

Discussion on Competitiveness Improvement for Local College Students

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Abstract

At present, college student employment has already become a focused issue that attracts high attention from the whole society. The employment situation of local college students is severe, and employment has been an important issue related to the survival and development of colleges. Therefore, local colleges should formulate school-running characteristics suitable for the practical situations by starting from the actual requirements of local economic and social development. In curriculum setting, market demand should be the orientation, teaching must be dominant, and scientific research can play a subsidiary role. Moreover, employment education for college students should be strengthened, so as to improve students’ self-cognition and self-assessment. Feasible career plans must be formulated.

Key words: Local undergraduate colleges; Employment competitiveness of college students

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INTRODUCTION

It is a new requirement raised at the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China to promote realization for employment of higher quality, which has pointed out a clear direction for employment education in the current colleges. However, in order to forge iron, the iron must be hard. Similarly, in order to realize employment of higher quality, college students’ employment competitiveness must be improved. According to the current data of employment statistics, the proportion of students from common local colleges is the highest, but the employment situation is quite severe. According to data issued by Ministry of Education in 2012,

As for the ranking result of employment rate, 985 colleges are ranked the first, vocational colleges are ranked the second, 211 universities are ranked the third, independent colleges are ranked the fourth, scientific research institutions are ranked the fifth, and common local colleges are ranked the sixth. (Anonymous, 2013)

Obviously, under the background of “two-way selection and job-hunting by self-determination”, low employment rate is actually the reflection of weak employment competitiveness. Therefore, in the process of promoting realization for employment of higher quality, local colleges should persist in demand orientation by centering on the core issue of “employment competitiveness”, and cultivate high-quality talents suitable for economic and social development.

1. ANALYSIS ON FACTORS INFLUENCING EMPLOYMENT COMPETITIVENESS OF LOCAL COLLEGE STUDENTS

1.1 There Is a Lack of School-Running Characteristic, and Colleges Have Blind Orientation and School-Running Philosophy

School-running characteristic is the fundamental advantage of colleges in school-running philosophy and

development pattern, and it is the core competitiveness of colleges. Due to historical, economic and environmental reasons, development of higher education in different places is imbalanced, and various colleges still have a gap. Such imbalance and gap will exist for a long time. Therefore, development orientation of colleges should fully consider the school-running strength as well as historical and practical situations. Colleges must follow the principle of refraining from doing some things in order to accomplish other things. However, some local colleges do not start from the practical situations and ignore the inherent law of educational development in the development orientation process. They just blindly determine their development orientation, compare with each other, and conduct upgrading aimlessly. Single-subject schools want to become multi-subject colleges, and multi-subject colleges hope to be comprehensive universities, so as to gain the so-called “integration” and “achievements”. In this way, school-running is stereotyped and there will be no characteristic. As a result, things go awry, and the school-running quality decreases. The school-running quality of colleges presents a positive correlation with college students’ employment competitiveness. Colleges often strive for grandiose projects in school-running pattern, and lack obvious personalities. Most schools are the same and most people are also the same. As a consequence, students graduating from these colleges lack outstanding core competitiveness. In this way, due to the absence of high-level scientific research ability and technical operation ability, employment difficulties will be encountered naturally in the process of obtaining employment.

1.2 Curriculum Setting Is Out-Dated, and Major Setup Is Separated From Social Need

Curriculum is the core element in the teaching process, and scientific and reasonable curriculum setting is directly related to the education and teaching quality. Moreover, it will finally influence employment competitiveness of college students. According to *Chinese College Graduates’ Employment Annual Report 2009 (Blue Book of Employment)* issued by MyCOS, in the less developed area—Guangxi, undergraduates of 2008 are relatively satisfied with “books and teaching facilities” and “school spirit and learning style”, but their satisfaction degree with curriculum setting is the lowest. According to *Chinese College Graduates’ Employment Survey Report 2006* issued by the Institute for Public Policy Research of Peking University in 2006, almost 50% of employers consider that unreasonable curriculum setting is the restraining factor of “employment difficulty” among college students. At present, with the deep advancement of pattern transformation and structure adjustment of China’s economy and society, many new jobs have appeared, and high-quality and high-end professional and technical talents are severely insufficient. On the other hand,

major setup and curriculum contents in some colleges are out-dated, and they cannot keep pace with the quality requirements of “pattern transformation and structure adjustment” for talents. Some college students cannot find a suitable job for they have not mastered new knowledge and new skills. Plentiful new jobs, including some traditional occupations and industries, lack corresponding suitable talents; besides, many occupations and posts cannot find students graduating from corresponding majors. Students are unable to apply what they learn. As a result, the contradiction between employment difficulty of college students and labor shortage of enterprises is caused. Especially with the strategy transition of China’s economic development under the new normal, economic development will also be transformed from quantity expansion into quality improvement. For local colleges, in order to grasp the opportunity for economic and social development and to cultivate well-liked talents, they should advance curriculum reform and improve college students’ qualities and abilities with advanced and high-quality curriculums. In this way, their core competitiveness of employment will be enhanced.

