



An Analysis of the Contradiction between Over-Education and Knowledge Unemployment in China from the Perspective of Employment Difficulties

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Abstract. Since the 20th century, with the rapid development of Chinese society and the improvement of the country's overall education level, the problem of over-education and knowledge-based unemployment has been widely discussed, but the causes and solutions of these problems are still insufficient. This paper analyzes the contradiction between over-education and knowledge unemployment in China from the perspective of employment difficulties and puts forward solutions. This paper analyzes the contradictions between knowledge and labor employment in China and the institutional defects of the labor market, which lead to this phenomenon. The article finds that the main causes of this situation are the Chinese traditional values, individuals' vague definition of a good job, and some flaws in the labor market. Based on the above problems, this paper proposes the following suggestions: China should improve the quality of basic education and pay attention to the connection of education stages so that newly graduated job seekers can change their mentality and reduce the pressure on themselves. The government can also introduce some reasonable and relevant laws or regulations to promote the development of the job market.

Keywords: Over-Education, Knowledge Unemployment, Employment Difficulties, Solutions.

1 Introduction

Because of the implementation of "enrollment expansion" in colleges and universities in 1999, people in China gained more opportunities to receive higher education, and it also improved the overall quality of the people, conforms to the tide of development of The Times, and promotes China to enter the era of "popularization" of higher education. What's more, the number of college graduates in China has risen sharply in the past 20 years, for graduates every year, to meet them is a severe employment challenge [1]. A survey on the career trends of 2023 college graduates from Sina Hot News shows that 32.2 percent of graduates are very optimistic about the employment situation, and 40.7 percent of graduates say the employment situation is highly competitive. Another survey of students three months after graduation from a university showed that only 8.4 percent of graduates were waiting to sign a contract, 50 percent

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said they were still at a loss to find a job, and 23.64 percent felt anxious and depressed [2]. Due to the existence of structural imbalance in employment, both highly-educated youth and low-skilled youth are facing employment difficulties [3]. Many foreign countries have developed mature definitions of over-education and knowledge unemployment. Levine's theory of over-education is the most widely accepted one. According to the theory of over-education, college graduates who have received higher education do show the characteristics of over-education in the process of job hunting. Therefore, it can be said that the unemployment of college students is caused by excessive education. This paper deeply discusses the contradiction between over-education and knowledge unemployment in China from the perspective of employment difficulties and puts forward some solutions combined with social phenomena to achieve sustainable development of education and the employment market.

2 The Definition of Over-Education and Knowledge Unemployment

2.1 The Conception of the Over-education

Over-education means the degree holder has received more years of education than the actual requirements of the job the person is doing [4].

The negative effects of excessive education, such as low return on education and waste of resources, attracted great attention from European and American scholars in the 1970s. As early as 1976, Freeman, an American scholar, paid early attention to the negative problems caused by the expansion of the scale of American higher education and over-investment after World War II [5]. His book first raised the issue of "over-education", which caused a high degree of attention in Western society. Then, many scholars began to systematically study the problem of over-education. At present, these three ideas have been accepted by the public. One is J. Bishop's proposal that over-education is a society or an individual receiving education more than what he or she needs or wants. John Robust argues that a person who obtains more education than his profession needs is over-educated. And the third one is made up by Levine, an educational economist, he lists three measures of over-education: first, People with the same level of education now have a lower economic status than those with higher levels of education in the past [6]. Second, the educated person fails to fulfill his or her expectations of career achievement. Third, the worker has educational skills higher than the job requires. With the continuous development of higher education, more and more people receive higher education, and society has higher and higher requirements for workers' skills and qualities. According to the theory of over-education, college graduates who have received higher education do show the characteristics of over-education in the process of job hunting. Therefore, it is the over-education that leads to the unemployment of college students [7].

