

Research on the Employability of College Graduates from the Perspective of Employers

Based on a Questionnaire Survey for Campus Recruitment Organizations in Jilin Province

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Abstract—Based on a series of studies on employment ability at China and abroad, this paper compiles a survey questionnaire for the employment status of college students in Jilin Province in 2017, and conducted a survey in 392 employer units. The survey results show that different types of employers have different criteria for selecting graduates, but practical ability and work experience are the first consideration for selecting graduates. In addition, this paper also invites employers to evaluate the employment quality of college graduates from three aspects: employment ability of graduates, employment service of colleges and universities, employment default of graduates. It is found that employers are basically satisfied with the employment quality of college graduates, but there is still room for improvement of the employment ability of graduates.

Keywords—*employability; employment service in colleges and universities; employer*

I. INTRODUCTION

In 2018, the number of college graduates in China reached 8.2 million, a record high. At the same time, with the slowdown of economic growth and the upgrading of industrial structure, the employment situation of college graduates is more complex and difficult, and many graduates are facing the embarrassing situation of "unemployment after graduation". In general, the employability of college students refers to the ability to realize their own value in social life through learning knowledge and development ability in school [1], which is one of the important factors affecting the employment of college graduates. As the employer of the employment market of the university students, the employer has more specific requirements on the actual work ability and professional quality of the employees from the perspective of their own benefits and needs. Their evaluation of college graduates is often more realistic and objective. Through a questionnaire survey of the employers who employed the graduates of Jilin province in 2017, this study analyzed the actual demand and satisfaction of the graduates, and evaluated the employment service work of colleges and universities, so as to master the dimension of the employers' attention to the employability of college students. It provides

theoretical basis for the training of college students' employability.

II. RESEARCH METHODS

In this study, the employer was used as the research object, and an online questionnaire survey was conducted on the employers who came to Jilin Province for campus recruitment, and a total of 392 valid questionnaires were collected. There are five parts in the questionnaire and 32 questions in total. The first part is the background information of the employer, such as the type and size of the unit; the second part is to understand the quality factors which are the most important when hiring graduates; the third part is to understand their satisfaction with the quality of graduates; the fourth part is to inquire about the satisfaction to the university employment service degree; the fifth part is about the employment default of college graduates.

Among the 392 employers involved in the survey, the vast majority are small and medium-sized enterprises, as well as some middle and primary education units, small and micro enterprises with fewer than 20 employees. The industries involved include education, manufacturing, real estate, finance, scientific research and technology services, health and social services, information transmission, software and information technology services. Among them, there are 1 military unit, 8 research and design units and 8 party and government organs. This is because research and design units, military units and party and government organs have higher requirements for relevant professional knowledge of graduates or have special requirements in some other aspects, so they are less involved in campus recruitment activities.

*Project: Supported by "the Fundamental Research Funds for the Central Universities", 2412018JC011 & Social Science Research Project of Jilin Provincial Education Department, JJKH20190325JY.