1.3 Teaching and Scientific Research Are Disjointed, and What Students Learn Is Separated From What Teachers Impart

Teaching and scientific research are main tasks of educators. Teaching is the process in which teachers impart new knowledge to students, and scientific research is the main source for human to acquire new knowledge. The fundamental meaning of colleges is talent cultivation, and talent cultivation has to experience the teaching link. It is undeniable that in the current college evaluation system, university lecturers that continuously impart “academic production” are far better than those “that are contributed to classroom teaching”, and the former can gain more economic interests. Some professors have no time to give classes owing to academic research, and high-level teachers do not put enough energy into teaching. Such phenomenon even presents a spreading and young trend. In order to gain a professional evaluation and acquire abundant social and economic returns, young teachers move in teaching and scientific research activities wearily. Of course, it is understandable that creators of new knowledge acquire abundant social and economic returns. However, the achievements gained by many high-level teachers devoted to scientific and academic research are not connected to the curriculums well. Those academic activities conducted by college professors should have been the top-quality teaching contents, but these “good nourishments” miss college students due to the reasons of educational concept and management system. Thus the quality of talent cultivation cannot be guaranteed. It is necessary for local colleges that provide human resource supports local economic and social development to make teachers work on some scientific researches according to

different situations. However, they have a huge gap with research universities and teaching research universities in teachers' level, academic exchange and research level. Teachers have to bear heavy teaching tasks. Based on the thinking set that the school with more scientific research achievements will possess a higher teaching quality, the scientific research orientation is raised artificially. As a result, many teachers pay attention to scientific research, and their normal teaching is affected.

1.4 The Professional Orientation Is Vague, and the Employment Education and Teacher Force Is Weak

In 2010, Guangxi Talent Market organized student delegates from 10 colleges including Guangxi University, Guangxi University for Nationalities and Guangxi Medical University to make a questionnaire survey for college students' current employment status and employment service demand. According to the results, 33.3% of interviewees consider that their job-hunting ability is not strong. Employment guidance contents that the interviewees are most interested in include employment information acquisition, job-hunting skills and experience, employment psychological guidance, employment skill training, and career planning. In 2012, Beijing Information Science & Technology University investigated the employment education situations in colleges. According to the investigation, most colleges lack an in-depth study on employment education in China; some colleges are not scientific and systematic enough in the employment education process, and they do not pay much attention. Meanwhile, colleges also lag behind in the time of carrying out employment education. Many colleges only conduct employment education by aiming at graduating students, and they ignore employment education and employment guidance for freshmen and sophomores. In addition, the employment education contents are single, mainly covering education of employment skills and techniques like employment situation analysis, employment policy propaganda, employment detail mastering, and resume making. There is a lack of targeted professional guidance and professional employment education, and cultivation and improvement for students' inherent comprehensive quality are ignored. If employment skills and techniques belong to basic abilities of employment, then education of college students' inherent comprehensive quality or ideological and political education of employment will be the reflection for core competitiveness of employment. When improvement for inherent quality is ignored, it will be hard to increase core competitiveness of employment. Moreover, some colleges lack enough attention to employment guidance curriculum, though it is treated as a compulsory course in form. In the practical implementation process, the curriculum contents become a mere formality, the curriculum status is not realized,

and the teacher force is weak. Therefore, the effect of employment guidance curriculum can be predicted.

2. ACTING POINTS TO IMPROVE EMPLOYMENT COMPETITIVENESS OF LOCAL COLLEGE STUDENTS

2.1 The Development Orientation Should Be Clarified and Composite Innovative Talents Must Be Cultivated

Local colleges bear the important task of cultivating adapting talents for local economic and social development. Only by keeping a foothold in the region, relying on the region, and sticking to the characteristic road of serving local economic and social development, can local colleges strive for a better development. Whether college students can be approved and accepted by the society and college students' employment quality and employment rate reflect the school-running quality and level of a college to some extent. Therefore, cultivating application-oriented professionals adapting to local economic and social development becomes the realistic choice of local colleges. Students should "apply what they learn" and "learn valuable knowledge". Cultivating application-oriented talents required by the region does not mean to reduce the talent cultivation quality, and it is not equal to higher vocational education. Local undergraduate colleges need to cultivate high-quality composite innovative talents. Compared with academic talents, they possess stronger practical ability and operational ability, so they can adapt to requirements of the post rapidly. Compared with technologic persons cultivated by higher vocational education, they have a "wider", "professional" and "interdisciplinary" knowledge structure. Local undergraduate colleges not only have to accept the social test, but also need to determine the orientation, formulate a plan and make a decision according to the social requirements. A school-running system aiming to serve the society should be established through innovation. Only in this way, can the employment difficulty of college students be solved from source. Thus sustainable development will be realized. It is certainly an attractive target to find a comprehensive and research-based first-class university, but comprehensive and research-based first-class university is not the target of all Chinese colleges. The development experience of domestic and overseas successful colleges shows that their brands and strengths are achieved due to the excellence in some aspects. Characteristic pursues excellence in some aspects and brand and strength in some fields rather than overall leadership and comprehensive distinction. Local undergraduate colleges should stick to the principle of "refraining from doing some things in order to accomplish other things, and doing things in order", and grasp the

relation between breakthrough at key points and overall advancement. Only in this way, can colleges avoid being eliminated by the society.