2.2 The Conception of the Knowledge Unemployment

Knowledge unemployment can also be called “Knowledge labor is unemployed”, It refers to the fact that highly educated intellectuals do not get reasonable resource matching, so that the knowledge labor force is in a state of no work. The main group of knowledgeable unemployed people are skilled people and most of them graduated from the university and even got a postgraduate diploma. This phenomenon can be seen in many countries including the developed and developing countries, but it especially happened in the developing countries. China is one typical model. Compared with the data posted by the Ministry of Education in Chinese between 2019 and 2022, the number of Normal Courses students increased from about 1 million to 2.5 million. The number of people who graduated with a Master's Degree has increased from half a million to one million. It's easy to see there were more and more people with higher education entering society. But the big companies have far fewer jobs for these people than they have graduates. So that it let the labor market resources become tight. Many people find that is not easy to get into good companies, and bad companies cannot meet their expectations. People with higher education, do not want to engage in low-level factory work, so they may choose to continue to study, and go to get a higher degree. After working hard in school, it can be found that the employment prospects of this major were not good, and then some people even worked hard to obtain a doctoral degree. For this group of people, getting a high degree is no longer to improve their value and cultivation and promote social progress, but only a certificate which can let them get a good job [8].

3 The Cause of the Phenomenon

3.1 Wrong Values

Most people who receive a good education, always have a balance in mind, they want the work to have equal value with the education they receive. No one would like to waste the time they spend on education, in their opinion, subpar jobs don't match the value they have. But this might not healthy mental activity. Parents' expectations have also become one of the important reasons for students' excessive employment expectations It is not wrong to expect excellent children, but the characteristic of Chinese parents is that they tie study work, and life together. This kind of "study-work-better life" model of family education is rooted in China's deep-rooted "official standard" thought. What's more, children of lower social class status in this country often go to better schools and get better jobs to change their class status [9]. "Imperial examinations-promotion-making a fortune" has been an unshakable formula for Chinese people to make progress since ancient times. This formula has been continuously instilled into the minds of new generations in family education, virtually resulting in the employment concept that highly educated people only pursue "high positions" (high social status, high salary positions) and ignore other positions. This seriously misunderstands the nature of education, and seriously limits the employment and development of the new generation.

3.2 The Contradiction Between Technology-Based Employment and Knowledge-Based Employment

First, basic education and higher education have not been well connected [10]. In the basic education stage, students are assigned too much homework every day. Schools and parents devote too much time to the return of good grades and do not pay attention to the cultivation of children's skills. Extra-curricular abilities, such as hands-on ability, result in students being under high pressure. College admission seems as a relaxing stage for Chinese students. In college, Chinese students are not supervised by parents and teachers, and they do not have heavy homework. Many college students feel that they have learned nothing in the four years of college, and they do not have the motivation to learn. These two stages of management education lack continuity and gradualism. The second is the disconnect between independence and innovation [11]. Due to the emphasis on exam-oriented education and the neglect of the cultivation of students' independent ability and innovative ability, many students only know the knowledge from textbooks, and have little understanding of the social experience and professional technical work. However, the development of society and country needs both knowledge and technical talents [12]. There is no way for a country's economy to continue to function if it feeds only on knowledge. As for the technical occupations, many highly educated students have not been exposed to, them and can't be competent, but the need for high-end talent occupations accounted for a small number, so they are in a middle stage, and can't move forward or move back.

3.3 Structural Defects in the Labor Market

The defects of China's economic structure and employment system are the external reasons leading to excessive education [13]. China is a developing country, and there are obvious dual economic structures, one is called the traditional economic sector and the other is the modern economic sector. The traditional economic sector refers to the natural economic system that has existed for thousands of years, and the modern economic sector refers to the urban industrial sector that carries out production by modern methods. In the traditional economic sector, there are generally two situations, on the one hand, the vicious competition caused by the excess labor force makes the knowledge workers unable to enter; On the other hand, low income is not attractive to knowledge workers. As a result, knowledge workers tend to seek jobs in modern economic sectors, which in developing countries account for a small share of the overall national economy. Although China is the "world manufacturing factory", the low-end processing and manufacturing industry is still the main body of China's manufacturing industry. Therefore, small modern economic departments have limited ability to absorb knowledge workers, and with the rapid expansion of the scale of colleges and universities, the number of knowledge workers trained by colleges and universities is much higher than the new employment opportunities that modern economic departments can provide, so knowledge unemployment is inevitable. To avoid knowledge unemployment, people have to accept a higher level of higher education, which leads to over-education. In addition, some scholars have concluded that: from