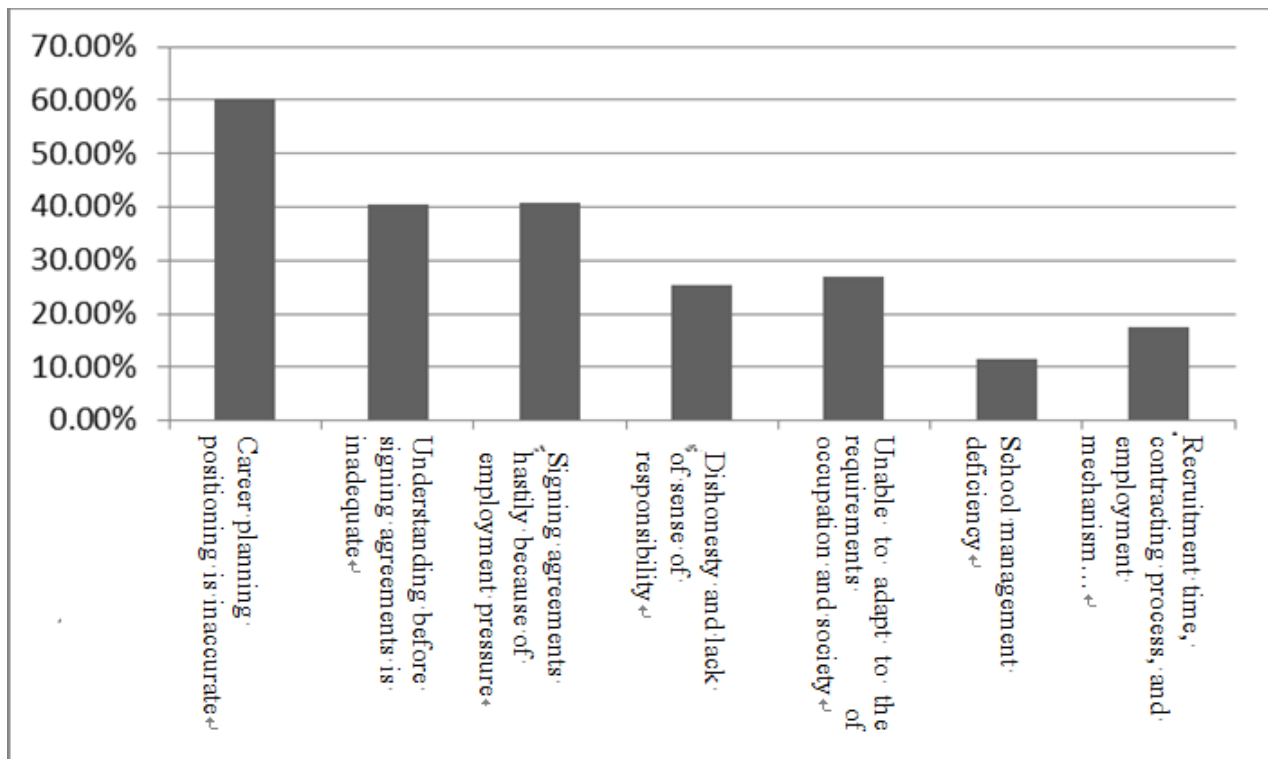


Fig. 1. Distribution of employer types.

III. THE SELECTION CRITERIA OF THE EMPLOYER

The screening theory pointed out that even if there is an information asymmetry between the employers and the employees in the labor market, the employer can still make recruitment decisions based on the factors such as the education level, academic achievement, professional, gender and work experience of the job seeker [2]. That is to say, there is no uniform standard for employers to choose college graduates, which is a complex system composed of many factors. It is inferred that the employment ability of college graduates is also a multiple ability structure, which is a reflection of the comprehensive quality that is closely related to professional skills and professional literacy of students.

Employability refers to the ability of individuals to acquire and maintain jobs at the earliest [3], while current research considers employability to be a complex indicator system composed of multiple factors. For example, the USEM model proposed by Yorke and Knight based on the four dimensions of comprehension ability, skills, self-efficacy and meta-cognition[4]; Pool and Sewell propose a Career EDGE model consisting of high-level self-esteem, self-confidence and self-efficacy and low-level Career development learning, work and life experience, professional knowledge skills, general skills and emotional intelligence [5]; On the basis of a comprehensive series studies, McQuaid & Lindsay believed that employability mainly includes three aspects: living environment, personal quality and external factors [6]. In addition, with the emergence of the problem of "difficult employment" for college graduates in recent years, many scholars have also discussed the employment ability of

college students in many aspects: Xie Jinyu and Song Guoxue [7] consider the employment of students from the perspective of employability, think that the employability skills of students are very important to improve the employability of students, and their impact on employment is greater than academic performance; After analyzing the employment ability of college students, Xie Zhiyuan [8] believes that the employability mainly includes three aspects: basic skills, professional skills and ability differences.

Based on the research of the literature on the employability of college graduates at home and abroad and combining with the actual needs of employers, this paper holds that the employability of college graduates mainly includes six aspects: academic ability, professional skills, general skills, personal quality, interpersonal ability and career development planning. Accordingly, the questionnaire lists 20 criteria: school visibility, academic achievement and academic level reflecting academic background; professional skills, relevant internships and work experience, awards and qualifications reflecting the type of profession; practical ability, learning ability, problem-solving ability and logical analysis ability reflecting general skills; the moral qualities such as resilience, stress resistance, positive optimism, hard work, rigorous, practical and helpful reflecting personal qualities; interpersonal skills and teamwork ability reflecting interpersonal ability; professional responsibility and employment development ability reflecting career development planning.