2.2 Innovation Should Be Realized for Curriculum System Construction, and the Strategy of Market Demand Must Be Adopted

As the “core content” of colleges, curriculum is the ultimate carrier of school-running resource and school-running behavior as well as the key to improvement of higher education quality. Whether curriculum setting is advanced and useful is directly related to whether talents cultivated by colleges are well-liked. Competition of modern higher education is actually the competition of talent cultivation quality, and curriculum is the direct carrier of improving education and teaching quality. Advanced curriculums will cultivate graduates that are useful for the society and approved by the society. Colleges that are not approved will certainly be eliminated. Therefore, the conformity between employment market and major and the conformity between employment post and curriculum learned become the basic principles of curriculum setting in colleges. Curriculum reconstruction and innovation become the foundations for survival, development, value and mission of colleges. Only through continuous construction and efficient management by centering on curriculums required by students, can a college run well. Competition of modern higher education is actually the competition of talent cultivation quality, and curriculum is the direct carrier of improving education and teaching quality. Advanced curriculums will cultivate graduates that are useful for the society and approved by the society. Colleges that are not approved will certainly be eliminated. Therefore, the conformity between employment market and major and the conformity between employment post and curriculum learned become the basic principles of curriculum setting in colleges. Aimed at employment, school-running tries to enhance students’ employment competitiveness and to improve students’ “hard power”. Its foothold lies in curriculum. Thereby, local colleges should strengthen discipline construction in the process of serving local economic and social development. Colleges need to establish majors and teach curriculums according to where graduates will go, what occupations graduates will take up, and what knowledge capability graduates need. A brand-new curriculum system should be established, so as to solve the “mismatch” contradiction between talent cultivation and social need.

2.3 Teacher Force Construction Should Be Strengthened and the Relation Between Teaching and Scientific Research Must Be Settled

Due to the absence of enough expenditure, local colleges, especially colleges in less developed areas, are faced with dual pressures of high-level talent introduction difficulty

and severe talent drainage. Therefore, in order to attract talents and retain talents with limited expenditure, local colleges have to create teacher management mechanism and to value cultivation for young teachers as academic backbone and reserve force. An environment beneficial to young teacher development should be established, and policies that can help young teachers stand out must be formulated. Besides, opportunities should be provided in the aspects of educational training, housing security, position recruitment and professional title promotion, and teachers’ sense of identity and sense of belonging must be enhanced with people oriented idea. Meanwhile, senior engineers, managers and people with special skills of enterprises and public institutions should be attracted and encouraged to act as full-time or part-time teachers, and the proportion of external teacher must be expanded gradually. In this way, students will be more “dependable”. Secondly, the teaching quality should be grasped, and the relation between scientific research and teaching must be handled scientifically. Teaching quality is the foundation and guarantee for survival and development of local colleges. Therefore, the orientation of promoting development with scientific research dominated by teaching and supported by scientific research will remain unchanged in local undergraduate colleges for a long time. Scientific research should be aimed at local construction, so as to solve specific problems in local economic development. The main purpose of scientific research is to improve education and teaching quality to a large extent, and it is carried out by centering on cultivation of applied talents. Meanwhile, it directly serves the demand of local economic and social development rather than tries to pursue profound knowledge. Only by following the principle of doing everything for students and serving the local place, can local undergraduate colleges cultivate students that are useful for the market and become schools that are useful for the society. In this way, college students are able to gain employment and college development can become hopeful.

2.4 Employment Education Patterns Should Be Enriched and Correct Employment Views Must Be Established for Students

Employment education is different from employment guidance. Employment guidance pays more attention to “problem” solving in employment, such as reduction of vocational selection anxiety, removal of vocational selection fear, and adjustment of cognitive bias. Employment education means to help students choose and determine a career beneficial to expression of individual talents and realization of personal ideal according to their characteristics and vocational need in the society. Fundamentally speaking, it tries to help students establish correct world views, views on life and values, and to enhance graduates’ ability of adapting to social development. Employment education not

only tells students how to find an ideal job, but also teaches students to gain rational self-cognition and self-assessment. By directing at the current situation in which local colleges ignore employment education and college students are unfit for a higher post but unwilling to take a lower one, it becomes necessary to conduct employment education suitable for the practical situation in colleges. On the one hand, career planning and development should be brought into entrance education. Students are required to clarify the academic objective according to their personality traits, hobbies and interests. Moreover, they should comprehensively learn knowledge, skills and quality required to realize the objective. In addition, students should be made to formulate their own career plans according to practical situations. Career plans must be formulated by combining with talent training objective of schools, future employment region of students, position where

the school is located, and cultivation of applied and innovative talents for enterprises. Besides, students should be guided to conduct employment practice during the four years. On the other hand, a group of professional occupational guidance teachers should be cultivated, to know students' interests, hobbies, outlooks about career, and values. Moreover, education to career objective selection should be provided in a targeted way by giving relevant employment courses during the future 2-3 years; students must be guided to participate in various associations and clubs; part-time job and internship opportunities should be recommended to students.

REFERENCE

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