have an impact on the quality of life of college students. There are more businesses, malls, museums and other places in big cities, as well as more opportunities to socialize; Smaller cities have a quieter social environment where you can focus more on your studies and personal development. Therefore, college students need to choose a social environment that suits them according to their preferences and adaptability. Based on the above analysis, college students need to choose a suitable city according to their personal consumption preferences and urban social environment. At the same time, they need to consider factors such as price level and living cost as well as personal preferences and future development to ensure that they can have a relatively comfortable living environment during their college years.

3.3. Regional Orientation and Belongingness

When choosing a university location, it is important to understand one's own geographical preference. People from different regions have different preferences and adaptability to their living environment. In terms of city and life, some people like the prosperity and diversity of big cities, and they are more inclined to pursue rich cultural activities and career development opportunities; While others may prefer the tranquility and leisure of small towns, they value the quality of life and interpersonal relationships more. In terms of climate, some people like places with four distinct seasons. They enjoy the change of seasons, warm winters and cool summers. While others are more accustomed to a place with a warm climate. For many, choosing a particular location may be motivated by an emotional connection and sense of belonging to the area. Therefore, college students can also combine their hometown, relatives and emotional factors to choose a region, can consider the city size, pace of life and cultural atmosphere preferences, but also consider the adaptability to the climate type, so that they can better choose their own regional preferences of the school and living environment, lay a good foundation for college life.

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