TABLE I. SELECTION OF COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES BY DIFFERENT TYPES OF EMPLOYERS (%)

Type of Employer Talent Selection Standards	Party and Government Organs	Higher Education Units	Primary and Secondary Education Units	State-Owned Enterprises	Scientific Research and Design Units	Tripartite-Invested Enterprises	Medical and Health Units	Other
211 Universities	12.50	13.51	28.85	23.19	14.29	0	9.62	11.76
Other General Undergraduate Colleges	87.50	83.7	61.54	63.77	57.14	46.15	53.85	55.56
Higher Vocational Colleges	0	2.70	5.77	11.59	28.57	53.85	36.54	30.07
Independent Colleges	0	0	3.85	1.45	0	0	0	2.61

In the questionnaire, the types of colleges and universities where the most graduates are recruited are taken as the choice preferences of employers. The distribution of colleges and universities in Jilin Province is mainly one in project 985 (Jilin University) and two in project 211 (Northeast Normal University, Yanbian University). The other universities include ordinary undergraduate colleges, higher vocational colleges and independent colleges. The survey results show that (see “Table I”) the general undergraduate colleges are most favored by employers. The proportion of graduates in general undergraduate colleges and universities recruited by different types of employers is much higher than that of other colleges and universities. On the one hand, this is because the number of colleges and universities in project 985 and project 211 in Jilin Province is small, so most of the employers recruit graduates from

ordinary undergraduate colleges and universities. Compared with the graduates of higher vocational colleges, undergraduate education has obvious advantages over junior college education in the employment market of college students, while the graduates of independent colleges are least recognized by employers in the employment market of college students. Secondly, in terms of the degree level of graduates (see “Table II”), undergraduates occupy a large proportion in the recruitment of employers. The proportion of graduates recruited by different types of employers is more than 40%, up to 85.71%. Ph. D. employers have the smallest proportion of recruitment, which may be fewer than other graduates and have higher human resources costs. Many employers are reluctant to employ more graduates with high academic qualifications because of the need to control the cost.

TABLE II. SELECTION OF GRADUATES' ACADEMIC QUALIFICATIONS BY DIFFERENT TYPES OF EMPLOYERS (%)

Type of Employer Talent Selection Standards	Party and Government Organs	Higher Education Units	Primary and Secondary Education Units	State-owned Enterprises	Scientific Research and Design Units	Tripartite-Invested Enterprises	Medical and Health Units	Other
Doctorate	28.57	5.41	0	2.90	0	0	3.85	1.96
Master	0	10.81	15.38	10.14	14.29	0	7.69	5.88
Bachelor	85.71	81.08	82.69	75.36	57.14	46.15	50.00	62.09
junior college graduate	0	2.70	1.92	11.59	28.57	53.85	38.46	30.07

Although there are differences in the selection criteria of different types of employers, pragmatism is the main tendency of most employers to select talents. In the survey of the factors influencing the recruitment of graduates by employers (see “Fig. 2”), the employers pay most attention to whether college graduates have relevant internship and work experience (21.94%), followed by practical ability (18.62%) and learning ability (16.58%). Ding Xiaojiong pointed out that when recruiting graduates, employers mostly based on pragmatism to facilitate graduates to adapt to the working environment and skills as soon as possible [9]. Yin Susheng and Xie Guiqing also believed that enhancing practical ability of students could make graduates better adapt to the needs of economic and social development [10]. Therefore, employers often take the internship experience and practical ability of graduates as the primary

consideration when recruiting graduates. In addition, the questionnaire data show that employers pay little attention to the personal quality and psychological quality of graduates, and more or less ignore the moral quality of graduates in the recruitment process, except for hard work, other factors that reflect personal quality are of less than 10 % concern.