the perspective of the demand for labor in China's three industries, with the increase of output value in the primary industry, the number of employers does not increase, but begins to decrease, which indicates that the primary industry has reached saturation and began to exclude labor. With the increase of investment in fixed assets, the upgrading of technology, and the rise of labor productivity, the substitution of capital and technology for labor appears in the secondary industry, resulting in a sharp decline in the ability of the secondary industry to absorb labor. The tertiary industry is the field with the strongest ability to absorb labor, but at present, the tertiary industry structure in China is still in the irrational state of low-level structure, and its ability to absorb labor is limited, which makes the labor supply in the market oversupply, resulting in a large number of graduates' knowledge unemployment, and then lead to excessive education [13].

4 Suggestions

4.1 Develop the Basic and Higher Education Level

As mentioned above, basic education and higher education cannot be connected, and the government should introduce some educational mechanisms to improve the level of basic education and higher education. While paying attention to the growth of the number of college students, the government should also pay attention to the quality of students [13]. Schools should re-plan the curriculum, it is necessary to form a comprehensive and perfect talent training system by adjusting the education system and education model and help students improve their professional ability and enhance their core competitiveness based on laying a good foundation. The job market is already full of people with knowledge, in the actual work environment, a person's practical operation level and social experience are the most important thing.

4.2 Adjust Mental Attitude

It seems that Chinese people are always trapped in the prison of thinking, equating work with the future, so they anxiously look for work and keep learning [14]. The phenomenon of intellectual unemployment is understandable, given that a high degree in China seems to be a highly glorified concept and a gateway to all good jobs. But it is worth thinking about the true definition of a good job. It might be reasonable that college students looking for jobs should get rid of anxiety, accept all job opportunities calmly, and realize their value in work, instead of blindly pursuing a good job. Thinking out of the box, people can find that there are more choices, which requires the majority of highly educated graduates to put down their posture, adapt to the new working environment and interpersonal relations as soon as possible, think more about things, treat people with more understanding, not afraid of challenges, proactive, and strive to grow as soon as possible into a responsible person [3].

4.3 Government Power

The government should encourage the development of the tertiary industry from the policy perspective, and help the service industry to absorb talents and labor force as soon as possible [15]. At the same time, accelerates the process of urbanization and narrows the gap between urban and rural areas; A large amount of funds need to be invested in developing underdeveloped areas in the western and central regions to balance the economic level of different regions. 'The government can strengthen the personnel security system and encourage the "go west" and "return home" highly educated people who are engaged in national construction and hometown development, and improve the treatment and social status of towns and underdeveloped areas so that students receiving higher education can see the material and spiritual "high return" corresponding to "high dedication" and fully realize their infinite value. And they are more willing to devote themselves to the tide of social construction [15].

5 Conclusion

Starting from the concepts of over-education and knowledge unemployment, this paper points out the contradictions between them and the causes of the phenomenon. The structure of China's labor market and the shortcomings of the employment system are one of the important reasons. The traditional Chinese educational concepts and the life and values which was inherited by the ancients have influenced the employment choices of college students. As a developing country, China lacks both technical and knowledge-based talents, but most people with higher education are reluctant to engage in technical work and have certain misunderstandings about such work. Through reading the literature, this paper proposes three ways to alleviate the current situation. As for the schools, they should strengthen the construction of basic education, and should not always put knowledge first place, technical talents are also of indispensable parts of the country's development. At the government level, the national government can improve the labor system, ensure the welfare of every job, reduce the difference of work, and let every worker obtain due rights. At the individual level, people should correct their attitude towards work and career, think out of the box, not only blindly pursue a good job, but also realize self-value in work.

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