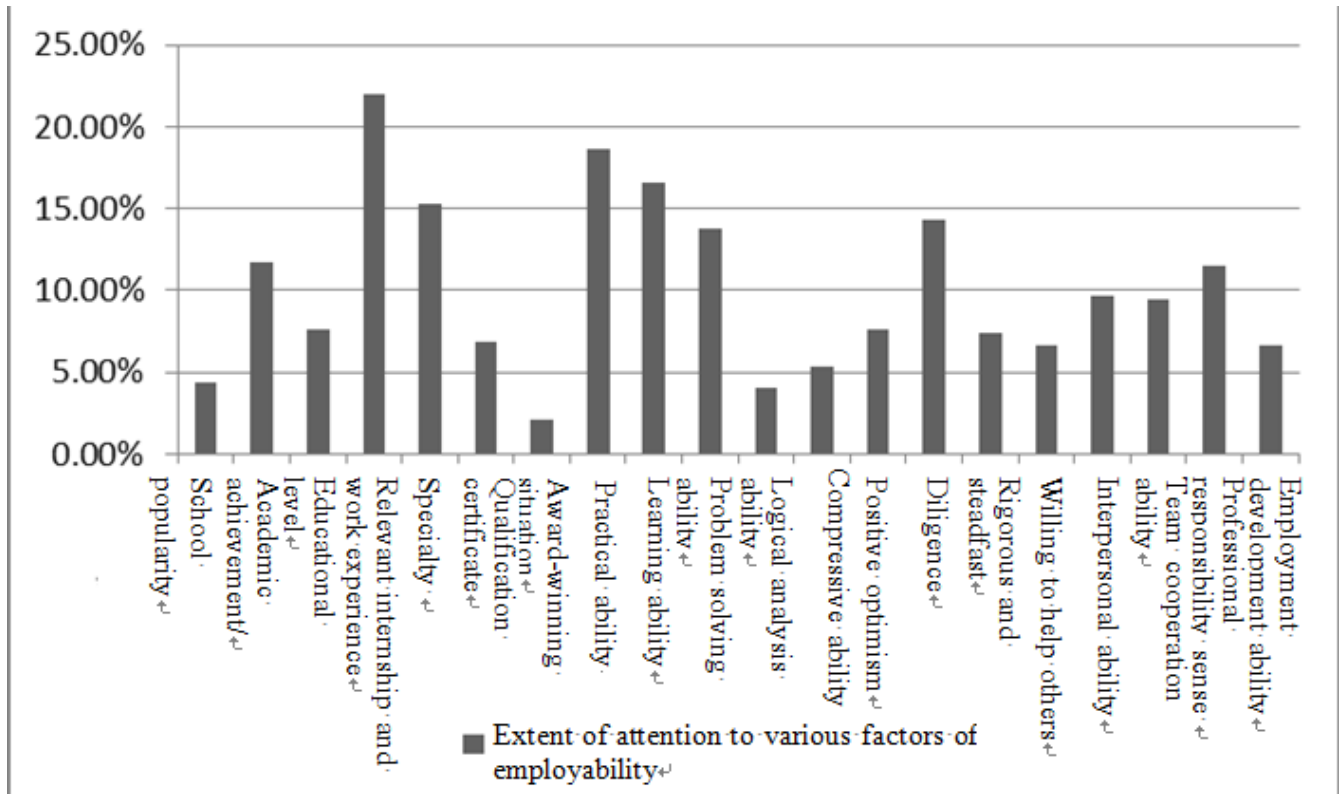


Fig. 2. The attention of employers to the factors of employment ability of college graduates.

IV. EVALUATION OF COLLEGE GRADUATES BY THE EMPLOYER

The questionnaire uses the Likert five-level scale to evaluate the satisfaction of graduates in terms of their

employment ability and employment service. Combining with the analysis of the reasons for breach of contract after employment, the author hopes to find out the reasons why college graduates are difficult to find employment, and improve their employment quality.

TABLE III. SATISFACTION OF EMPLOYERS ON THE QUALITY OF COLLEGE GRADUATES (%)

	Very Satisfactory	Relatively Satisfactory	Generally Satisfactory	Dissatisfactory	Very Dissatisfactory
Project 211	34.69	44.90	20.41	0	0
Other general undergraduate institutions	21.16	53.53	21.99	2.90	0.41
Higher vocational college	18.75	40.63	33.33	5.21	2.08
Independent college	0	33.33	50.00	16.67	0
Overall satisfaction	21.94	48.98	25.00	3.32	0.77

The results are shown in "Table III". First, on the whole, employers are basically satisfied with the quality of college graduates, among which the percentages of very satisfactory, relatively satisfactory and generally satisfactory are 21.94%, 48.98% and 25% respectively, which means that college graduates are basically recognized by 95% of employers. The satisfaction of employers with project 211 college graduates is much higher than that of other schools, and there is no unsatisfactory or very unsatisfactory situation. The satisfaction of graduates from other general colleges and higher vocational colleges is slightly lower than that of project 211 colleges, but the satisfaction of graduates from

independent colleges is at the end of various colleges and universities, and about 17 % of employers are unsatisfactory.

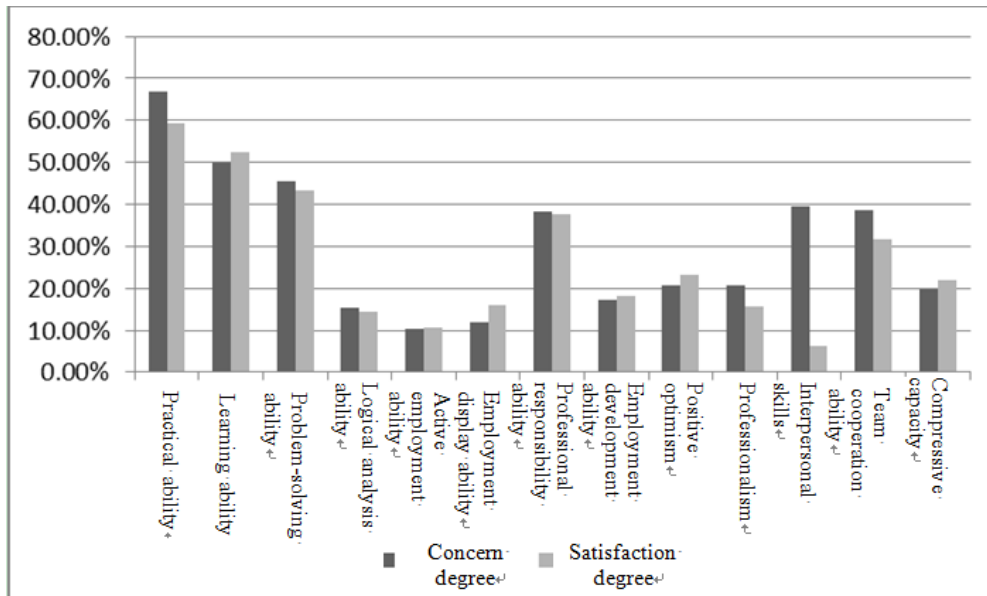


Fig. 3. Comparison of employers' attention to employability and satisfaction of graduates.

From the comparison of employer's concern and satisfaction with employability of graduates (see "Fig. 3"), the employer's attention to the level of the ability factors of college graduates tends to be consistent with the distribution trend of satisfaction, which shows that the employability of graduates can be basically recognized by employers. Among them, the employability of college graduates who are most satisfied with employers includes practical ability (59.18%), learning ability (52.30%) and problem solving ability (43.37%). It is worth noting that many employers will regard interpersonal skills as one of the factors of concern when

recruiting graduates, because good interpersonal skills are often the basis of transmitting information, communicating ideas and solving problems, which is of great significance to the development of graduates and enterprises. However, in the survey, it was found that employers were less satisfied with the interpersonal skills of college graduates (6.38%). Some employers also indicate that most of the graduates are hard-working, but they are introverted and inarticulate. This kind of direct impression of the graduates has been well verified in the above data analysis.

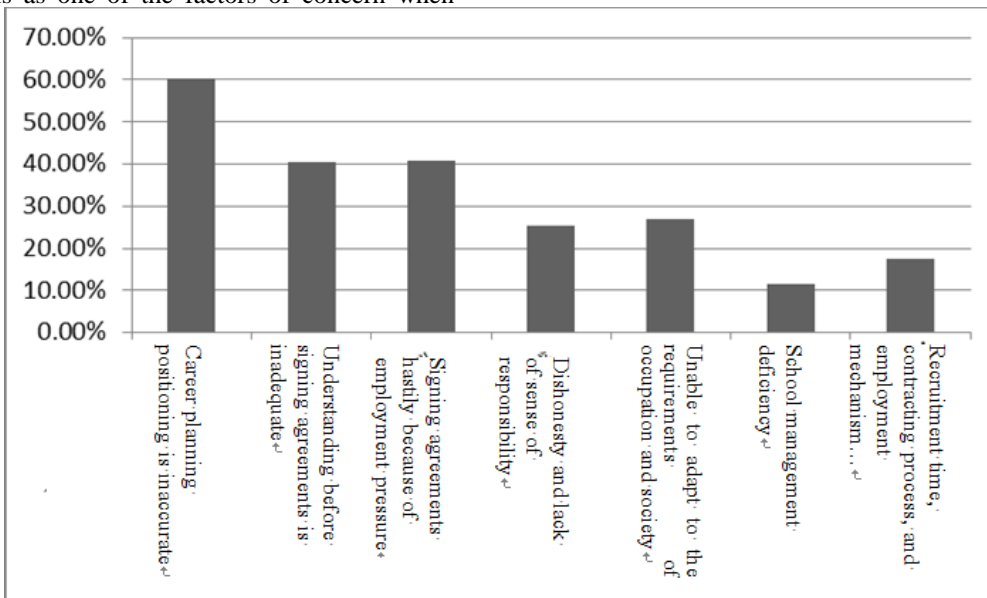


Fig. 4. The reason why the employer thinks that the graduate has breached the contract after signing the employment agreement.

The employment of college graduates is unstable. And the proportion of graduates who choose to default after signing an employment agreement exceeds 60%. Shi Yi and Yang Dexiang believe that the phenomenon of graduates

default is not only related to the factors of college students themselves, but also influenced by society, colleges and families [11]. The survey found that (see "Fig. 4"), the vast majority of employers reflect the inaccurate positioning of

career planning of college graduates (60.2%). They believe that students lack proper understanding of their future industries and positions, and lack necessary planning for their future career, which is the primary reason for graduates' breach of contract after employment. Secondly, because of the time constraints of employment, many college students usually only have half a year or even one or two months of internship. After graduation, they are forced to sign employment agreements rashly under the pressure of employment and the expectations of parents and schools. After arriving at their posts, they find that their jobs are not suitable for them, and they can only choose to change jobs by default. In addition, individual factors of graduates such as lack of responsibility (25.26 %) and inability to adapt to job requirements (26.79 %) are also important reasons why employers believe that college graduates choose to default. Some employer indicated that some graduates have weak legal consciousness, because they are afraid of paying liquidated damages or assuming legal liabilities, they neither go through relevant formalities nor notified the employer

when they breach the contract, which has brought losses to the employer. Finally, the employer indicated that the integrity education (11.48%) of the school to the graduates was also related to the occurrence of graduate default.

V. EVALUATION OF EMPLOYMENT SERVICES IN COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES BY EMPLOYERS

The employment service institutions of colleges and universities play an intermediary role in the employment market of college students, and the role between employers and graduates is irreplaceable. This survey invites employers to evaluate the satisfaction degree of employment service in colleges and universities with the Lickert scale from six aspects: the organization of campus recruitment fairs, the professional level of employment teachers, the publication of recruitment information, the handling of employment dispatch procedures, the job recommendation of schools to graduates, and the employment and career of graduates counseling.

TABLE IV. SATISFACTION OF EMPLOYERS ON EMPLOYMENT SERVICES IN COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES (%)

	Very Satisfactory	Relatively Satisfactory	Generally Satisfactory	Dissatisfactory	Very Dissatisfactory
The organization of campus recruitment fairs	48.72	31.89	16.33	2.30	0.77
The professional level of employment teachers	40.05	41.84	15.82	1.53	0.77
The publication of recruitment information	43.11	35.20	18.88	2.55	0.26
The handling of employment dispatch procedures	39.03	36.48	21.43	2.55	0.51
The job recommendation of schools for graduates	39.80	38.27	16.58	4.34	1.02
The employment and career counseling of graduates	40.56	34.18	21.94	2.30	1.02

Generally speaking, the satisfaction of employer with the employment service in colleges and universities is low, and the proportion of the employers who are very satisfactory and relatively satisfactory with the six aspects mentioned above is less than 50%. Among them, the employers are most satisfied with the organization of the campus recruitment fair, while the employers are least satisfied with the job recommendation of schools to graduates, about 6% of the employers are unsatisfactory or very unsatisfactory. (shown in "Table IV") The vast majority of employers participating in the survey reflect that the employment service institutions in Colleges and universities are not timely and incomplete in handling the employment dispatch procedures and issuing recruitment information for graduates; the employment and vocational guidance for students only stay at the recruitment stage, and the students in colleges and universities lack the necessary planning for the career they will be engaged in.

VI. CONCLUSION

In analyzing and summarizing the results of the survey of employers who recruited college graduates from Jilin Province in 2017, there are four points worth paying attention to.

First, there are differences in the criteria for recruiting graduates from different types of employers, but pragmatism is still the selection tendency of most employers. According to the survey, different types of employers have certain preferences for academic ability, professional skills, personal qualities and interpersonal abilities of graduates. For example, college graduates in project 211, graduates doctoral and master still have certain employment advantages in the employment market of college students. However, for the vast majority of employers, the practical ability and internship experience of graduates is a factor of great concern when recruiting graduates. As far as employers are concerned, graduates with work experience can adapt to the work environment and skills requirements as soon as possible, thus reducing training costs. It should be noted that in the survey, employers more or less ignore the personal quality and psychological quality of employees when recruiting graduates, while in fact, the quality of employees is a key factor driving high performance of employees and a developmental factor in the growth process of enterprises [12]. Therefore, employers should pay equal attention to the professional quality of graduates, actively carry out employee training, improve the quality of employees, and maintain their vitality for long-term development.

Second, employers are basically satisfied with the employment quality of college graduates, but interpersonal skills of graduates are still far from the requirements of employers. Guo Junchen believes that the improvement of interpersonal communication ability of college students can help them build a harmonious circle of friends and cultivate ability of students to adapt to society [13]. However, the cultivation of interpersonal communication ability of college students cannot be completed overnight. It is a long-term process, which requires the cooperation of college students, universities and society. Colleges and universities can actively carry out extracurricular activities to cultivate social skills of students, and college students should strive to learn interpersonal knowledge and apply the knowledge to practice.

Third, college graduates are affected by many factors after employment, such as employment instability and breach of contract. For the employer, the breach of contract behavior of the graduates has caused the loss of employees. Therefore, the company can only increase the number of recruitment and extend the trial period, which increases the recruitment cost of the employer and reduces the operational efficiency of the enterprise. In view of the serious breach of contract by college graduates, on the one hand, college employment service agencies must strictly review the information of employers, provide graduates with real and reliable recruitment information, so that graduates can understand the real development of employers and prevent them from being fooled. On the other hand, college employment service agencies should also strengthen credit education for college students and guide college students to recognize the adverse effects of employment default.

Fourth, in view of the low satisfaction of employers with employment services in colleges and universities, on the one hand, colleges and universities should take the initiative to strengthen communication with employers, and understand the development of industries and enterprises through career counseling and school-enterprise cooperation, and provide employment guidance with different characteristics according to the actual situation of schools. On the other hand, practical ability is the general requirement of employers for college students, which means that social practice is also an important part of college education. According to the questionnaire data, about 54% of employers have an intention to establish an internship practice base with universities. Therefore, colleges and employers can set up internship and practice cooperation bases for college students, arrange training activities appropriately, and provide a platform for the cultivation of practical ability of college students.

Overall, college graduates have a good overall level of employability, but there is still a certain gap between the requirements of the employers. The study of graduate employment performance based on the perspective of the employer is helpful to help college students realize that the training of employability will increase the probability of employment success and thus be in a favorable position in the employment competition market. It is helpful for colleges and universities to adjust the training mode of talents according to the actual needs of employers, and cultivate a

multi-functional talent; it also can help employers to recruit suitable talents, save recruitment and training costs, and expand corporate economic benefits. It should be noted that this paper discusses the employment competitiveness of college graduates from the perspective of employers, which enriches the domestic research on the employability of college students to a certain extent. However, due to the limitations of research conditions, there are still some problems and shortcomings, and it can be considered in the future to increase the study on the types and numbers of samples and the long-term follow-up survey data for obtaining more detailed analysis, so that the research has a broader representative meaning.

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